



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-25-85
Meeting 25-18
June 25, 2025

AGENDA ITEM 6

AGENDA ITEM

Grants Program Update

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

(5) *den*

Receive a Grants Program informational update on the program's grant revenue development and management metrics, approach, and strategic planning. No formal action is required.

SUMMARY

The Grants Program, established in 2016 and first staffed in 2017, strives for a proactive, collaborative, diversified and trustworthy approach to grant revenue generation and management. Over eight years, the program has facilitated more than \$45,500,000 in awards, and over \$17,300,000 in reimbursements. During Fiscal Year 2024-25 (FY25), the Grants Program has stewarded 18 grant awards and submitted 34 narrative reports; built a comprehensive prospect list of over 172 public and private funders with clear assessment criteria; developed 16 grant proposals totaling \$50.5 million; and held 30 funder prospect meetings.

Also in this fiscal year, the Grants team has achieved several distinct milestones:

- **Strategic Review of the Grantmaking Program:** prepared findings and recommendations for improvements to the Grantmaking Program.
- **Advocacy:** traveled to Washington, D.C. to advance funding goals with key federal agencies and legislators.
- **Staff Transitions:** onboarded the new Grants Program Manager and expanded capacity within the program; transitioned FEMA grant management duties from temporary staff to existing full-time staff.
- **Data Management:** implemented a new customer relationship management (CRM) system to enhance organization, tracking, and reporting of funder engagement activities.

The Grants Program strategic plan expired in 2021. In FY26, the program will initiate a comprehensive process to develop a renewed strategic plan to serve the District for another three to five years.

DISCUSSION

Introduction

In 2016, the District established a centralized grants program to improve internal efficiencies in the pursuit of grant funding and expand grant revenue streams. The first staff was hired in 2017. Since then, the Grants Program has facilitated over \$45,500,000 in awards. The large majority

(~90%) is from public funders, including more than \$23,000,000 through elected state and federal congressional member requests (Member Requests).

Metrics

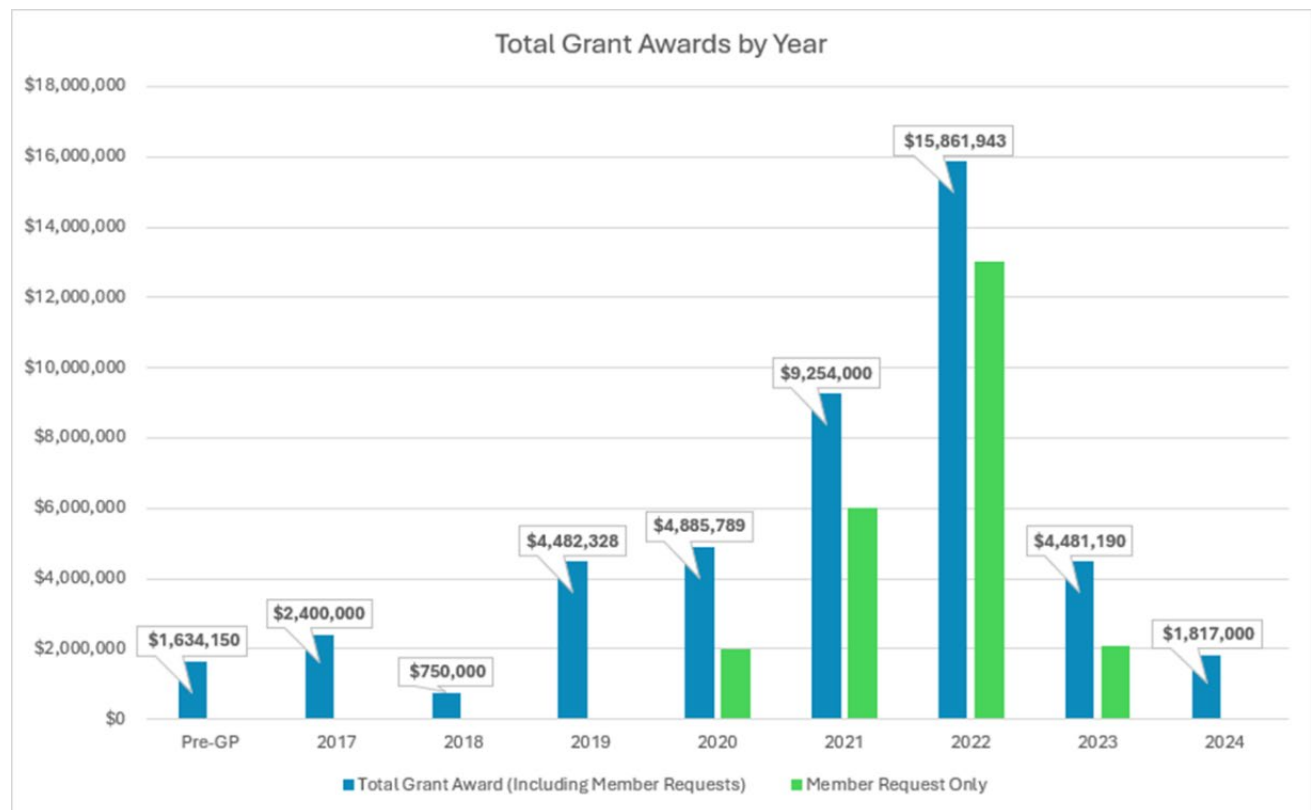
Grant Awards, Calendar Year 2017 – 2024

Since 2017, the Grants Program has facilitated a total of \$45,560,000 in grant awards. The chart below reflects grants awarded by calendar year from 2017 through 2024. “Pre-GP” refers to awards made prior to the establishment of the Grants Program that the program inherited for management in 2017.

