Legislation Text

File #: 2026-0685, **Version:** 1

To: Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
Department or Agency Name(s): Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
Staff Name and Phone Number: Misti Arias, General Manager, 565-7264; Irma Cuevas, (707) 565-3426
Vote Requirement: Majority
Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:
Public Outings and Youth Education Program: July 7, 2026 - June 30, 2029

Recommended Action:
Authorize the General Manager of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District to execute nine service agreements for the Public Outings and Youth Education Program totaling $2,220,000, effective from July 7, 2026 and ending June 30, 2029, with an option to extend for two additional one-year periods as follows:

i) An agreement with the California Indian Museum & Cultural Center in an amount of $76,000.
ii) An agreement with Friends of the Petaluma River in an amount of $150,000.
iii) An agreement with the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation in an amount of $237,000.
iv) An agreement with LandPaths in an amount of $525,000.
v) An agreement with Point Blue Conservation Science in an amount of $75,000.
vi) An agreement with City of Cotati in an amount of $137,000.
vii) An agreement with Sonoma Ecology Center in an amount of $285,000.
viii) An agreement with Sonoma Land Trust in an amount of $270,000.
ix) An agreement with Sonoma Resource Conservation District in an amount of $465,000.

Executive Summary:
For over 20 years, the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (Ag + Open Space) has contracted with nonprofits and other local service providers to offer public outings, youth education, and workforce development programming that connects community members with the natural and working lands we have conserved through in-person and virtual experiences. This program directly supports Ag + Open Space's mission by:

- Increasing public awareness of Ag + Open Space's work and accomplishments, and helping community members develop a greater understanding of the impact and multiple benefits of land conservation
- Encouraging *all* Sonoma County community members to enjoy and develop an appreciation for the conservation of agricultural lands and natural areas, while providing positive opportunities to engage in the stewardship of protected lands in their community
- Connecting community members of all ages to the working and natural lands of Sonoma County to explore the important relationship between healthy agricultural systems, a healthy environment, and healthy communities
- Inspiring current and next generation conservation leaders

Given the specialized nature of this program and the geographically diverse conserved lands on which this

program provides access, Ag + Open Space requires the assistance of experts in the field of public outings, youth education, and workforce development. Nine service providers were selected pursuant to the above-described request for proposals process to support Ag + Open Space's community engagement efforts.

Discussion:
Ag + Open space is committed to engaging our communities with their taxpayer investment in land conservation through thoughtful and authentic community relations efforts. Key to these efforts is the Public Outings and Youth Education Program, which offers programming throughout the year in every supervisorial district. This programming is always free to participants, and contract funds are often utilized to offer transportation/buses, address other cost barriers, and provide workforce development and internships for the next generation of land stewards. Approximately one-third of the public outings currently offered are led in Spanish and/or hosted by bilingual staff. In the program's last three years, we have increased the number of participants from 8,000 per year to over 14,000 per year.
On December 23, 2025, Ag + Open Space issued a Request for Proposals for the Public Outings and Youth Education Program covering the next three fiscal years, with a special focus on strengthening the program in the following areas:

- Equity and justice in land conservation: Land conservation should be a place for everyone, so we strongly encouraged applicants to demonstrate their own commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work throughout their organizations, and in their proposed programming.
- Elevating Ag + Open Space's mission and accomplishments: Program participants should leave each outing with an understanding of Ag + Open Space, how their own tax dollars support the organization, and the benefits they receive because of our work. Further, one of the most powerful aspects of this program is that it demonstrates the impact of collaboration between a publicly funded land conservation agency and our environmental/agricultural/educational/recreational public agency and nonprofit organizations.
- Connecting the public to privately held conserved lands: Consultants were encouraged to provide increased opportunities to connect participants with Ag + Open Space-conserved lands that are privately owned and managed. Ag + Open Space will be an active partner in building relationships with landowners to increase the breadth of properties visited by these programs.

