LOS ANGELES COUNTY REGIONAL PARK AND OPEN SPACE DISTRICT — MEASURE A

Measure A Implementation

Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District

Summary Meeting Notes
Steering Committee Meeting #3
June 29, 2017 9:30 am – 12:00 pm

Steering Committee Members in Attendance:

Manal Aboelata	Esther Feldman	Sandra McNeill
Greg Alaniz	Hugo Garcia	Delia Morales
Jean Armbruster	Karen Ginsberg	Sussy Nemer
Jean Beesley	Mark Glassock	Bonnie Nikolai
John Bwarie	Lacey Johnson	Dilia Ortega
Scott Chan	John Johns	Max Podemski
Maria Chong-Castillo	Tori Kjer	Stefan Popescu
Cheryl Davis	Kim Lamorie	Bruce Saito
Reuben De Leon	Amy Lethbridge	Keri Smith
Reyna Diaz	Clement Lau	Brian Stiger
Hugo Enciso	Amy Lethbridge	Stephanie Stone
Lylwyn Esangga	Linda Lowry	
Belinda Faustinos	Norma Martinez	

Alternate Members in Attendance: Nicole Jones, Clement Lau, Cara Meyer, Katy Young, Zachia Nazarzai

RPOSD Staff in Attendance: Dwayne Case, Rocio Diaz, LaTrina Hancock, Agie Jordan, Sara Keating, Arcy Navarette, Rigoberto Sanchez, Sok Tay, Ani Yeghiyan
PlaceWorks Staff in Attendance:
David Early, C.C. LaGrange, Jessica Wuyek, Jasmine Williams

Agenda Item: Competitive Grants Overview

1. *Question:* How will the allocation, in terms of Category 3 and 4, to DBH and DPR be administered and what is the process?
   Response: You can think of them as annual allocations, and they will be administered in a manner similar to the Category 1 and 2 allocations.

2. *Question:* What is the definition of a regional facility and where does it come from?
   Response: From the Measure A language. It means facilities with unique countywide significance of 100 contiguous acres.

3. *Question:* How will they know whether or not they're applying to Category 3 or Category 4?
   Response: Applicants won't need to specify which category they're applying to. They will just choose "recreation access" or "general" and RPOSD will decide which category the funds will come from.

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4. ***Question:*** Where do community gardens fit?
   Response: Let's take that as a comment and we'll discuss where specific projects fit at the October meeting.

***A**genda Item: Proposed Grant Policies (Funds for Planning & Design)*

1. ***Comment Summary:*** There should be funds for planning and design. The goal of Measure A is to get projects built and if there aren't funds for planning and design, things can't get built. From a project cost basis, we can assume 25% (floor) of the construction cost for planning and design, but that wouldn't including permitting. A separate grant should be set up just for planning and design because it's a critical piece of knowing what project costs will be. Planning and design should be able to be included in any of the grant programs, but there should also be a small amount of funds specifically for planning and design. It is very important to have funding for planning and design so low-income communities can compete later in the construction phase. There is a time when you need background planning, and separate funding to do that would have a big impact on getting a project moving.

2. ***Comment Summary:*** Funds should not be bifurcated into a separate "bucket." The biggest concern is that the planning and design money is used and then they can't get funds to implement. In that scenario, the money was wasted on planning and design. Not supportive of separate buckets. Cities have people in-house to help stretch and leverage funding for in-house services for planning and design. Perhaps put an amount or value that could be used for planning and design within each grant.

3. ***Summary Response:*** Everyone agrees that planning and design is important, expensive, and a good idea. We should set it at 25-30%. But we don't all agree that it should be a separate bucket of funds.

Agenda Item: Proposed Grant Policies (Award Size)

1. ***Comment:*** In general, there should be a minimum and maximum for award sizes, but these maximums and minimums may need to vary by agency/organization size or by making a distinction between high-need and low-need. For example, it might be helpful to a small city to cover the entire cost vs. a larger entity with other funds available. Not sure how this would be set up or how it would work.

2. ***Comment:*** The max of $7 million excludes some projects that may not have any other funding source, especially in unincorporated areas.
   Response: County DPR does get an annual allocation that can help fund projects in unincorporated communities, but this does present a barrier. Perhaps, giving some leeway for high-need areas or unincorporated areas could be considered. Fifteen percent of the projects identified in the Needs Assessment would be excluded using the $7 million maximum, and would need to get funds from other sources as well.

