



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-26-70  
Meeting 26-15  
May 27, 2026

## SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA ITEM 1

### AGENDA ITEM

Consideration of Grant Awards for the 2025 Cycle of the Grantmaking Program

#### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

(7) *den*

As reviewed and affirmed by the Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs Committee, approve the list of recommended grant awards for the 2025 Cycle of the Grantmaking Program, for a total of \$313,983.

#### SUMMARY

In September 2025, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) announced the availability of \$300,000 in funding through the 2025 Grantmaking Program grant round. Organizations were invited to submit proposals for projects up to \$60,000 under 3 priority areas, as outlined in the District's Grantmaking Board Policy 3.10: 1) Access, Interpretation, and Education; 2) Network and Partnership Support; and 3) Applied Science. The District received a total of 37 pre-proposals, totaling \$1,718,910 in funding requests. The review committee advanced 26 of the 37 pre-proposals for further consideration, with a total of \$1,192,841 in funding requests, and are recommending funding seven proposals.

As reviewed and affirmed by the Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs Committee (LFPAC) in April 2026, the General Manager recommends approving the proposed seven grant awards for the 2025 Grantmaking Program, for a total of \$313,983. Following Board of Directors (Board) approval, staff would work with grantees to finalize grant agreements by the summer of 2026. Grantees will have up to 2 years to complete the projects following the execution of grant agreements.

#### DISCUSSION

##### *Background*

Prior to establishing the Grantmaking Program, from 2007 to 2017, the District supported academic research on District lands through its Resource Management Grant Program. At that time, a select number of small grants were provided to local researchers to fund work that could further the District's mission, enhance public education, and advance the scientific understanding of natural processes. These small grants were also a means for strengthening local partnerships with researchers.

On February 28, 2018, with the desire to establish a more robust and formal grant program to expand its level of impact, the Board approved Board Policy 3.10, *District Grantmaking Program* ([R-18-19, meeting minutes](#)). More specifically, the purpose of the Grantmaking Program is to: a) support projects that further the District’s mission; b) build the capacity of academic and nonprofit institutions to sustain and grow the conservation field; and c) facilitate the District’s mission and work by building and strengthening partnerships. The Grantmaking Program effectively continues, with its now fourth (2025) grantmaking cycle.

The last round of grants (2023) was approved by the Board on December 13, 2023, which resulting in the funding of five projects with a combined allocation of \$249,769 ([R-23-151, meeting minutes](#)). To date, two of the five 2023 grantee projects have been completed and have fully expended their grant. Grants staff continue to monitor the progress of the remaining three grantee projects from the 2023 grant round, making project modifications as needed. Below is a table of all Grant Awards per cycle.

Cycle Year	Number of Grantees	Total Amount Funded
2019	7	\$250,000
2021	10	\$341,997
2023	5	\$249,769

In the fall of 2024, the Grants Program staff conducted a strategic review of the Grantmaking Program, in alignment with Board Policy 3.10. Four updates to this Board Policy were recommended to LFPAC in July 2025 ([R-25-98, meeting minutes](#)) and subsequently approved by the Board in August 2025 ([R-25-114 meeting minutes](#)):

- Increase the Grantmaking Program award budget from \$250,000 to \$300,000; increase the maximum grant award size in Tier 1 from \$25,000 to \$30,000 and Tier 2 from \$50,000 to \$60,000
- Limit the reimbursement period to two years for a biennial cycle
- Update the Funding Priority descriptions
- Support Early-Stage and Grassroots Initiatives

### ***2025 Grantmaking Program Cycle***

In 2025, the Grantmaking Program issued a request for proposals (RFP) to initiate the next grant cycle (Attachment 1), inviting applicants to submit proposals in alignment with one of the three funding priorities: (1) Access, Interpretation, and Education (AIE), (2) Network and Partnership Support (NPS), and (3) Applied Science (AS) (refer to Attachment 2 for full descriptions). Proposals needed to align with two new conditions consistent with the updates to Board Policy 3.10. The first condition specifies that funding approvals will only be considered for certain grassroots organizations and/or early-stage initiatives. Eligible grassroots organizations are those with assets minus the value of non-liquid assets (e.g., land, building and equipment) of \$1.2 million or less. Early-stage initiatives refer to the maturation of the proposed project or program. The second new condition specifies that beneficiaries and/or participants of funded projects or programs must be located within the District’s jurisdiction.

### *Solicitation and selection process*

Building on previous efforts, the Grantmaking Program has continued to improve the equitability of the solicitation processes, guided by the principles of Trust Based Philanthropy. Simplifying and streamlining paperwork shaped this cycle's pre and full proposal solicitation processes. The pre-proposal stage is required for all Tier 1 and Tier 2 applicants, while full proposals are required for Tier 2 applicants. This improvement reflects our effort to reduce the administrative burden on smaller-resourced organizations and/or on lower-budgeted projects. It also reduces the demands on proposal reviewers by limiting the amount of documentation for review.

The 2025 Grantmaking Program Request for Proposals (RFP) was released in September 2025 and distributed to 430 individuals and stakeholder groups via the District's website, e-newsletter, press release, and interested party lists. A language accommodation statement in Spanish was included on all public notices. Grants staff hosted a non-mandatory public webinar and informational session via Microsoft Teams on October 13, which was attended by 29 individuals from various organizations. The recording was posted on the website. Eight consultation meetings were held with potential applicants prior to the pre-proposal submission deadline of October 31, 2025. To date, there have been no requests for Spanish or other language translations.

The District received 37 pre-proposals, (27 AIE, 6 NPS, and 4 AS) for a total of \$1,718,910, with most requesting funding at the Tier 2 level (up to \$60,000) compared to the Tier 1 level (up to \$30,000). Grants staff conducted an initial administrative review to ensure applicants and pre-proposals were eligible under the solicitation guidelines. Subsequently, the 9-person internal review committee, which consisted of three Grants Program staff and representatives each from the Natural Resources, Planning, Public Affairs and Visitor Services Departments, evaluated and scored each of the pre-proposals based on the following criteria:

- Alignment with the District's mission, strategic plan goals, and funding priority
- Alignment with being a grassroots organization and/or an early-stage initiative
- Project goals, objectives and outcomes
- Equitable engagement
- Grant Request Budget
- Applied Science Applicants Only: Timely Relevance to Stewardship Decision-making

The full proposal included two additional evaluation criteria:

- Organizational Capacity
- Project Budget

In alignment with the Grants Program's equitability interests, and to encourage organizations with limited organizational capacity to apply, applicants were invited to indicate any interest in receiving non-financial 'subject matter expert' (SME) support from Grants, Public Affairs, Land Stewardship & Trails, GIS, and/or Natural Resources. The application instructed that fulfilling the request was not guaranteed and based on staffing capacity. There were 17 applicants requesting a SME at the pre-proposal stage. The requests did not influence the

scoring except when the requested SME support was *required* to carry out the project. Five of the 7 proposals being recommended included SME support request.

Review committee members individually scored the pre-proposals, with a maximum score of 90 for AIE and NPS proposals, and 100 for AS proposals. Each reviewer's score was converted to a percentage and proposals with a score of 80% or higher moved forward. The committee advanced 27 of the pre-proposals (19 AIE proposals, 6 NPS proposals, and 2 AS proposals) totaling \$1,192,841. Of these 27 pre-proposals, 10 were requesting funding at a Tier 1 level and 17 at a Tier 2 level. Of the 17 Tier 2 applicants invited to submit a full proposal, 16 of them completed their submissions.

For Tier 2 proposals, the pre-proposal scores plus full proposal scores were converted to reach a new maximum scope and percentage. The review committee convened to discuss all Tier 1 and Tier 2 proposals with scores of 80% or higher within each Funding Priority Area (Attachment 3). While scoring criteria guidelines informed the assessment, each reviewer score reflected each individual reviewer interpretation and knowledge of the topic, resulting in variations with outliers in several instances. The review committee's discussions were important as they called attention to aspects of a proposal that may not have been identified or well understood by other reviewers. The discussions ensured that final recommendations were thoughtful, equitable, and grounded both in quantitative scoring and qualitative judgment, all critical to reaching consensus.

### ***Proposed awards***

Based on the scoring criteria, the review committee discussions, and the goals set forth in Board Policy 3.10, the General Manager recommends funding 7 grant proposals for a total of \$313,983, as shown in the table below. Summaries of the recommended grant proposals are included in Attachment 4.

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Funding Priority Category</b>	<b>Tier</b>	<b>Total requested</b>	<b>Proposed award</b>
Hidden Villa	Access, Interpretation and Education	1	\$29,150	\$29,150
The HEAL Project	Access, Interpretation and Education	2	\$59,708	\$59,708
Arriba South Coast	Network and Partnership Support	1	\$29,040	\$29,040
Muwekma Ohlone Preservation Foundation	Network and Partnership Support	2	\$55,000	\$51,000*
Grassroots Ecology	Network and Partnership Support	2	\$59,550	\$59,550
University of California, Santa Cruz	Applied Science	1	\$29,930	\$29,930
University of Nevada, Reno	Applied Science	2	\$55,605	\$55,605
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$317,983</b>	<b>\$313,983</b>

\* *Muwekma Ohlone Preservation Foundation proposal included the development of a GIS*

*database. The review committee determined that more clarity was needed for that scope of work and did not recommend funding the database. The RFP notes that partial funding is an option.*

Recommending these 7 projects reflects the objective of issuing grant awards in every funding priority category. As shown in the table below, if the recommendation is approved, this round will reflect the first time since 2019 that all 3 funding priority categories have again been represented.

Awards Made by Funding Priority Area Across 4 Award Cycles

Funding Priority Area	2019	2021	2023	2025 (recommended)	Total Awards	% of Total Awards
AIE	4	6	3	2	15	52%
AS	2	4	-	2	8	28%
NPS	1	-	2	3	6	21%
TOTAL	7	10	5	7	29	100%

### **Grant administration**

Grants Program staff will administer grant agreements and monitor grantee progress and may include a representative from another department to provide subject matter expertise (SME) or other capacity-building support to the grantees. Grantees are required to submit progress reports with each payment request. Grantees may also be required to identify the District during public announcements and in printed or web-based public materials relating to the project. Grantees must request a District logo file and acknowledgment guidance prior to use. Grantees may also be invited present to the Board and/or staff at the completion of their grant agreement.

### **Review by the Legislative Funding and Public Affairs Committee (LFPAC)**

Grants staff presented the recommendations to LFPAC on April 21, 2026 (Attachment 5: R-26-46, draft meeting minutes). LFPAC approved the recommendations with three requests for additional detail to be provided to the full Board as part of this report:

1. Include a reference map showing the locations of the beneficiaries and/or participants of the recommended programs/projects by ward (Attachment 6). This is the first time this data has been made available.
2. Include a detailed narrative with Attachment 3 on the decision-making process that led to the final set of recommendations.
3. Include information on the key rationale behind the final recommendations in the Recommended Project Summaries (Attachment 4).

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The recommended action has no fiscal impact for Fiscal Year 2025-26 (FY26). The FY27 proposed budget includes sufficient funds to cover the estimated grantee reimbursements.

## PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

- February 2018: The Board approved Board Policy 3.10 – *District Grantmaking Program* as a Replacement to the Resource Management Grant Program. ([R-18-19, meeting minutes](#))
- December 2023: The Board approved the recommended grant awards for 2023 Grantmaking Program ([R-23-151 meeting minutes](#))
- July 2025: LFPAC reviewed the recommended updates to the Board Policy 3.10: District Grantmaking Program. ([R-21-172, meeting minutes](#))
- August 2025: The Board approved the recommended updates to Board Policy 3.10: District Grantmaking Program. ([R-25-114, meeting minutes](#))
- April 2026: LFPAC reviewed the recommended grant awards and approved, with updates to attachments (Attachment 5: R-26-46, see draft meeting minutes as attachment)

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. In addition, notice was provided to the Grants Interested Parties list, which includes all 2025 cycle proposers.

## CEQA COMPLIANCE

The seven proposals recommended for funding are not considered projects under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

## NEXT STEPS

Pending Board approval of the proposed awards, Grants staff will work with each of the grantees to execute a total of up to seven grant agreements by summer of 2026 and begin monitoring the progress of grantee projects. Grantee projects will be completed no later than two years after the grant agreement execution date. Grants staff will stay in contact with the new grantees during the grant period to ensure that projects are on time and provide any other support.

### Attachments

1. 2025 Grantmaking Program Request for Proposals
2. Funding Priority Descriptions
3. Table of Top Ranked Applicants
4. Recommended Project Summaries
5. April 21, 2026 Draft LFPAC Minutes
6. Beneficiaries/Participants by Ward

Responsible Department Head:

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# Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District 2025 Grantmaking Program Request for Proposals



RFP released: September 9, 2025

Pre-proposals due: October 31, 2025 by 5 p.m.

Full proposals by invitation due: January 30, 2026 by 5 p.m.

**Questions? Contact:**

Grants Program team at [grants@openspace.org](mailto:grants@openspace.org) or (650) 625-6507

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

5050 El Camino Real, Los Altos, CA 94022

*Para obtener ayuda en español sobre esta solicitud de becas, favor de contactarnos por correo electrónico: [grants@openspace.org](mailto:grants@openspace.org) o por teléfono: (650) 691-1200*

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# Background

## Who We Are

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen) is an independent special district in the San Francisco Bay Area that has preserved a regional greenbelt system of nearly 70,000 acres of public land and manages 26 open space preserves. These diverse and scenic landscapes, from bay wetlands to redwood forests and coastal grasslands, host an incredible diversity of life, making our region one of the world's biodiversity hotspots.

Midpen preserves have long and complex histories of human use prior to becoming public open space. We actively manage the land and waterways to restore their health and function, helping our local ecosystem become more resilient in a time of climate change. By caring for the land, the land in turn takes care of us, providing tangible and intangible benefits like clean air and water, flood protection, carbon sequestration, and the opportunity for restorative experiences in nature.

On the San Mateo County Coast, where local agricultural roots run deep, our mission also includes preserving viable working lands. We partner with local ranchers to use conservation grazing as a land management tool for enhancing native coastal grasslands and providing wildland fire protection.

Midpen preserves are free and open to the public daily, providing an extensive trail network for ecologically sensitive recreation. Our programming connects people to nature through enriched experiences, including environmental interpretation, docent-led activities, and volunteer opportunities.

By preserving, restoring, and providing access to our region's iconic, cultural, working, and scenic landscapes, Midpen lands offer us opportunities for health, climate change resilience and refuge.

## Mission Statement

*To acquire and preserve a regional greenbelt of open space land in perpetuity, protect and restore the natural environment, and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.*

## Coastside Protection Mission Statement

*To acquire and preserve in perpetuity open space land and agricultural land of regional significance, protect and restore the natural environment, preserve rural character, encourage viable agricultural use of land resources, and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.*

## Funding Opportunity

### Purpose and Impact

Midpen's grant making program is guided by its purpose and a newly-defined intended impact.

**Purpose:** The purposes of Midpen's grant making program are to:

1. Support projects that further Midpen's mission
2. Build the capacity of academic and nonprofit institutions in order to sustain and grow the conservation field; and
3. Facilitate Midpen's mission and work by building and strengthening partnerships.
  - (a) Midpen's organizational [Goal 3/Objective 2](#) refers to building and strengthening partnerships as a diversity, equity and inclusion strategy, and Midpen's [DEI webpage](#) identifies the grant making program as one strategy to help achieve this.

**Impact:** Midpen seeks to invest in opportunities where a modest grant can be most impactful and has identified two areas most likely to have such results: 1) grassroots organizations, and 2) early-stage initiatives.

1. Grassroots:

*Goals:* Focusing on grassroots organizations strongly advances Midpen's stated purpose of building capacity through its grantmaking. It ensures equitable access to funding by reaching lower-resourced organizations with more limited capacity to fundraise. This also increases opportunities for Midpen to provide "support beyond the check" and offer other ways to be in partnership with a grantee, which aligns with the stated purpose to strengthen partnerships and the guiding principle that emphasizes partnership opportunities. Non-monetary partnership considerations include technical assistance and access to meeting facilities.

*Definition:* Grassroots refers to an organization with net assets minus the value of land, building and equipment totaling \$1.2 million or less. This information is found on the organization's 990 form. If Form 990-EZ is used, the organization is considered grassroots. If the applicant is a fiscally-sponsored initiative, it is considered grassroots.

*Projects Eligible:* Ongoing/existing program or project or an early-stage initiative (defined below)

2. Early-stage:

*Goals:* Focusing on early-stage initiatives refers to support for projects and programs launching a new direction or new idea. By helping a grantee develop the capacity and demonstrate results for an early-stage initiative, it is anticipated that the funded project would be more competitive for future, larger funding opportunities.

*Definition:* Early stage refers to the maturation of the proposed project or program.

*Projects Eligible:* Midpen is interested in receiving proposals for a program or project that aligns with one or more of the following early-stage criteria:

## Attachment 1

1. A new direction for an existing project/program (e.g. piloting a new curriculum; conducting new research based on findings from prior research)
2. A new constituency to be served by an existing project or program
3. A new location from where to conduct an existing project or program
4. A new project or program

### Eligible Project Summary:

	<b>Early-Stage Project</b>	<b>Existing/Ongoing Project</b>
<b>Grassroots Organization</b>	Eligible	Eligible
<b>Large Organization</b>	Eligible	Not Eligible

This eligibility structure ensures both grassroots and larger organizations can access support for early-stage work, while ongoing support for established projects is reserved for grassroots groups, reinforcing the focus on capacity building and equity.

### Available Funding

A total of \$300,000 in funding is available this cycle.

### Priorities

As in previous cycles, proposals are welcomed in three funding priorities, detailed below.

- Access, Interpretation, and Education
- Network and Partnership Support
- Applied Science

### Tiers

As in previous cycles, grants are made at two levels, Tier 1 and Tier 2. New this year, Tier 1 applicants are only required to submit a pre-proposal. Tier 2 applicants submit a pre-proposal and, if invited, a full proposal. Also new this year are higher maximum awards for each tier.

- Tier 1: Up to \$30,000; and
- Tier 2: From \$30,001 to \$60,000

Grantmaking Program awards from prior Grantmaking Program grant rounds can be found on Midpen's Grantmaking Program web page: <https://www.openspace.org/grantmaking-program>.

# Funding Priorities

## Access, Interpretation, and Education

**Priority Overview:** Funding for access, environmental interpretation, and education are directed towards programs and projects that facilitate equitable access and broad opportunity for all residents to experience being in nature while fostering an appreciation for open space protection, nature study, and environmental stewardship. Agriculture-based environmental education projects, such as those that provide hands-on learning about sustainable farming practices, food systems, or the ecological connections between agriculture and natural habitats, are welcomed. Applicants are encouraged to emphasize if and how the proposed program/project bridges gaps in access, widens equitable participation, supports and/or learns from indigenous communities, or otherwise helps lower barriers to traditionally underserved or under-represented communities. Agriculture-based environmental education projects, such as those that provide hands-on learning about sustainable farming practices, food systems, or the ecological connections between agriculture and natural habitats, are welcomed.

**Project Location:** Access, Interpretation, and Education Funding Priority applications are no longer required to conduct field-based activities on Midpen land, but because Midpen is interested in connecting people with these publicly funded lands proposals that incorporate field activities conducted on Midpen land are preferred. If a program or project that does not normally conduct field activities on Midpen lands it must then incorporate a Midpen-developed lesson plan to bridge the connection between the program or project outcomes and Midpen's mission and goals and informs about ways to support and enjoy open space.

### Types of Projects, examples:

- Public access or educational programs for the public, teachers, students, volunteers, and/or docents including topics such as wildlife connectivity, biodiversity, climate change, and resilience
- Field trip to a working farm for youth to experience hands on learning and gain a better understanding of the interconnectedness between food production and environmental stewardship
- Outreach and/or activity programs that connect tribal members with their ancestral homelands and foster indigenous knowledge
- Complete gaps in a regional trail system that connect communities to trails and open space (e.g., outreach and engagement strategies for community and partner support for regional trail connections)
- Outreach and/or activity programs or training materials that encourage outdoor engagement and nature-based experiences in underserved communities

**Funded Project Outcomes:** The types of funded project outcomes for the Access, Interpretation, and Education Funding Priority include, but are not limited to, enhanced environmental literacy; application of indigenous knowledge; expanded outdoor engagement; increased community stewardship; improved mental health; bridging participation gaps; and increased motivation for science and environmental careers.

### Network and Partnership Support

**Priority Overview:** Funding in the Network and Partnership Support priority focuses on opportunities that help cultivate, sustain, or expand established conservation networks and partnerships. Eligible activities may include facilitation or consulting services, staff time dedicated to network participation, outreach efforts, meeting coordination, and related expenses such as supplies or communication materials.

Although future funding rounds may allow for the creation of new working groups or networks, in this round only projects submitted by established groups or networks will be considered. An established group or network refers to an organized and recognized entity that has already been formed and actively operates in a specific field or area of interest. It typically consists of multiple individuals, organizations, or institutions that collaborate and work together towards a common goal or purpose. Groups or networks should be primarily oriented toward topics that relate to land management, conservation, or public access to outdoor recreation. Applicants are encouraged to emphasize if and how the group or network bridges gaps in access, widens equitable participation, or otherwise helps lower barriers to traditionally underserved communities.

Please note that funds may not be used for policy or advocacy work and therefore lobbying support is not an eligible project type.

**Project Location:** Not applicable.

#### **Types of Projects, examples:**

- Support for forums, site visits, and other convenings for capacity building for indigenous knowledge, application of Native American land management practices, and related partnership development
- Development of a network-wide data-sharing system
- Consulting support and staff time for activities such as:
  - Developing a strategic plan
  - Conducting outreach to and engaging with new partners or participants (e.g., serving additional age groups, diverse abilities, and/or traditionally under-represented communities)
  - Organizing convenings

**Funded Project Outcomes:** Examples of funded project outcomes include, but are not limited to, enhanced collaboration and resource sharing; strengthened regional conservation strategies; increased membership (for a membership-based network); and more diversified participants.

### Applied Science

**Priority Overview:** Proposals under the Applied Science Funding Priority focus on academic or practitioner science projects that inform the protection and enhancement of natural resources on Midpen lands. Proposals that address this cycle's theme, described below, are encouraged.

