



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

# Memorandum

DATE: May 23, 2018

MEMO TO: District Board of Directors

THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, Acting General Manager *[Signature]*

FROM: Mel Askay, Grants Specialist  
Stefan Jaskulak, CFO

SUBJECT: Grants Program Strategy

---

## **SUMMARY**

The Grants Program is currently undergoing a strategic planning process, the outcome of which will be a comprehensive three to five year vision for the Grants Program. As part of the process, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) is soliciting input from staff and select external organizations. External interviews will inform Case Studies, which will be used to develop a set of best practices for the Grants Program. The Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs, and Action Plan and Budget Committees will provide input on the preliminary strategy in late July 2018, with the final strategy to be presented to the full Board of Directors in September 2018.

## **DISCUSSION**

The strategic planning process for the Grants Program aims to build a well-defined three to five year vision that:

- Increases public and private grant funding;
- Increases the ability for District to leverage current funds;
- Builds an organizational culture that understands that the Grants Program is integral to District financial success;
- Strengthens each staff member's individual role in grant making in a way that complements and reinforces their existing work; and
- Expands District's funding partnerships and collaborations while avoiding competition with partners.

To achieve these outcomes, the strategy will include:

- A comprehensive three to five year Grants Program that includes grant revenue and expense projections, key actions, timing, resources, responsibilities, process flowchart, and measures of success. Components will include a clear process for identifying and prioritizing projects and programs that are grant-worthy, a protocol

for identifying, evaluating and seeking grants, and annual targets for grant funds received;

- A strategy to strengthen existing and build new relationships with funders and partner organizations; and
- Methods to foster internal alignment around the Grants Strategy, embed the grant making process into project timelines and capital improvement plans, and engage project staff throughout the grants life cycle.

To assist with strategy development, District has retained the services of Tina Stott, of Stott Planning Associates and Donna Fletcher of Mission Driven. Tina and Donna have worked together developing organizational development and fundraising strategies for over ten years, and have a deep background in organization planning, communications, and revenue generation for conservation organizations.

### Structure and Process

Managing the strategic process is Mel Askay, District Grants Specialist, with guidance from Ana Ruiz, Acting General Manager and a designated Project Team, which includes Stefan Jaskulak, CFO, and Acting Assistant General Managers Christine Butterfield and Brian Malone. The strategy will also include input from staff across all departments through internal interviews as well as three Management Team discussions. The purpose of the internal interviews is to identify how to streamline grant-related processes, where to focus grant-seeking efforts, and how to increase staff engagement in the Grants Program.

The consultants will also lead external interviews as part of the Case Studies to identify best practices that District can incorporate into its strategy. The outcome will be best practice recommendations that will inform District's own processes, revenue targets, and Grants Program structure. In addition to interviewing District legislative consultants who are well versed in state funding opportunities (Environmental & Energy Consulting and Public Policy Advocates), Case Study interviewees include:

- East Bay Regional Parks
- Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy
- Peninsula Open Space Trust
- San Mateo County
- Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority
- Sonoma County Ag Preservation and Open Space District
- Sustainable Conservation

The strategy will also provide recommendations to ensure that the Grants Program is working in collaboration with current and potential partners.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Internal interviews are complete and Case Study interviews are planned for June. Preliminary findings will be presented to the Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs, and Action Plan and Budget Committees in late July 2018, with the final strategy presented to the Board of Directors in September 2018 (see attached schedule for details).