3. ***Comment:*** The maximum is too high, as it's conceivable that only one or two grants would be funded from any category with these maximum. It isn't a lot of money.
   Response: Yes, if the max is too high the money could be used up in one place and fewer projects would be funded. It is likely that an awards committee will not approve the money going to one area because it would then diminish the amount given to other areas.

4. *Question:* When you looked at the projects in the $5 million to $7 million range, do you know if those projects were in high-need areas?
   Response: No, we did not analyze if bumping the maximum to $7 million resulted in more projects from high need areas being completely funded.

5. *Comment:* There is a concern about the minimum for planning/construction in smaller communities. In the San Fernando Valley, small agencies could easily use much smaller grants, for example a $15,000 planning grants. It might be better to have a smaller micro- grant to help small agencies and organizations.

6. *Summary Response:* Everyone agrees that there should be minimum and maximum award amounts, but there are some questions about what the minimums and maximums should be.

Agenda Item: Proposed Grant Policies (Eligible Agencies)

1. *Comment:* For schools with a joint use agreement, indoor and outdoor distinction seems like a huge barrier. Typically, outdoor facilities are fine. The agreement must stipulate that public use must be substantial, not just limited hours. There is room for abuse.

2. *Question:* What about joint use between a school and non-profit?
   Response: Non-Profits are okay. It can be either a public agency or a non-profit.

3. *Comment:* For non-profit organizations, there should be a letter, but no governing agency is going to go into an agreement without available funds. Perhaps structuring a letter that says, "If you get this grant we are willing to work with you."
   Response: Noted.

4. *Comment:* Nonprofit eligibility applies to planning and design because in some circumstances, non-profits can't get permission from every land owner and need funds to develop a plan to then pitch to the city. A nonprofit wanting to lead a project without partnership with agency would not have a letter then.
   Response: Yes, non-profit agencies would most likely be eligible for planning and design funds. Perhaps a non-profit would still need a letter from the agency stating that the agency wants to work with the non-profit on their study, or will consider the results of the study.

5. *Comment:* It is important for non-profit organizations to not have too many limitations because the goal is to support the nonprofit to assist disadvantaged communities (Ex. Pacoima Beautiful). The types of agencies listed is too restrictive. Maybe a CBO doesn't have a mission related to parks, but wants to expand into it.
   Response: Community empowerment could be added to the list, or category could be broader

6. *Comment:* We're getting into eligible projects versus eligible agencies. Agencies shouldn't have any barriers to be eligible.

7. **Question:** If a local city is an operating entity for a state agency, are they eligible?
   Response: Yes.

8. *Comment*: Veterans group should be in this.
   Response: Yes, noted.

Agenda Item: Proposed Grant Policies (Qualifying Expenses)

1. ***Question:*** Which pie piece does planning and design fit into?
Response: We don't know yet.

2. ***Comment:*** 5% for community engagement should be the minimum amount. 5% seems arbitrary.
Response: All projects should be doing community outreach. Bonding regulations stipulate that soft costs cannot be more that 30% of the total cost, which drives the 25% and 5% numbers. Admin costs is probably a maximum number and engagement is probably a minimum.

3. ***Question:*** Can community engagement be incorporated into administrative? Some communities may not need to spend the 5% for community engagement, if they have other funding sources for engagement, in which case a 30% cluster would work with the stipulation that some community engagement should occur.
Response: Noted. It seems that combining the two could work as long as community engagement is still required.

4. ***Comment:*** For the needs assessment, $2500 was given and we struggled to find a way to spend that money and that money might get wasted. Requiring certain levels of engagement, but not the actual funds that must be spent could be helpful.

5. ***Comment:*** Where does staff time fall?
Response: In the administration portion of the expenses.

6. ***Comment:*** Be mindful of where agency engagement fits in, there are different kind of community engagement. Perhaps developing a definition of community engagement that captures both local community and agency engagement would be helpful, as many projects require coordination and engagement with many agencies.

Agenda Item: Proposed Grant Policies (Pre-Application Process)

1. ***Question:*** Is the goal to make the administrative process less burdensome or to help agencies?
Response: Both.

2. ***Comment Summary:*** Approach 2 is reasonable and balanced. Providing responses to frequently asked questions to the entire group of applicants is a good idea. There should be a note about a referral mechanism for agencies needing technical assistance. Don't overcomplicate the technical assistance process, but make sure applicants learn and build capacity. Look at this process to give technical assistance to organizations that don't have the experience so they at least go through the process and understand that. Some hybrid of approach 2 and 3 would be good to help applicants with technical assistance needs. Approach 2 and 3 are more in line with equity and high need areas.