**Project Location:** Field-based research must be completed on Midpen lands.

**Types of Projects and Topics:** Projects include applied academic research or proof-of-concept on topics such as integrated pest management, species habitat, restoration, or similar topics relating to natural resource management.

## Attachment 1

**Project Sponsorship:** Faculty at accredited academic institutions must lead or sponsor research-related projects. Graduate student research projects are welcomed. Practitioner science projects that do not involve peer-reviewed research may require faculty sponsorship, which will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Applicants must contact Grants staff ([grants@openspace.org](mailto:grants@openspace.org)) to request a consultation prior to submitting a pre-proposal to confirm whether sponsorship is required.

**Funded Project Outcomes:** The types of funded project outcomes include improved scientific understanding of natural processes, and enhanced stewardship effectiveness on Midpen lands.

**Theme:** *Science and Stewardship*

A host of challenges face our world today. Ecosystems are being affected by a range of shifting conditions such as greater variability in precipitation, increased vulnerability to fire, and changes in species distributions and dispersal patterns. These pressures combined with accelerated and novel stressors, are reducing the capacity of ecosystems to recover from disturbance. Proposals for research that deepen scientific understanding of these dynamics and explore stewardship practices to support resilient land and resource management are encouraged.

Types of projects relating to *Science and Stewardship*:

1. Ecosystem Resilience and Environmental Change
  - Climate change and carbon sequestration
  - Climate refugia and novel ecosystems
  - Fire ecology
  - Drought and flood management
  - Sea level rise and shoreline resiliency
2. Biodiversity and Population Dynamics
  - Population dynamics
  - Genetic diversity (including inbreeding and outbreeding dynamics)
  - Plant and wildlife pathogens
  - Pollinator health and ecosystem services
3. Landscape and Habitat Stewardship
  - Adaptive land and resource management strategies
  - Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)
  - Invasive species dynamics and management
  - Habitat connectivity and fragmentation
  - Aquatic habitat resiliency or watershed function
  - Soil health and erosion
4. Monitoring and Indicators
  - Landscape-Level monitoring using remote sensing, eDNA, long-term datasets
  - Ecosystem and bio-indicators for monitoring

Example Projects:

## Attachment 1

- Research examining the ecology, spread, and potential mitigation strategies for Phytophthora species of concern
- Development of plant propagule collection protocols or best management practices for restoration, informed by genetic and environmental factors
- Design and installation of long-term ecological monitoring plots, with opportunities for student engagement and training
- Research on the effects of road construction on movement patterns, habitat connectivity, and genetic diversity of endangered species
- Evaluation of the benefits and trade-offs of regional carbon sequestration strategies on working and agricultural lands
- Research on pollinator health and ecosystem services to guide stewardship practices
- Studies assessing the role of climate refugia and novel ecosystems in supporting biodiversity under changing conditions

## Grant Program Requirements

### Eligible Recipients

Eligible applicants must be one of the following: a public agency, including a K–12 school or academic institution; a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization or a fiscally-sponsored initiative if the fiscal sponsorship is established before proposal submittal and the project has a primarily charitable, scientific, or educational purpose.

While applicant organizations do not need to be within [Midpen’s jurisdiction](#), beneficiaries and/or participants of funded programs or projects must be within Midpen’s jurisdiction.

Applicants from prior Grantmaking Program grant rounds are eligible to apply.

### Grant Period

Projects funded through this program must be complete and expended within two years of the grant agreement execution date.

### Project Location

See applicable Funding Priorities for guidance on [location](#).

### Entry Restrictions and Permits

Eligible projects must not result in permanent damage and/or impairment to habitats or natural resources on Midpen lands and will be in compliance with Midpen’s Permit to Enter procedures (required for each research project).

### Eligible Costs

Grant funds may be used to cover expenses related to the implementation of proposed projects within the approved project budget. Eligible expenses must be incurred during the performance period as specified in the grant agreement.

ELIGIBLE COSTS		
Budget Item	Eligible Cost	Required Documentation
Salaries, Wages, and Benefits	Salaries and wages of employees employed by the grantee who are directly engaged in the execution of the grant project. Benefits include employer contribution of fringe benefits.	Timesheets or similar documentation detailing days and hours worked on the project along with staff hourly wage or the estimated hourly wage of a salaried person.
Consultants and Contractors	Direct consultant and contractual services necessary to achieve the objectives of the grant.	Invoices from consultant/contractor identifying expenditure, services performed, and period of services.
Travel	Travel costs associated with travel to and from project sites, meetings, etc., directly related to the grant project. Costs must be considered reasonable and necessary for the completion of the project.	Receipts identifying travel costs (i.e., lodging, rental cars). Mileage must be documented by either employee travel claims or vehicle mileage logs for vehicles owned by the grantee.

## Attachment 1

ELIGIBLE COSTS		
Budget Item	Eligible Cost	Required Documentation
Equipment and Supplies	Supplies and/or equipment required for project or program execution. Purchased supplies and/or equipment are to remain in the possession of the grantee during and after project completion.	Receipts identifying item purchased, cost, and date of purchase. Use of grantee equipment must be substantiated with an equipment usage log that identifies the equipment used, rate, and total rental cost.
Indirect Costs	Indirect costs are costs associated with doing business that are of a general nature and are incurred to benefit two or more functions within the grantee organization.	Up to 10% of direct costs may be for indirect costs.

### Ineligible Costs

The following activities and costs are not eligible:

- Conducting lobbying, carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation or political decision making
- Influencing the outcome of any specific election through any means
- Purposes other than those that are charitable, scientific, or educational
- Fundraising
- Budget shortfalls or endowment funds
- Scholarships, fellowships, or grants to individuals
- Land acquisition or real estate purchases
- Costs incurred before or after the project performance period
- Late fees, penalties, and bank fees

### Matching Funds

Matching or in-kind funds are not required.

## Application Process

### Overview

All applicants complete the pre-proposal section of the Proposal Form (see Appendix A).

All pre-proposals will be reviewed in Review Period 1. Applicants will be notified about advancing to Review Period 2.

- If applying as a Tier 1 applicant, only the pre-proposal is required.
- If applying as a Tier 2 applicant, a full proposal is required, *if invited*.

### Key Dates

- October 31, 2025, 5:00 PM: pre-proposals are due via email to [grants@openspace.org](mailto:grants@openspace.org).
- December 12, 2025: All applicants will be notified of the status of their preproposal. Tier 1 applicants will be informed whether their pre-proposal will advance to final review. Tier 2 applicants will be informed whether they are invited to submit a full proposal.
- January 30, 2026, 5:00 PM: Full proposals are due via email to [grants@openspace.org](mailto:grants@openspace.org).

### Tentative Application and Award Schedule

PROPOSAL SOLICITATION	
Grant application packet released	Tuesday, September 9, 2025
Application webinar (optional)	Thursday, Thursday, October 9, 2025, 12:00 PM
Pre-proposals due	Friday, October 31, 2025, 5:00 PM
Review Period 1*	November 3 – December 5, 2025
Notifications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tier 1 – Advancement to final review</li> <li>• Tier 2 – Advancement to full proposal</li> </ul>	Friday, December 12, 2025
Tier 2 full proposals due	Friday, January 30, 2026, 5:00 PM
Review Period 2*	February 2 – March 20, 2026
Committee and board meetings for award decisions	March/April 2026
Award notifications, Tier 1 and Tier 2 applicants	May 2026
<u>Earliest</u> date grant agreements are anticipated to be executed and projects begin Note: Some grant agreements may take longer	July 2026
* Applicants may be contacted during review periods to provide minor clarifications to their proposals	

## Attachment 1

### Application Support and Consultations

An application webinar will be hosted on **October 9, 2025**. The webinar will be recorded and available online afterward.

Grants program staff are available for individual consultation. Applicants are encouraged to schedule consultations *prior* to submission of their pre-proposal. Contact [grants@openspace.org](mailto:grants@openspace.org).

**Applied Science applicants:** Before submitting a pre-proposal a consultation with the Grants Program staff is required to discuss the proposed project and determine whether faculty sponsorship is needed.

Midpen is not soliciting, does not wish to receive, and will not treat any information received in a grant proposal as proprietary or confidential.

### Preliminary Grant Award Selection

Midpen's Grantmaking Review Committee will rank pre-proposals and full proposals based on the following considerations:

- Technical review scores and comments based on the Evaluation Criteria below
- Balance/distribution of funds by geographic area, project type or type of institutions, and availability of funds

The Grantmaking Review Committee may recommend modifications, such as reducing the requested grant award amounts to meet current and potential future program priorities, funding targets, and available funding limitations.

### General Manager and Board Action

The Grantmaking Review Committee's grant award recommendations will be presented to Midpen's executive team and General Manager. The General Manager will consider the comments and recommendations from the entire review process and will determine the final grant award recommendations to be presented to the Board of Director's Legislative, Funding and Public Affairs Committee for consideration prior to presenting the recommendations to the full Board of Directors for funding approval. The Board of Directors has sole and absolute discretion to approve or reject funding for a project. Upon approval, the Grants Program team will work with selected applicants to develop grant funding agreements.

## Evaluation Criteria

The Grantmaking Review Committee, comprised of District staff representing the Grants Program and the departments of Natural Resources, Visitor Services, and Land Stewardship and Trails, will evaluate each application based on how well it meets the evaluation criteria for the respective Funding Priorities.

Tier	Criteria	Points	
Pre-Proposal (Tier 1 and Tier 2)	Midpen mission, goals and the grantmaking funding priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotes Midpen’s mission and Strategic Plan goals (FY26 Update)</li> <li>Advances the goals set forth by the applicable Grantmaking Program priority</li> </ul>	20
	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets the definition of grassroots organization and/or an early-stage initiative</li> </ul>	20
	Project Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describes the project clearly, including the project’s importance, beneficiaries or participants, and the key activities, and the timeline is feasible for the scope of work and can be completed within the grant performance period</li> <li>Identifies realistic outcomes (the type of change the program or project seeks to achieve in the short term), with well-defined measures of success (e.g. number of participants in activity)</li> </ul>	20
	Equitable Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes engagement with individuals that have historically lacked access to — or have been excluded from — nature-based outdoor experiences.</li> </ul>	15
	Grant Request Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrates cost effectiveness; the budget aligns with and is sufficient to achieve the stated goals, objectives and outcomes</li> </ul>	15
	Other: <i>Applied Science applicants only</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relevance to Stewardship Decision-making: Provide actionable, applied science that directly informs restoration, land management, or policy decisions.</li> <li>Advances the goals of the applicable Grantmaking Program priority.</li> </ul>	10
	<b>Total Base Points Possible</b>		<b>90-100</b>
Full-Proposal (Tier 2)	Organizational Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involves adequate staff expertise and direct and indirect resources to ensure project completion</li> </ul>	10

## Attachment 1

		• If applicable: Describes clearly the purpose for the requested non-monetary support	
	<b>Project Budget</b>	• Demonstrates a cost effectiveness; the budget aligns with and is sufficient to achieve the stated goals, objectives and outcomes	15
	<b>Total Additional Points Possible</b>	<b>25</b>	
<b>Total Points Possible</b>			<b>115 – 125</b>

**FINAL SCORES** are determined by totaling the number of points awarded for each criterion and dividing by the total number of possible points to reach a percentage. Examples: 1) A Tier 1 Applied Science proposal receives 91 out of 100 Base Points, which is 91% of the Total Base Points Possible. 2) A Tier 2 AIE proposal receives 85 out of 90 Total Base Points Possible (94%) and is invited to submit a full proposal, which receives 21 of 25 Additional Points for a combined score of 106. This combined score is divided by 115 (90 Base Points + 25 Additional Points), which gives a total percentage score of 92%.