Ag + Open Space proposes to enter into nine service agreements (see Attachments) for these services totaling $2,220,000 covering three years ending on June 30, 2029, with an option to extend for two additional one-year periods. Partners will receive payment for services on a monthly reimbursement basis, after work is satisfactorily completed.
All nine of the organizations have unique strengths:

- California Indian Museum & Cultural Center

With over a 30-year history, the California Indian Museum & Cultural Center has effectively delivered community and youth education programs that engage Native people. They also design and deliver culturally grounded field trips, summer camps, and guided outings of tribal ancestral lands in Sonoma County.

- Friends of the Petaluma River: This partnership helps increase our youth education presence in Petaluma, is well aligned with local and state science standards, and includes field-based projects including water quality testing, habitat monitoring, and other stewardship activities. Programs are offered broadly throughout Petaluma City Schools, with an active focus on serving Title 1 Schools.
- Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation: The Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation offers programs that are focused specifically on the Laguna de Santa Rosa ecosystem, and has an excellent volunteer program

that is utilized to offer both elementary school programs and public outings.

- **LandPaths:** LandPaths specializes in culturally competent programming and diverse outreach and engagement, and their renowned outings and elementary school programs are geographically and thematically diverse.
- **Point Blue Conservation Science:** Through their 8-week Community College Conservation Internship program for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color community college students, Point Blue Conservation Science will introduce the next generation of environmental land stewards to both Ag + Open Space and our conserved properties.
- **City of Cotati through its subcontractor, Sandy Loam:** This partnership will help expand programs at Veronda-Falletti Ranch, which are aimed at better serving people with increased care needs, such as neurodiverse individuals and older adults. Serving these audiences directly will be new for Ag + Open Space, helping to broaden and deepen our community relationships.
- **Sonoma Ecology Center:** Sonoma Ecology Center leads an impactful youth workforce development program, Enviroleaders, and much of their programming focuses on Sonoma Valley with culturally diverse and inclusive programs. This partnership also includes supporting their elementary school programs that connect students with natural sciences and conserved lands through in-class visits and field trips.
- **Sonoma Land Trust:** This partnership expands our reach to the Baylands in the southern part of the county. Through public outings, educational field trips, and virtual programming, Sonoma Land Trust is a strong partner in messaging about climate change and the importance of local natural resources and ecosystems.
- **Sonoma Resource Conservation District:** The Sonoma Resource Conservation District is a leader in connecting communities with our local agricultural heritage and food systems, providing career pathways for teens to the farming industry, and demonstrating the nexus between agriculture and natural resource conservation.

Competitive Selection Process

Ag + Open Space conducted a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to identify and screen qualified contractors to provide the services described above. The RFP was sent to approximately 489 organizations and advertised on the Ag + Open Space website and the County Purchasing website. A total of 12 organizations submitted proposals in response to this RFP. Using objective selection criteria, an evaluation committee composed of internal staff and

Local Preference, Local Experience

All the selected firms have locations in Sonoma County and have significant experience working in the Sonoma County community.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

Racial Equity:

N/A

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No.

Prior Board Actions:
N/A

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 25-26 Adopted	FY 26-27 Projected	FY 27-28 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	$700,000	$740,000	$780,000
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	**$700,000**	**$740,000**	**$780,000**
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other	$700,000	$740,000	$780,000
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources	**$700,000**	**$740,000**	**$780,000**

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:
Ag + Open Space has adequate appropriations in the FY 26-27 budget from Measure F sales tax revenue and will allocate funds as needed for future years' budgets.

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):
N/A

Attachments:
1. Agreement with California Indian Museum & Cultural Center
2. Agreement with Friends of the Petaluma River
3. Agreement with Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation
4. Agreement with LandPaths
5. Agreement with Point Blue Conservation Science
6. Agreement with City of Cotati (subcontractor Sandy Loam)
7. Agreement with Sonoma Ecology Center
8. Agreement with the Sonoma Land Trust
9. Agreement with the Sonoma Resource Conservation District

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:
N/A