3. ***Comment Summary:*** There is an advantage to nonprofit organizations having a more formal LOI process because organizations don't want to expend resources on a lengthy process and not have it amount to anything. There is logic to a formal LOI process, but maybe a different process for different types of grants. LOI for large grants proves capacity and smaller grants can have an informal process. Formal letters saves trouble of large number of applicants, especially for larger grants.

Response: SGC uses a slightly informal process, but staff will give applicants very candid advice on their chances of winning.

4. *Question:* For the pre-application process, what is in place to increase readiness?
   Response: We'll address that in the summer at the workshops
   Comment: I want to be sure to discuss this again in the summer so we can consider technical assistance, equity, and the overall process.

5. *Comment:* The next few topics of today's meeting need to be influenced by technical assistance. We need to include other grantors who have experience and can contribute. We should get their input and form a technical group of 10-12 grant makers who can provide expertise.
   Response: It might be good to go to the technical group and not let them make decisions, but ask for their advice on how to make this effective.

Agenda Item: Proposed Grant Policies (Grant Award Selection Committees)

1. *Comment Summary:* Applications need to be reviewed in the same way each time. The main concern should be consistency and fairness. Don't have different people making decisions at different times. Decision makers need to be isolated from the agency.
   Response: The deciders might be staff from agency, but a second body could potentially advise.

2. *Question:* Do recommendations require approval by the board?
   Response: Yes, they do require approval. Precedent is to go to board for every allocation, but in the future the board would prefer to get this information in a consolidated manner. This process needs to be confirmed.

3. *Question:* How does RPOSD currently evaluate competitive grants from Prop A?
   Response: Internal staff from RPOSD evaluates the applications.
   Question: Has that worked well for you?
   Response: Certainly. We've done competitive grants and it went well.

4. *Comment:* Maybe there could be an advisory committee that takes RPOSD staff recommendations and makes the final recommendation to the Board. Alternatively, there could be an advisory committee that makes recommendations to RPOSD staff, but staff makes the final determinations.

5. *Comment Summary:* A rep from the Board office would have to be on the committee. Outreach and engagement expert such as a non-profit is recommended since it is a key component across the board. Recruiting people with in-depth understanding of high-need areas as well as different kinds of expertise is important. Adding foundations or grant makers would be helpful because they're used to reviewing applications and understand if the project will work well. Committee needs geographical diversity to include incorporated and unincorporated areas, racially and ethnically different areas, and economically diverse areas.

6. *Comment:* If committee members rotate, it's important that the rotation doesn't happen too frequently. You can't rotate terms too often because there is a learning curve fors new committee members.
   Response: The flip side is that you don't want people to stick around for 30 years. Perhaps the

rotations can occur in shifts so there are always experienced people on the committee, with a third of the committee rotating off every time a rotation occurs.

7. *Comment:* Maybe having two groups could be less efficient. It should be one committee, not a deciding committee and an advisory committee, it complicates it too much.

8. *Vote:* Two Options
   Option 1 (13-15; yes): A non-staff advisory committee makes a set of recommendations, with RPOSD staff making the ultimate decisions.
   Option 2 (4; yes): One committee of predominately non-RPOSD staff and experts, make the ultimate decisions with RPOSD staff advice.

9. *Comment:* Perhaps publishing the decision-making process publicly can help people learn from the scoring and improve their future applications.

10. *Question:* Would high-need areas be part of the oversight committee?
    Response: Most likely.

Agenda Item: Proposed Grant Policies (Grant Evaluation Criteria)

1. *Comment:* Water conservation measures should be more about sustainability and multi-benefit projects.

2. *Comment:* Level of needs says, "areas not participating in parks assessment can't get points". Needs assessment should be a guide, but should not limit points. The Parks Needs Assessment may be out of date and not reflective of current need.
   Response: Measure A requires the updating of the Needs Assessment so it won't be out of date. There are only two communities who elected not to engage in the needs assessment. Those cities were told that by not participating, they wouldn't be eligible and they agreed. Neither city currently contains public parks. If either city wants to participate in future updates to the Needs Assessment, they will be able to do so.

3. *Comment Summary:* Each criterion needs much more discussion. Only one is tied to the needs assessment. Need is important, but we should look at other criteria to identify level of need. We need to get more specific. Certain facilities and amenities weren't assessed in the needs assessment and so the level of need isn't entirely accurate. It is vitally important that we maintain connection to needs assessment and level of points should connect.

4. **Comment Summary:** Organizational capacity should not be a category because it could limit organizations interested in growing their capacity with the grant. It's hard to penalize agencies with limited capacity. The grant should help them elevate to that level of better capacity. They should just have to prove strong track record. Create some form of training or workshop to help cities or non-profits apply for grants. Offer training or workshops to increase capacity so they're less likely to be impacted negatively by this criterion.