## Grant Award Requirements

### Funding Agreement

Midpen will use the Grantmaking Program funding agreement for all awards. Please refer to Appendix B for the funding agreement template. By submitting an application, applicants are deemed to have consented to the terms and conditions contained in the Grant Funding Agreement.

### Reimbursements

Funds can be disbursed after a fully executed grant agreement is in place. Midpen will issue payments on a reimbursement basis, barring exceptions for projects with demonstrable need. Reimbursement requests can be submitted as frequently as quarterly but at least annually if reimbursable expenses are accrued.

Advance payments may be considered at Midpen's discretion and with demonstrable need. No advance payment shall exceed 15% of the total grant award. Advances must be fully utilized within a six-month period unless additional time is approved by Midpen.

Reimbursement requests must be accompanied by a brief report as described below, a budget report that demonstrates which funds are being requested for reimbursement against the fund balance, and appropriate receipts or other necessary documentation.

### Reporting

Short-form reports are to be submitted with reimbursement requests up to four times/year (as determined by the grantee) using a template provided at the time of the award.

Annual narrative report due 12 months after date of executed agreement, using a template provided at the time of the award.

## Attachment 1

### Loss of Funding

The following are examples of actions that may result in loss of funding:

- Grantee fails to obtain a grant agreement.
- Grantee fails to complete the funded project (conform substantially to the agreement).
- Grantee fails to submit all documentation within the time periods specified in the grant agreement.
- Grantee fails to secure environmental clearance to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) or other necessary project permits.
- Grantee changes the project scope without the concurrence of Midpen.
- Grantee terminates the project by written notice 30 days in advance.

### Changes or Amendments

Grantees seeking changes to the scope, grant period, or budget (greater than 10% from a budget category) must obtain Midpen's written approval. Changes in project scope must continue to meet the need cited in the original proposal. Grantee will jeopardize funding should changes be made without prior notice to and approval by Midpen.

### Audits and Accountability

Projects are subject to audit annually and for three years following the final payment of grant funds. If the project is selected for audit, the grantee will be contacted in advance. The audit shall include all books, papers, accounts, documents, or other records of grantee, as they relate to the project. All project expenditure documentation should be available for an audit, whether paid with grant funds or other funds. Grantee must maintain an accounting system that accurately reflects fiscal transactions, with the necessary controls and safeguards to provide an adequate audit trail.

### Project Recognition

Midpen requires that grantees acknowledge Midpen's contribution to the program or project. Printed or web-based public materials relating to the project should acknowledge Midpen as a funding source. If the grantee uses social media, the grantee should acknowledge the project and Midpen funding at major milestones, as well as other sources of public outreach, such as newsletters, press releases or blog posts whenever possible.

Use Midpen's formal name, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, when acknowledging. If a logo is needed, please contact [grants@openspace.org](mailto:grants@openspace.org).

### Liability Release Form and Permission Requirements for Minors

To engage in activities on Midpen lands, participants need to submit an activity sign-in sheet liability release form as shown in Attachment 3. For minors to participate, a parent or guardian must sign a release form which will be confirmed at the time of funding agreement execution. These forms must be submitted to Midpen before the activity occurs. Refer to Attachment 3 for more details.

## Appendix A-Proposal Form

This form is for illustrative purposes only. Use the Proposal Form located on the Grants Program webpage.

All applicants are required to fill out a pre-proposal. Full proposals are by invitation only for Tier 2 projects.

- Tier 1 Applicants: Notifications will be sent December 12<sup>th</sup> if the project will be considered in the final review period in March/April 2026.

### Pre-Proposal Section

<b>Applicant Information</b>
<b>Organization Name</b>
<b>Organization Type</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 501c3 (indicate one of the following) <input type="checkbox"/> Not fiscally sponsored <input type="checkbox"/> Fiscally sponsored <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Institution (indicate one of the following) <input type="checkbox"/> University or 4-year College <input type="checkbox"/> Community College <input type="checkbox"/> K-12 School
<b>Mailing address</b>
<b>Proposal Contact</b>  Name and Title  Email  Phone number

I. [Program/Project Name](#)

II. [Funding Tier and Amount Request](#)

Indicate which funding tier applies and indicate the amount of the request

- Tier 1 (up to \$30,000): Request: \$
- Tier 2 (\$30,001 - \$60,000): Request: \$

## Attachment 1

### III. Funding Priority

Indicate which funding priority best aligns with your proposed program or project

- Access, Interpretation, and Education
- Network and Partnership Support
- Applied Science

### IV. Alignment – Goals and Impact

#### A. Organizational Goals:

1. Which of the District's organizational goals does your proposed program/project align? Check all that are applicable.

- Goal 1-Promote, establish, and implement a regional environmental protection vision with partners
- Goal 2-Protect the positive environmental and biodiversity values of open space and agricultural lands
- Connect people to open space and agricultural lands, and a regional environmental protection vision

#### B. Grantmaking Impact:

1. Indicate which of the following applies. See definitions and eligibility below. Review the Purpose and Impact description in the Funding Priority section on page 7 for background information.

- My organization is **grassroots**
- My program/project is **early stage**

#### *Impact definitions*

- **Grassroots:** An organization with net assets minus the value of land, building and equipment totaling \$1.2 million or less. This information is found on the organization's 990 form. If Form 990-EZ is used or the applicant is a fiscally-sponsored initiative, the organization is considered grassroots.
- **Early stage:** A program or project that aligns with one or more of the following criteria:
  - A new direction for an existing project/program (e.g. piloting a new curriculum; conducting new research based on findings from prior research)
  - A new constituency to be served by an existing project or program
  - A new location from where to conduct an existing project or program
  - A new project or program

*Impact eligibility*

	<b>Early-Stage Project</b>	<b>Existing/Ongoing Project</b>
<b>Grassroots Organization</b>	Eligible	Eligible
<b>Large Organization</b>	Eligible	Not Eligible

V. Program/Project Overview

**A. Description:**

1. In one page, please describe the program or project, addressing the following (single space acceptable, 1" margins, font size no less than 11):
  - Why is the proposed program or project important? If this is an early-stage program or project, include an explanation of what is new and why the new effort is needed.
  - What are the goals, objectives, and key activities?
  - Who are the beneficiaries or participants of the program or project?
  - When and where will the program or project activities occur?
    - **For Access, Interpretation and Education applicants:** If there are no activities that will take place on District land, indicate how your curriculum could accommodate a brief Midpen-developed lesson plan that includes what open space is and its importance, what the District does to protect and maintain open space, and what communities can do to support and enjoy open space.

**B. Workplan and Outputs/Deliverables:**

1. In the table below, list the key tasks of the proposed program or project, briefly describe the tasks, include the counts of activities (event, engagements, sessions, outings, etc.) and beneficiaries and/or participants, and estimated timeline for each. Add more rows as needed.

#	Tasks	Description – include type and # of activities and # of beneficiaries or participants	Estimated Timeline

**C. Outcomes:**

1. Check the relevant outcome statement(s) for your proposed program or project. These are the type of change the program or project seeks to achieve in the short term. If none are relevant, select "other" and write in the applicable outcome(s).

**ACCESS, INTERPRETATION, AND EDUCATION FUNDING PRIORITY**

- Enhanced environmental literacy
- Expanded outdoor engagement

## Attachment 1

- Increased community stewardship
- Improved mental health
- Increased equitable access
- Applied indigenous knowledge
- Increased motivation for science and environmental careers
- Other:

### **NETWORK AND PARTNERSHIP SUPPORT FUNDING PRIORITY**

- Enhanced collaboration/resource sharing
- Strengthened regional conservation strategies
- Increased membership (for a membership-based network)
- More diversified participants
- Other:

### **APPLIED SCIENCE FUNDING PRIORITY**

- Improved scientific understanding of natural processes
- Enhanced stewardship effectiveness on Midpen lands
- Other:

2. For the outcomes identified above, briefly (e.g., 1-2 paragraphs) describe your outcome measurement plan.

- What method(s) will be used to understand the progress made toward the outcome? E.g., participant survey; informational interview; public scientific presentations.
- When will the method(s) take place?

### **D. Other support - optional**

Midpen may have resources available that could contribute to the success of your program, project or organization. Review the list of options and indicate which, if any, are of interest, and how the resource can be of benefit. Grants staff will discuss the interest with the applicable department. Availability of the resource is not guaranteed.

1. Indicate if any of the following is of interest. If not, leave blank.

- Advisement from subject matter expert. Indicate which field(s) are of interest.
  - \_\_\_ Land stewardship
  - \_\_\_ Trail development/management
  - \_\_\_ Natural resources
  - \_\_\_ Public affairs
  - \_\_\_ GIS
  - \_\_\_ Grant development/management.
- Meeting space for up to 12 people at Midpen's Los Altos headquarters (as available).

## Attachment 1

Describe the purpose and expected benefit that the resource would provide:

### VI. Budget:

1. Indicate if you anticipate requesting *advance payment* of up to 15%?

Yes

No

2. Use the Grant Request Budget table below to outline the funding request aligned with the following eligible costs. There is no match requirement.

<u>ELIGIBLE COSTS</u>		
Budget Item	Eligible Cost	Required Documentation
Salaries, Wages, and Benefits	Salaries and wages of employees employed by the grantee who are directly engaged in the execution of the grant project. Benefits include employer contribution of fringe benefits.	Timesheets or similar documentation detailing days and hours worked on the project along with staff hourly wage or the estimated hourly wage of a salaried person.
Consultants and Contractors	Direct consultant and contractual services necessary to achieve the objectives of the grant.	Invoices from consultant/contractor identifying expenditure, services performed, and period of services.
Travel	Travel costs associated with travel to and from project sites, meetings, etc., directly related to the grant project. Costs must be considered reasonable and necessary for the completion of the project.	Receipts identifying travel costs (i.e., lodging, rental cars). Mileage must be documented by either employee travel claims or vehicle mileage logs for vehicles owned by the grantee.
Equipment and Supplies	Supplies and/or equipment required for project or program execution. Purchased supplies and/or equipment are to remain in the possession of the grantee during and after project completion.	Receipts identifying item purchased, cost, and date of purchase. Use of grantee equipment must be substantiated with an equipment usage log that identifies the equipment used, rate, and total rental cost.
Indirect Costs	Indirect costs are costs associated with doing business that are of a general nature and are incurred to benefit two or more functions within the grantee organization.	Up to 10% of direct costs may be for indirect costs.

<b>Grant Request Budget</b>			
For each task, list the item(s) for which Midpen grant funding would cover and the amount requested.			
Task #	Task Description (from section V.B. above)	Budget item and brief description	Amount Requested

## Attachment 1

<b>TOTAL GRANT REQUEST</b>			

### VII. Attachments

Along with the Proposal Form, email the following as separate pdf-formatted documents using the naming convention indicated.

- **501c3 organizations:**
  - As applicable, IRS 990, 990-EZ or 990-N from most recent fiscal year. *Filename: 990*
- **Fiscally-sponsored applicants:**
  - Fiscal sponsor's IRS 990 forms from the two most recent fiscal years. *Filename: Fiscal Sponsor 990*
  - Fiscal sponsor letter stating its commitment to serve as fiscal sponsor and describing the supporting activities it will provide to the applicant during the grant period. *Filename: Fiscal Sponsor Letter*
- **Applied Science applicants:**
  - Project location map. *Filename: Map*
  - As applicable, faculty sponsor letter of support. *Filename: Faculty Sponsor*

## Full Proposal – Tier 2 Applicants Only if Invited

**The full proposal is an extension of the pre-proposal. Please include the original pre-proposal when submitting.**

<p><b>Proposal Contact, if different than pre-proposal</b></p> <p>Name and Title</p> <p>Email</p> <p>Phone number</p>
---

I. Describe the program or project in 1-2 sentences. This will be used for announcements (e.g., social media, press release, etc.)

II. Narrative (up to 3 pages)

### A. Detailed Scope of Work

1. Expand on the narrative from your pre-proposal to incorporate the following considerations:
  - Project importance: Provide any additional evidence that supports the importance of the program or project. Considerations: How does the program or project align with any local or regional strategy? How does the program or project leverage any partnerships?
  - Alignment: Deepen our understanding of how the project aligns with Midpen’s goals [mission](#) and [goals](#)?
  - Risks: What challenges might the program or project encounter? What are some likely solutions?
  - Post-grant plans: What is the plan for the program/project post-grant?
  - If applicable, describe participant recruitment or outreach plans.
  - If applicable, explain the status of any permits or other approvals that would be required.

### B. Organizational Description

1. Describe your organization (or the fiscal sponsor as applicable), including the mission and vision and any previous experience implementing this proposed, or a similar, scope of work. Describe how the organization has the capacity to manage the grant reimbursement process (e.g., has sufficient funds to cover costs ahead of reimbursements; can effectively track costs and appropriate documentation).

### C. Project Budget





## Appendix B – Funding Agreement Template



### MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT GRANT AGREEMENT

This agreement (the “Grant Agreement”) dated [REDACTED], contains the terms and conditions of a grant in the amount of \$ [REDACTED] (the “Grant”) from the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (“District”) to [REDACTED] (“Grantee”). The District and Grantee may collectively be referred to as “Party” or “Parties.”

By signing this Grant Agreement, the District and Grantee agree to the following terms and conditions regarding the Grant.

1. Grant Purpose

The purpose of this Grant is to provide funding for [brief description of project] (“Grant Purpose.”).

2. Use of Grant Funds

Grantee must use Grant funds, and any income earned on those funds, for the Grant Purpose only. Use of the Grant funds must conform to the approved work plan and project budget, as further described in Attachment 1. Grantee expenditures funded by Midpen must occur within the time frame of the grant period as indicated in Section 12 of this Grant Agreement.

3. Grant Payments

The District will disburse Grant funds up to four times per year, subject to the terms and conditions of this Grant Agreement. Payment requests must include a Grantee Payment Request Form, Budget Tracking Sheet, and required documentation for proof of expense including, but not limited to, timesheets, mileage logs, invoices, and receipts. Grantee acknowledges that the District and its representatives have made no actual or implied promise of funding, except for the amount in this Grant Agreement. The District will determine any future funding in its sole discretion.

4. Grant Reports

Grantee will submit progress reports to the District, along with each payment request. Progress reports must contain a brief description of what has been achieved towards advancing the objectives of the District-approved work plan in Attachment 1 and the actual versus budgeted spending of Grant funds. Additionally, Grantees with Grants over \$25,000 must submit an annual report no later than June 30 each year and answer the questions provided in the Annual Report Template.

5. Compliance with Laws

Grantee agrees to comply with all laws and regulations applicable to all of its activities associated with this Grant. ***Include when applicable for the Grantee project:*** Grantee will ensure that the appropriate level of environmental review is conducted, and any necessary permits are secured prior to initiation of the approved work plan, as described in Attachment 1.

6. Remedies

If the District determines, in its reasonable discretion, that Grantee has failed to or is unable to carry out any provision of this Grant Agreement, including but not limited to making reasonable progress towards the achievement of the Grant Purpose, the District may elect to withhold further Grant payments under this or any other Grant Agreement. The District may also demand return of all or part of any Grant funds not properly spent. Prior to terminating or curtailing the Grant, the District will give Grantee thirty (30) days' advance written notice to respond to and resolve the issues, but the determination to continue, curtail, or terminate the Grant will remain in the District's sole discretion.

7. Entire Agreement, Severability

This Grant Agreement supersedes any prior oral or written understandings or communications between the parties and constitutes the entire agreement between the parties with respect to the Grant. In the event that any term, condition, provision, requirement or specification set forth in this body of the agreement conflicts with or is inconsistent with any term, condition, provision, requirement or specification in any exhibit and/or attachment to this Agreement and/or the District's Grant Solicitation, the provisions of this body of the agreement shall prevail. The provisions of this Grant Agreement are severable so that if any provision is found to be invalid or illegal, that finding will not affect the validity or enforceability of the remaining provisions.

8. Permits for Entry on District Lands

If Grantee will enter onto District lands to carry out purposes of the grant project, Grantee shall obtain a District permit prior to commencing project and shall always carry a valid District-issued permit on District lands. Grantee further warrants that he/she will obtain a signed waiver, as further described in Attachment 2, from any and all research partners (who are not District employees) prior to entering District lands and provide such waiver(s) to a District representative. If evidence of insurance coverage is required, District will inform Grantee of such requirements in advance of issuing a permit. Activities on District lands shall conform to the District-approved work plan in Attachment 1 and Grantee must have all activity participants entering District lands sign a release of liability, in a form substantially similar to Attachment 3, and provide such form(s) to a District representative.

9. Acknowledgment

Grantees may be required to identify the District during public announcements and in printed or web-based public materials relating to the project. Grantees must request a Midpen logo file and acknowledgment guidance prior to use. Grantees should be prepared to give a presentation to the District's Board of Directors, if requested.

10. Information Sharing

Grantee shall provide a courtesy copy of data gathered on research projects funded in whole or in part with Grant funding. Grantee shall provide advance drafts of research papers/reports prior to publication.

11. Amendment and Modification

Grantees seeking changes to the scope or budget (greater than 10% from a budget category) must obtain District's prior written approval. Changes in project scope must meet the Grant Purpose described in the original grant application.

12. Term

This Agreement shall be effective for three years from the date of its full execution. Extension for a period up to twelve (12) months beyond the expiration date may be approved by District in its sole discretion. Requests for extensions must be submitted in writing and received no later than sixty (60) calendar days prior to the expiration of this Agreement. Grantee must submit sufficient documentation in support of its request to enable the District to evaluate such request.

13. Indemnification ***(keep the appropriate clause; delete the other)***

**For non-government entity:** Notwithstanding any other provision of this Grant Agreement, Grantee agrees to defend, hold harmless and indemnify District, its officers and employees, and each and every one of them, from against any and all actions, damages, costs, liabilities, claims, demands, losses, judgments, penalties, costs and expenses of every type and description, including, but not limited to, any fees and/or costs, reasonable attorney fees, and any fees and expenses incurred in enforcing this provision (hereafter collectively referred to as "Liabilities"), including but not limited to Liabilities arising from personal injury or death, damage to personal, real, or intellectual property or the environment, contractual or other economic damages, or regulatory penalties, to the extent any of Liabilities arise out of, pertain to, or relate to the Grantee's performance of this Grant Agreement or obligations stated herein, whether or not (i) such Liabilities are caused in part by a party indemnified hereunder or (ii) such Liabilities litigated, settled or reduced to judgment; provided that the foregoing indemnity does not apply to liability for any damage or expense for death or bodily injury to person or damage to property to the extent arising from the negligence or willful misconduct of District. The foregoing does not limit any strict liability imposed onto the Grantee by law. The rights, duties, and obligations of the Parties as set forth above in this Section 13, Indemnification, survive termination, expiration, and suspension of this Agreement.

**For government entity:** In lieu of and notwithstanding the pro rata risk allocation, which might otherwise be imposed between the Parties pursuant to Government Code Section 895.6, the Parties agree that all losses or liabilities incurred by a Party shall not be shared pro rata but, instead, District and Grantee agree that, pursuant to Government Code Section 895.4, each of the Parties hereto shall fully indemnify and hold each of the other Parties, their officers, board members, employees, and agents, harmless from any claim, expense or cost, damage or liability imposed for injury (as defined in Government Code 810.8) occurring by reason of the negligent acts or omissions or willful misconduct of the indemnifying Party, its officers, employees, or agents, under or in connection with or arising out of any work, authority, or jurisdiction delegated to such Party under this Agreement. No party, nor any officer, board member, or agent thereof shall be responsible for any damage or liability occurring by reason of the negligent acts or omissions or willful misconduct of the other Party hereto, its officers, board members, or agent thereof shall be responsible for any damage or liability occurring by reason of the negligent acts or omissions or willful misconduct of the other Party hereto, its officers, board members, employees, or agents, under or in connection with or arising out of any work authority or jurisdiction delegated to such other Party under this Agreement. The rights, duties, and obligations of the Parties as set forth above in this Section 13 Indemnification, survive termination, expiration, and suspension of this Agreement.

**MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN  
SPACE DISTRICT**

**GRANTEE**

**[NAME OF ORGANIZATION]**

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Ana Ruiz, General Manager

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maria Soria, District Clerk

Approved as to form: \_\_\_\_\_  
Hilary Stevenson, General Counsel

## Attachment 1 - Approved Work Plan and Budget Template

### Project Scope

[insert project scope]

### Project Deliverables

[insert project deliverables]

### Project Schedule

[insert project schedule]

### Project Budget\*

[insert project budget]

\*Changes within a budget category are allowable up to 10% without prior approval. Changes over 10% need to be approved by Grants Program Staff.

### Other Support

[insert description of support to be provided]

### Project Team

[insert project team contact information]

### Midpen Contacts

[insert contacts]

## Attachment 2 - Grantee Waiver Template

Name of Grantee or designee (please print): \_\_\_\_\_ (“Grantee”)

**READ CAREFULLY AND COMPLETELY**

By Signing this Waiver and Release I Understand and Agree to the Following:

1. I understand that visiting District property (the “Property”) for the purpose [describe project here] is a voluntary act on my part and that I am voluntarily participating in this activity.
2. By participating in this activity, I assume certain risks and I hereby waive certain rights.

### ASSUMPTION OF RISK

Grantee understands and has been informed that there are numerous general safety hazards on the Property, including but not limited to dangerous and/or poisonous wildlife, abrupt changes in weather, steep drop-offs, unmaintained roads and paths, falling hazards, and trip and fall hazards. Grantee understands that activities in and around the closed areas of District property expose Grantee to the risk of serious injury.