5. *Comment Summary:* Criterion 4 needs to dig deeper and get more specific about engagement. Engagement should be evaluated meaningfully and give bonus point to those with more meaningful involvement versus superficial engagement.

6. *Comment:* A few criteria are missing: multiple benefits, water supply & climate change are not here, also nature and eco-based approaches. Consider supporting regional-serving projects that serve high need areas even if they're not in a high need areas. We don't want to end up with green dots that don't connect so you need these regional projects.

7. *Comment:* Scoring criteria should be set up so that every round a certain percent of funds are going to high-need areas. TCC program stipulates that it only goes to top 5% areas. Certain funds should go directly to areas of high-need.

8. *Comment Summary:* Level of need should look at proportionality, in which case, idea of bonus points is a good one. Segregating and putting money aside doesn't inform quality projects and becomes burdensome. It's burdensome to segregate funds and not good precedent. We don't want people rushed into seeking or spending funds.

9. *Vote:* Two Options that need more discussion
   Option 1 (10; Yes): Points but not a minimum amount of dollars.
   Option 2 (10; No): Minimum amount of money for high need areas.

10. *Comment:* On public safety, it would be helpful to broaden language to include places that promote peace. On health and wellness, it should include public potable water and healthy vending. Also, creative space making should include local artists.

11. *Comment:* I support the idea of adding criterion for regional value. I agree that on criterion 1, proportionality of how scoring would work and weighting is important. I like the idea of bonus points.

Agenda Item: Proposed Grant Policies (Grant Cycles)

1. *Comment:* Multiple breakdowns of categories will make it difficult for a low-income community to win against a high-income community. There should not be a judgment on how they present their project. Applications shouldn't compete against other applications, should only compete against the RFP.
   Response: Only apply to one of the 5 categories without any cycle?
   Comment: Not sure.

2. *Comment Summary:* Strong recommendation for staying at the higher-level, which still allows comparison of like-type projects. Difficult to compare large-cost project to small-cost. Like-type budget projects should maybe be compared against each other instead. Simplify, make them sooner and more often. Some defined buckets and a grants calendar will help agencies plan and budget. Be careful about diluting the projects and making it too administratively complicated.

3. *Comment:* Competitive programs are important because this is where creativity happens and innovation so we want to encourage competition without restricting the types of applications too much. Maybe not limit it to every 5 years. Less than 2 years could be too restrictive. I am presuming bonding will buffer the pot.

4. *Comment Summary:* Planning and micro grants categories would help, but need to be simple. There could be value for neighborhood councils to build their way into park buildings. Perhaps is there is left over money it could be micro-granted or rolled over.

5. **Question:** Will we have discussion about eligible projects?
   Response: Yes, since you asked. The list is clear about eligible projects from the Measure. We will put together in a more formal list to make sure it's clearer.

6. **Summary Response:** There is consensus that the first approach is best, without any themes. The fewer the pots, larger the pot, the better. Buckets should be broad and projects will compete to allow for innovation. Grants should be available on an annual or biannual basis. Everyone just wants cost brackets added.

Agenda Item: Park Funding 102 Meeting

1. **Question:** How will the meetings be advertised, who do you want there?
   Response: On the website and RPOSD mailing list. We want public agencies and grant-seeking organizations.

2. **Comment:** For outreach to nonprofits, can we see the mailing list?
   Response: Yes, we will send the list to everyone. We can also send an announcement to you so you can forward to any organizations you think should be there.

Public Comment

1. **Comment:** The categories should have a regular design process for the taxes and funds that go into this. The County should structure things like Metro. Make sure projects reflect what people want. Putting greens and bike lanes are missing.

2. **Question:** In relation to public health, will there be a searchable database for projects? Right now, they're in pdf form and we can't search by project type. Will project lists be updated?
   Response: Yes, and yes. What's on the web is projects identified as needed projects from the Needs Assessment, but they are not necessarily what will be funded or what communities will be applying for. Those projects won't go into the database, but the projects funded through Measure A will be posted publicly and interactively. RPOSD is currently exploring technology that will allow these functions.

3. **Question:** How many people plan to attend summer workshops?
   Response: The majority of the group expressed their intent to attend.

4. **Comment:** Can we put open space and open space acquisition on the agenda? We haven't talked about it.
   Response: Open space projects will be included in the list of eligible projects for the October meeting. We can discuss more specific concerns as well.

Meeting Adjourned.