### HOLD HARMLESS/WAIVER OF LIABILITY

Grantee understands that he/she may incur personal injury, death, or property damage in the course of visiting the Premises, caused by the presence of a variety of physical hazards both natural and man-made. Injury or death may result from an accident or from the misconduct of a third person. For the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (the “District”) to allow the Grantee to participate in the activity, Grantee hereby accepts and expressly assumes all risk of such injury or death. Grantee agrees to hold harmless, release and discharge the District, its officers, employees and servants from all liability arising out of, or in connection with Grantee’s participation in the above-described activity, including travel, even liability arising from the district’s negligence. For the purposes of this agreement, liability means all claims, demands, losses, expenses (including attorneys’ fees), causes of action, suits, or judgments of any and every kind that Grantee, and his/her heirs, executors, administrators or assignees may have against the District, or that any other person or entity may have against the District, because of any death, personal injury or illness, or because of any loss of or damage to Grantee’s property, that occurs during the above described activity and that results from any cause including the District’s negligence.

I have read the above and understand its terms. I execute it voluntarily and with full knowledge of its significance.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature (Grantee)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

---

### IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY, PLEASE CONTACT:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full Name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone

### Attachment 3 - Activity Sign-in Sheet and Release of Liability Template



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

## Activity Sign-In Sheet and Release of Liability

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Activity Title:</b>	
<b>Preserve:</b>	<b>Leader(s)/Sweep(s):</b>	<b>Type of Activity:</b>

In consideration of being permitted to participate in a Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District ("District") sponsored activity, I for myself, my personal representatives, heirs, and assigns, agree as follows:

### ASSUMPTION OF RISK

By my signature below, I acknowledge that I have voluntarily requested to participate in this activity. I understand that this activity may involve hazards and unknown risks, including, but not limited to, trail conditions, weather, or other natural or artificial hazards. I fully assume all risks of participating in the activity.

### RELEASE OF LIABILITY

I hereby release, discharge, covenant not to sue, and agree to indemnify, save and hold harmless the District, its respective officials, volunteers, administrators, agents, and employees (each considered one of the "Releasees" herein) from all liability, claims, demands, losses, or damages for personal injury, death, property damage, or other risks which I may incur as a result of participating in the activity caused or alleged to be caused in whole or in part by the negligence of the "Releasees", including, but not limited to, negligent rescue operations. I fully understand that the activity may involve risks and dangers of serious bodily injury, including permanent disability, paralysis and death. These risks and dangers may be caused by my own actions, or inactions, the actions or inactions of others participating in the activity, the conditions in which the activity takes place, or the negligence of the "Releasees". There may be other risks and social and economic losses either not known to me or not readily foreseeable at this time; and I fully accept and fully assume all such risks and all responsibility for losses, costs and damages I incur as a result of my participation in the activity.

### TRAIL CONDITIONS

Some common conditions you may encounter on the trail include, but are not limited to, the presence of poison oak, ticks, rattlesnakes, wildlife, and trail users. Some trails are wide and smooth, while others may be steep, narrow, muddy, overgrown, rutted, in remote locations, and/or have natural or man-made hazards, such as fallen trees and drainage structures.

### PHOTOGRAPHIC RELEASE

I understand that the District may use my photograph for District publications, presentations and/or media related purposes.

**I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THIS AGREEMENT. I FULLY UNDERSTAND ITS TERMS. I UNDERSTAND THAT I HAVE GIVEN UP SUBSTANTIAL RIGHTS BY SIGNING IT AND HAVE SIGNED IT FREELY AND WITHOUT ANY INDUCEMENT OR ASSURANCE OF ANY NATURE. I INTEND THIS AGREEMENT TO BE A COMPLETE AND UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE OF ALL LIABILITY TO THE GREATEST EXTENT ALLOWED BY LAW AND AGREE THAT IF ANY PORTION OF THIS AGREEMENT IS HELD TO BE INVALID, THE BALANCE, NOT WITHSTANDING, SHALL CONTINUE IN FULL EFFECT.**

**IF PARTICIPANT IN THIS ACTIVITY IS A MINOR (UNDER THE AGE OF 18 ON THE DATE OF THE ACTIVITY) THEN THE SIGNATURE MUST BE OF A PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN.**

## Activity Sign-In Sheet and Release of Liability

<b>Signature</b> <i>Please sign and print your name below. If participant is a minor signature must be of a Parent/Guardian.</i>			Check here if Participant is	INITIAL here to leave activity before it	<b>Emergency Contact (Optional)</b> Name & Phone #
1.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
11.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
12.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
13.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
14.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
15.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
16.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
17.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
18.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
19.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
20.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
21.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
22.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
23.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
24.	Participant Name	Signature <i>(Parent/guardian must sign for minors)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## **Funding Priority Descriptions**

In August 2025, the Board of Directors approved updated language to all three Funding Priorities. This provided a clearer expectation of the types of projects the Grantmaking Program would fund, as well as provide potential examples of fund project outcomes.

### *Access, Interpretation, and Education*

Funding for access, environmental interpretation, and education is directed towards facilitating equitable access and broad opportunity for all residents to experience and increase awareness of District lands while fostering an appreciation for open space protection, nature study, and environmental stewardship. Applications that incorporate activities conducted on District lands, and/or that incorporate District-developed lesson plans that highlight Midpen lands and resource conservation work, are preferred. Agriculture-based environmental education projects, such as those that provide hands-on learning about sustainable farming practices, food systems, or the ecological connections between agriculture and natural habitats, are welcomed. Applicants are encouraged to emphasize if and how the proposal bridges gaps in access, widens equitable participation, supports indigenous communities, or otherwise helps lower barriers to traditionally underserved or under-represented communities. Funding can be used for staff time to create or execute programming, provide transportation to opportunities for outdoor engagement or nature-based experiences, facilitate knowledge of outdoor recreational opportunities, broaden access to the outdoors, engage residents in environmental stewardship activities, etc. Examples of funded project outcomes include, but are not limited to, enhanced environmental literacy; restoration and integration of indigenous knowledge; expanded outdoor engagement in nature; increased community stewardship; improved mental health; bridging participation gaps; and increased motivation for science, conservation, and environmental careers.

### *Network and Partnership Support*

To maximize impact and ensure alignment with multi-jurisdictional conservation and recreation goals, the District welcomes grant proposals that help cultivate, sustain, or expand established conservation networks and partnerships. Eligible activities may include facilitation or consulting services, staff time dedicated to network participation, outreach efforts, meeting coordination, and related expenses such as supplies or communication materials. Examples of funded project outcomes include, but are not limited to, enhanced collaboration and resource sharing; strengthened regional conservation strategies; capacity building for a membership-based organization; and more diversified stakeholders.

### *Applied Science*

Applied Science funding supports academic or practitioner science research projects that inform the protection and enhancement of natural resources on District lands. Types of projects may include applied academic research or proof-of-concept, on topics such as integrated pest management, species habitat, restoration, or similar topics relating to natural resource management. Faculty at accredited academic institutions must sponsor research-

## Attachment 2

related projects and field research must take place on District lands. Practitioner science projects other than peer-reviewed research may require faculty sponsorship and will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Examples of funded project outcomes include improved scientific understanding of natural processes, and enhanced stewardship effectiveness on District lands.

Attachment 3

Scores were determined by dividing the total points awarded by reviewers by the total possible points to reach a percentage score. Total points possible for Tier 1 Access, Interpretation and Education (AIE) & Network and Partnership Support (NPS) applicants was 540 (90 criteria points times 6 reviewers), and 500 points for Tier 1 Applied Science (AS; 100 points times 5 reviewers). Total points possible for Tier 2 AIE & NPS applicants was 690 (115 criteria points times 6 reviewers), and 625 points for Tier 2 AS (125 criteria points times 5 reviewers). In addition to considering merit scores, the review committee also sought to ensure diversification of awards by tier and funding priority, and to consider new partnership opportunities and, for the first time, the location of beneficiaries/participants by ward.

The review committee discussed all applications with a base score of 80% or above. While scoring criteria guidelines informed reviewers' assessment, each reviewer's scores reflected their interpretation and knowledge of the topic, which resulted in score variations; there were significant outliers in several instances. The review committee's discussions were important as they called attention to aspects of a proposal that may not have been identified or well understood by other reviewers. These discussions ensured that decisions were thoughtful, equitable, and grounded both in quantitative scoring and qualitative judgment, all critical to reaching consensus. Of the seven recommendations, six are the highest scoring proposals within their respective tiers and funding priority areas, and the one with a lower score is being recommended as a result of the in-depth discussions and consensus-driven process.

**Application Scores**

	Tier	Funding Priority	% Score	Applicant	Proposal Title	Funding Request
<b>RECOMMENDED FOR FUNDING</b>	1	AIE	98%	Hidden Villa	Access to and Education on Farming and Open Space Preservation in the Midpen Region	\$ 29,150
		AS	92%	UCSC-Prof. Polito	Crab Watch: Student-centered research to inform invasive species management in the Midpeninsula Baylands	\$ 29,930
		NPS	90%	Arriba South Coast	Pescadero to the Sea Trail Planning Project	\$ 29,040
	2	AIE	86%	The HEAL Project	Farm Field Trip Program	\$ 59,708
		AS	84%	University Nevada-Reno	Exploring the Effectiveness of Virtual Fencing for Improved Management of Multiple-Use Objectives on Open Space Ag Lands	\$ 55,605
		NPS	87%	Muwekma Ohlone Preservation Foundation	Restoring Fire, Rstoring Kinship: Muwekma Ohlone Cultural Burning Capacity Building	\$ 51,000
			84%	Grassroots Ecology	Roots of Relationship: Deepening Indigenous Allyship	\$ 59,550
<b>NOT RECOMMENDED FOR FUNDING</b>	1	AIE	88%	Bay Area Ridge Trail Council	Building Healthy Communities: Ridge Trail + No Worries Amigos Hiking Club	\$ 30,000
			88%	SF Bay Wildlife Society	Our Shared Open Spaces: Connecting the Public with Refuge and Midpen Lands	\$ 23,100
			88%	Boys and Girls Club of the Coastside	Student Farmer Program and Outdoor Program	\$ 30,000
			87%	Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action	Nature-based Solutions to Climate Change Youth Program	\$ 30,000
			85%	The Student Conservation Association	The SCA Urban Green: Conservation Stewardship Program	\$ 29,833
			81%	Fletcher Lab UC Berkeley	Clip-on Microscopes for Natural Research Education at Midpen	\$ 30,000
	NPS	89%	San Mateo County DOE	Expanding Equitable Environmental Education through Professional Learning and Partnership	\$ 30,000	

2	AIE	93%	Pie Ranch	Stewarding Land & Communities	\$ 57,125
		92%	Saved by Nature	Youth Development Programs	\$ 60,000
		91%	Living Classroom	Bringing Nature to the Schoolyard: Sunnyvale (SESJ)	\$ 50,000
		85%	The Coastside Land Trust	WingWatchers: Junior Land Stewards Program	\$ 60,000
		84%	Vida Verde	Access to free culturally responsive outdoor education programming for low-income youth in Ravenswood Area	\$ 58,800
		83%	All Five	Roots of Curiosity: Growing Environmental Stewards	\$ 45,000
	NPS	84%	Redbud Resource Group	Restoring Right Relations	\$ 60,000
		81%	TOGETHER Bay Area	2027 Right Relations Program	\$ 60,000

**PROJECT SUMMARIES OF RECOMMENDED GRANT PROPOSALS**

When the nine-member staff evaluation committee convened to discuss final recommendations, several factors were considered that expand upon and are consistent with the proposal criteria. The committee gave special consideration to having the final recommendations represent each funding priority area (by at least one project each) and each funding tier (Tier 1 and Tier 2). In addition, the committee recognized the importance of supporting proposers with whom Midpen may not yet have established relationships, consistent with the Grantmaking Program’s goal of strengthening (including building and creating) partnerships. Equity considerations also played an important role in the selection process with particular attention given to projects that demonstrated strong connections to historically underrepresented groups. Finally, the committee considered opportunities to leverage and diversify funding sources in order to maximize the impact and long-term viability of proposed projects. These additional considerations helped the committee develop the balanced slate of finalists listed below.

**Funding Priority Area: Access, Interpretation, and Education (AIE)**

Proposer: Hidden Villa

*Proposal Title:* Access and Education on Farming and Open Space Preservation in the Midpen Region

*Project Overview:* This early-stage project will allow a new constituency of eight schools to participate in current programming by offering scholarships to students in grades TK-12 who meet the criteria of at least 50% Unduplicated Pupil Count that Hidden Villa has not had the opportunity to partner with due to funding restraints. At least two classrooms from each school will be able to participate in Hidden Villa programming over a two-year period.

*Tier 1 Funding Request:* \$29,150

*Impact:* Early-Stage

*District Organizational Goals:*

- Goal 3- Connect people to open space and agricultural lands, and a regional environmental protection vision

*Outcomes:*

- Enhanced environmental literacy
- Expanded outdoor engagement
- Increased community stewardship
- Improved mental health
- Increased equitable access
- Increased motivation for science and environmental careers

*Beneficiary/Participant Ward(s):* 3,4,5,6,7

## Attachment 4

### *Key rationale for recommendation:*

- Top ranked Tier 1 project within Access, Interpretation and Education
  - The project will expand access to Midpen lands to underserved communities.
- Agricultural-based environmental educational project *with access to Midpen lands*
  - This project will allow the Grant Program the opportunity to assess how effectively the new requirement of either having AIE activities on Midpen lands or incorporating a Midpen-provided lesson plan is being implemented by grant recipients.
  - Hidden Villa would incorporate students' understanding of the work Midpen does while visiting Midpen land.
- Participants will come from 5 of the 7 wards and will involve schools new to Hidden Villa.
- Leveraged funding opportunity
  - With this request, Hidden Villa will be able to reach at least 480 students from underserved populations, and form partnerships with schools they have been unable to reach due to lack of funding.
- Strong connection to Midpen Goals and Mission
- Strong anticipated outcomes

### The HEAL Project

#### *Proposal Title:* Farm Field Trip Program

Project Overview: The HEAL Project's Farm Field Trip Program will provide more than 900 elementary students with hands-on learning experiences that help them form connections between food, environmental health, and local open space while inspiring lifelong stewardship of the natural world.

*Tier 2 Funding Request:* \$59,708

*Impact:* Grassroots

*District Organizational Goals:*

- Goal 3 - Connect people to open space and agricultural lands, and a regional environmental protection vision

*Outcomes:*

- Enhanced environmental literacy
- Expanded outdoor engagement
- Increased community stewardship
- Improved mental health

## Attachment 4

- Increased equitable access

*Beneficiary/Participant Ward(s): 5 & 7*

*Key rationale for recommendation:*

- Highly ranked Tier 2 project in Access, Interpretation, and Education (AIE)
- Strengthening new partnerships
  - This project fulfills a key purpose of the Grantmaking Program: to strengthen partnerships. This project enables a new partnership with a Coastside organization.
- Agricultural-based environmental education *with use of Midpen lesson plan*
  - This project will allow the Grant Program the opportunity to assess how effectively the new requirement of either having AIE activities on Midpen lands or incorporating a Midpen-provided lesson plan is being implemented by grant recipients.
  - The HEAL Project will incorporate the Midpen developed lesson plan during the hike portion to non-Midpen land as part of their Farm Field Trip.
- Leveraged funding opportunity
  - With this funding, The HEAL Project will be able to offer more than 900 students with access to their Farm Field Trip. It will also provide the opportunity for HEAL to form connections with new schools that they do not currently have connections with.
- Strong connection to Midpen Mission and Goals
- Strong anticipated outcomes

### **Funding Priority Area: Network and Partnership Support (NPS)**

#### Arriba South Coast

*Proposal Title:* Pescadero to the Sea Trail Planning Project: Partner Advisory Committee and Community Stewardship Corps

*Project Overview:* Expand the Partner Advisory Committee for the Pescadero to the Sea Trail Planning Project with a new Community Stewardship Corps to include more diversified participants representing all segments of the South Coast.

*Tier 1 Funding Request:* \$29,040

*Impact:* Grassroots

*District Organizational Goals:*

- Goal 1 - Promote, establish, and implement a regional environmental protection vision with partners

## Attachment 4

- Goal 2 - Protect the positive environmental and biodiversity values of open space and agricultural lands
- Goal 3 - Connect people to open space and agricultural lands, and a regional environmental protection vision

### *Outcomes:*

- Enhanced collaboration/resource sharing
- More diversified participants

### *Beneficiary/Participants Ward(s): 6*

### *Key rationale for recommendation:*

- Top rated Tier 1 project in Network and Partnership Support (NPS) Funding Priority
- High equity value
  - This project will allow members of the local Pescadero community the opportunity to be involved in the planning of the Pescadero to the Sea Trail.
  - Focus will be on those who historically experience barriers to participation in community discussions due to language, transportation, technology, or functional needs.
  - Arriba will provide stipends, travel support, and childcare for Partner Advisory Committee meetings.
- Leveraged funding opportunity
  - Arriba will use awarded funding in conjunction with additional funding from other project partners and grants
- Strong connection to Midpen Mission and Goals
- Strong anticipated outcomes

## Muwekma Ohlone Preservation Foundation (MOPF)

*Proposal Title:* Restoring Fire, Restoring Kinship: Muwekma Ohlone Cultural Burning Capacity Building

*Project Overview:* Building on a decades-long partnership and recent early-stage work, MOPF proposes a two-year capacity-building project. This project will strengthen an established cultural fire stewardship network with Stanford's Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve ('Ootchamin 'Ooyakma), North Fork Mono cultural fire leadership, and CAL FIRE (CZU) through bi-monthly convenings, coordinated trainings/site visits, and outreach. Deliverables include a Cultural Burning Stewardship Plan and trained Muwekma members and intergenerational workforce pathways.

*Tier 2 Funding Request:* \$51,000

*Impact:* Grassroots

## Attachment 4

### *District Organizational Goals:*

- Goal 1 - Promote, establish, and implement a regional environmental protection vision with partners
- Goal 2 - Protect the positive environmental and biodiversity values of open space and agricultural lands
- Goal 3 - Connect people to open space and agricultural lands, and a regional environmental protection vision

### *Outcomes:*

- Enhanced collaboration/resource sharing
- Strengthened regional conservation strategies
- More diversified participants
- Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)-focused workforce development

### *Beneficiary/Participant Ward(s): 2 & 6*

### *Key rationale for recommendation:*

- Top ranked Tier 2 project in Network and Partnership Support (NPS)
- Tribal partnership opportunity
  - This project fulfills a key purpose of the Grantmaking Program: To strengthen partnerships, specifically with tribes.
- High equity value
  - Midpen is committed to strengthening tribal relationships in the area.
- Strong connection to Midpen Mission and Goals
- Strong anticipated outcomes

## Grassroots Ecology

*Proposal Title:* Roots of Relationship: Deepening Indigenous Allyship

*Project Overview:* Roots of Relationship leverages Grassroots Ecology's access to local lands, native plants, and botanical knowledge to provide meaningful allyship desired by tribes. Project goals are to strengthen and expand relationships and collaborations with Indigenous communities; support connections to culturally significant plants and ecosystems through on-the-ground assistance; and embed Indigenous allyship into our operations, communications, and programs for the long term. This is a continuation of work that Midpen is currently funding.

*Tier 2 Funding Request:* \$59,550

*Impact:* Early-stage

## Attachment 4

### *District Organizational Goals:*

- Goal 2 - Protect the positive environmental and biodiversity values of open space and agricultural lands
- Goal 3 - Connect people to open space and agricultural lands, and a regional environmental protection vision

### *Outcomes:*

- Enhanced collaboration/resource sharing
- More diversified participants
- Applied Indigenous knowledge

*Beneficiary/Participant Ward(s):* 1, 6, & 7

### *Key rationale for recommendation:*

- Top ranked Tier 2 project in Network and Partnership Support (NPS) Funding Priority
- Tribal partnership opportunity
  - The project will create more avenues for Midpen to form partnerships with tribal groups in the area. Midpen's established relationship with Grassroots Ecology will establish an additional resource for connections to tribes.
- High equity value
  - This project will deepen relationships and provide access to culturally significant ecosystems with Indigenous groups; groups that have historically lacked access to the lands that their ancestors have stewarded since time immemorial.
- Strong connection to Midpen Mission and Goals
- Strong anticipated outcomes

## **Funding Priority Area: Applied Science (AP)**

### University of California Santa Cruz

*Proposal Title:* Crab Watch: student-centered research to inform invasive species management in the Midpeninsula Baylands

*Project Overview:* This project seeks to establish the crucial ecological baseline needed for Midpen to identify and implement actions to manage potential invasive European green crab populations in the Bayland marshes, while supporting undergraduate students who have historically lacked access to nature-based activities and hands-on research experience.

*Tier 1 Funding Request:* \$29,930

## Attachment 4

*Impact:* Early-stage

*District Organizational Goals:*

- Goal 2 - Protect the positive environmental and biodiversity values of open space and agricultural lands

*Outcomes:*

- Improved scientific understanding of natural processes
- Inform invasive species dynamics and management

*Beneficiary Ward:* 5

*Key rationale for recommendation:*

This top-ranked Tier 1 project in AS offers strong equity value by providing hands-on research opportunities to UCSC students who have historically lacked access to nature-based outdoor experiences. The project will generate new, actionable scientific data on the ecological impacts of invasive green crab populations, in an area where no management practices currently exist, directly informing future Midpen stewardship decisions. Closely aligned with Midpen's mission and strategic goals, the project is expected to produce meaningful and impactful outcomes.

- Top ranked Tier 1 project in Applied Science (AP) Funding Priority
- High equity value
  - The project will provide a hands-on research opportunity to UCSC students who have historically lacked access to nature-based outdoor experiences.
- New information for Midpen management practices
  - The ecological impact of the invasive green crab species is currently unknown, with no current management practices. The reporting provided by this project will provide Midpen with actionable scientific data to inform management practices.
- Strong connection to Midpen Mission and Goals
- Strong anticipated outcomes

### University of Nevada, Reno

*Proposal Title:* Exploring the Effectiveness of Virtual Fencing for Improved Management of Multiple-Use Objectives on Open Space Agricultural Lands

*Project Overview:* This project seeks to complete a collaborative study to objectively compare virtual fencing (VF) with traditional grazing practices for achieving multiple land management objectives on the La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve, a property managed by Midpen and leased by Willow Creek Land and Cattle. Specifically, this project aims to

## Attachment 4

evaluate how VF influences: 1) riparian condition and grazing distribution; 2) vegetation structure, including fuel loads; 3) plant species richness and weed occurrence (with a focus on distaff thistle); and 4) public perceptions of livestock grazing and VF technology among recreation users.

*Tier 2 Funding Request:* \$55,605

*Impact:* Early-stage

*District Organizational Goals:*

- Goal 2 - Protect the positive environmental and biodiversity values of open space and agricultural lands
- Goal 3 - Connect people to open space and agriculture lands, and a regional environmental protection vision

*Outcomes:*

- Improved scientific understanding of natural processes
- Enhanced stewardship effectiveness on Midpen Lands
- Understand recreation user perceptions of virtual fencing

*Beneficiary Ward:* 6

*Key rationale for recommendation:*

This top-ranked Tier 2 project in AS presents a strong partnership opportunity within the Conservation Grazing Program and directly supports the Coastside Mission to encourage viable agricultural use of land resources alongside ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education. By generating data-driven insights from the University of Nevada Reno, the project will inform District management practices, particularly in maintaining and restoring native grasslands and supporting wildland fire risk management. With its clear alignment to Midpen's mission and goals, the project is anticipated to produce meaningful and impactful outcomes.

- Top ranked Tier 2 project in Applied Science (AP) Funding Priority
- Conservation grazing program partnership opportunity
  - This project will promote the Coastside Mission to "...encourage viable agricultural use of land resources and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education".
- New information for District management practices
  - In alignment with the Conservation Grazing Program Goals, University of Nevada Reno will be able to provide data driven results for best land management practices. It will specifically address the goal of maintaining and restoring native grasslands as well as wildland fire risk management.
- Strong connection to Midpen Mission and Goals
- Strong anticipated outcomes



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

**MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT**  
**LEGISLATIVE, FUNDING, AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

Administrative Office  
5050 El Camino Real  
Los Altos, CA 94022

**Tuesday, April 21, 2026**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Director Holman called the meeting of the Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs Committee to order at 2:01 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Members present: Jed Cyr, Karen Holman, Yoriko Kishimoto

Members absent: None

Staff present: General Manager Ana M. Ruiz, General Counsel Hilary Stevenson, Assistant General Manager Susanna Chan, Assistant General Manager Brian Malone, Chief Financial Officer Stefan Jaskulak, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Maria Soria, Grants Program Manager Carol Schimke, Senior Grants Technician Caitlin Amarillas, Public Affairs Manager Lori Low, Volunteer Program Manager Jennifer Williams, and Governmental Affairs Program Manager Joshua Hugg

Director Holman announced that the public has the opportunity to comment on the agenda, and the opportunity to listen to this meeting through the internet or via telephone. This information can be found on the meeting agenda, which was physically posted at the District's Administrative Office, and on the District website.

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

**Motion:** Director Cyr moved, and Director Kishimoto seconded the motion to adopt the agenda.

**ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0**

**ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

**Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs Committee  
April 21, 2026**

Public comment period opened.

District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Maria Soria reported there were no public speakers for this item.

Public comment period closed.

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

**1. Select Committee Chair for 2026 Calendar Year**

Director Cyr nominated Director Holman to serve as the Committee Chair for calendar year 2026.

Director Holman accepted the nomination.

Public comment period opened.

Ms. Soria reported there were no public speakers for this item.

Public comment period closed.

**Motion:** Director Cyr moved, and Director Kishimoto seconded the motion to select Director Holman as Committee Chair for Calendar Year 2026.

**ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0**

**2. Approve the November 4, 2025 Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes**

Public comment period opened.

Ms. Soria reported there were no public speakers for this item.

Public comment period closed.

**Motion:** Director Kishimoto moved, and Director Cyr seconded the motion to approve the November 4, 2025 Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs committee meeting minutes.

**ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0**

**3. Grant Awards for the 2025 Grantmaking Program (R-26-46)**

Grants Program Manager Carol Schimke and Senior Grants Technician Caitlin Amarillas presented. General Manager Ana Ruiz and Chief Financial Officer/Director of Administrative Services Stefan Jaskulak assisted in answering questions.

**Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs Committee  
April 21, 2026**

Chair Holman asked whether staff has a map showing the location of the beneficiary wards. She commented that she had reviewed the grantees and identified the beneficiary wards and noticed that the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) was assigned to Ward 5, but should have been assigned to Ward 6 since the project focuses on agriculture and fencing.

Ms. Amarillas responded it was a mistake and she will update the ward. She also clarified that the project would take place at La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve.

Chair Holman asked staff to be more attentive to beneficiary wards since the current sequencing is heavily weighted towards ward 6, which has five projects assigned to it.

Ms. Ruiz asked whether it would be helpful, when presenting to the full Board of Directors (Board), to include in attachment 3 of the staff's report an explanation outlining some of the reasons why certain proposals were not recommended. She noted that perhaps the numerical scores alone make it difficult to fully understand the distinctions, as some proposal received scores that are comparatively high or similar to others that were selected and by including a narrative it could provide clarity on why certain proposals were selected.

Ms. Amarillas responded that attachment 3 can be updated to include that information.

Chair Holman agreed that providing additional information would be helpful. She noted that differences between proposals are not always evident from the scores alone.

Ms. Schimke responded that the strategic review proposed by staff, particularly in terms of beneficiaries or participants, is in line with previous years. Furthermore, she stated that this is the first year staff have shared this data and highlighted where participants and beneficiaries are located. She indicated that it would be helpful to see that information in the context of the last few years to see if there are any trends or patterns. With respect to attachment 3, she explained that among the 30 proposals, often the smallest details were the tiebreaker for which proposal was selected, and staff would need to strike a balance with the amount of information to provide regarding how the review committee reached a determination.

Mr. Jaskulak stated that he would be hesitant to add a narrative that explains why certain proposals were not selected, as this could potentially impact on the applicant's opportunities when applying for other grants. He suggested that it be best to provide a more descriptive explanation of why staff recommended the selected proposals.

Chair Holman agreed with Mr. Jaskulak.

Director Kishimoto commented that the evaluation approach is roughly 50% point based and 50% qualitative and suggested that the cutoff threshold could be set higher to either 80, 85, or 88%.

Mr. Jaskulak responded that this would serve as a lesson learned for next year. He further explained that the Request for Proposals process is not based on selecting the lowest bidder or in this case the highest score, but rather on identifying the proposals that best meet District goals.

Ms. Schimke stated that one key lesson learned that could be implemented in future rounds is to use similar scoring criteria as used by some state agencies where specific points are assigned for

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clearly defined elements. She noted that this approach could reduce subjective interpretation, improve scoring consistency, and minimize extreme outliers.

Chair Holman confirmed that Ms. Amarillas will include a chart that shows past beneficiary wards and noted that the chart would be helpful for both the Board and future applicants in identifying gaps and opportunities across wards. She added that the chart should also include the number of grants that were awarded in each ward.

Public comment period opened.

The following person provided comments:

- Kristi Corley

Public comment period closed.

Director Kishimoto highlighted the Committee recommendation to include a better explanation of the selection.

Chair Holman added staff should include a bit of the history.

Director Cyr also requested that a map be included.

Ms. Amarillas confirmed that she will include a map along with a table.

**Motion:** Director Kishimoto moved, and Chair Holman seconded the motion to approve and forward the list of recommended grant awards for the 2025 Grantmaking Program, for a total of \$313,983, to the full Board of Directors for approval.

**ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0**

**4. Update to Board Policy 5.01 – Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition (R-26-47)**

Public Affairs Manager Lori Low presented. Volunteer Program Manager Jennifer Williams, General Manager Ana Ruiz, and Assistant General Manager Brian Malone assisted in answering questions.

Director Kishimoto commented that she is leaning more towards a 20 years of service threshold rather than 25 years.

Chair Holman commented that she is also leaning towards a 20 year threshold, noting that it is more achievable than 25 years of service while still exhibiting a great deal of commitment and dedication. She also suggested a small increase to the threshold for the number of volunteers hours donated.

Director Kishimoto stated that she is supportive of a 20 year service threshold and keeping it at the 500 hours level, noting that the dedication period is limited to a ten-year term.

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Director Cyr also expressed support for the 20 year service threshold. In addition, he requested to know where the current commemorative benches are located and the total number of general benches.

Ms. Ruiz responded that staff will identify the commemorative benches and provide a count.

Public comment period opened.

The following person provided comments:

- Kristi Corley

Public comment period closed.

Director Kishimoto asked how many benches exist overall.

Mr. Malone responded that staff would need to confirm the number.

Director Kishimoto requested that the total number of benches be included in the staff's report when it is presented to the full Board.

**Motion:** Director Kishimoto moved, and Chair Holman seconded the motion to approve an update to Board Policy 5.01 – *Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition* regarding special recognition eligibility for bench dedications with the following modifications:

1. Change the 25 years of service to 20 years; and
2. Staff to re-evaluate potentially increasing the 500-hour requirement to 600 or 650 hours or provide an analysis of why 500 hours is recommended.

**ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0**

**5. Legislative Positions for Consideration by the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (R-26-48)**

Governmental Affairs Program Manager Joshua Hugg presented.

Director Kishimoto noted that staff slide #3 lists SB 1135 as authored by Becker, but the staff report identifies the author as Senator Blake Speier.

Mr. Hugg responded that it was a mistake and confirmed that SB 1135 was authored by Senator Blake Speier.

Director Kishimoto asked if SB 1268 could be elevated from a priority two to a priority one.

Mr. Hugg stated that the District can serve in a supportive role as there are other groups already supporting the bill, but the District would not be in a position to take a leadership role.

Director Kishimoto recommended moving SB 1268 to a priority one and asked if staff had any issues with moving it.

Mr. Hugg responded that the difficulty in raising the priority is solely due to staff capacity.

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Chair Holman asked what could be done to address staff capacity if SB 1268 was elevated to a priority one.

Mr. Hugg stated that staff would conduct targeted outreach to specific delegation members on the relevant committee with whom the District has relationships, making explicit asks and effectively working the phones as it goes through, and noted that the bill analysis does have a long list of supporters.

Chair Holman commented that she would rather prioritize staff's energy to AB 2513 and elevate it to a priority one. She emphasized that she does support SB 1268 but there is already broad support for this bill.

Director Kishimoto noted that she understood the reasoning to elevate AB 2513 to a priority one since SB 1268 does have broad support and supports elevating AB 2513 to a priority one.

Public comment period opened.

The following person provided comments:

- Kristi Corley

Public comment period closed.

Chair Holman confirmed that there were no objections for the Committee elevating AB 2513 to a priority one bill, and the Committee concurred.

No Committee action required.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Holman adjourned the meeting of the Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs Committee at 4:09 p.m.

Maria Soria, MMC  
District Clerk



Ward number

Locations of Beneficiaries and/or Participants by Ward

Recommended Grantees	Funding Priorities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Hidden Villa	AIE			X	X	X	X	X
The HEAL Project	AIE					X		X
UCSC	AS					X		
U. of Nevada Reno	AS						X	
Arriba South Coast	NPS						X	
Grassroots Ecology	NPS	X					X	X
Muwekma OPF	NPS		X				X	