As of 2020, the Grants Program and Government Affairs have begun allocating time and effort in pursuit of legislative funding requests from State senators and assemblymembers as well as members of the U.S. Congress. Through that advocacy, Member Request funding (listed below and shown in the chart by the green bars) has comprised between 41% and 82% of total annual grant awards.

- 2020 – \$2M (41%)
- 2021 - \$6M (65%)
- 2022 - \$13M (82%)
- 2023 - \$2.1M (47%)

In 2024, one Member Request was made, which was declined. In 2025, 10 Member Requests were made and are pending, totaling \$23,000,000.

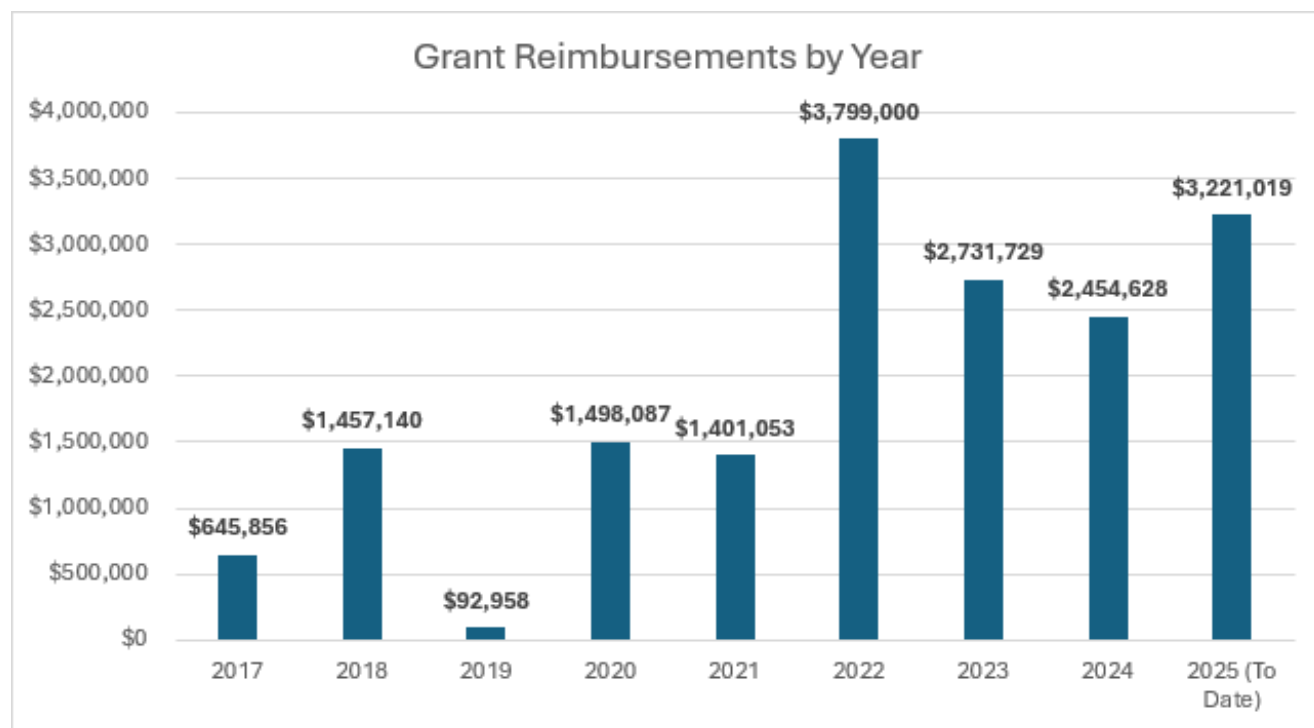


As the chart above shows, grant awards fluctuate due to changes in public and/or private foundation funding priorities, project readiness, and the competitive nature of grant programs. Timing and availability of grant opportunities and internal capacity to develop strong proposals and manage grant administration can also lead to variability in award amounts from one year to the next. The Grants Program continues to explore and implement ways to improve organizational readiness to pursue grants.

Grant Reimbursements, Fiscal Year 2017 - Current

Public funding agencies primarily issue reimbursable grants, as opposed to providing upfront funding. Grant reimbursement activities refer to the process by which the Grants Program stewards (manages and oversees) grant awards with responsibility and accountability, ensuring that the resources are used as intended and in alignment with the grant's goals and requirements. The process of managing a reimbursable grant involves tracking expenditures, monitoring project progress, maintaining compliance with reporting and funder guidelines, and transparently communicating outcomes and challenges to the grantor.

Of the total funding that the Grants Program has facilitated, the large majority, 77%, has been reimbursable grants. Since the Grants Program was established, over \$17,300,000 of grant-funded expenditures have been reimbursed, including over \$600,000 from FEMA for damages sustained to District roads and trails during the 2022-2023 storms.¹ Fiscal year reimbursement totals between FY17 through FY25 (to date) are shown in the chart below.



¹ These reimbursements do not include \$14,855,000 in property acquisition payments as that funding is not processed through the Grants Program reimbursement process. Acquisition funds are included in the grants awarded summary above.

Metrics, Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) to Date

Metrics	#	\$
Grant awards managed, total	18	
Active grants (including 1 FEMA portfolio of <i>reimbursed</i> projects)	12	
Grant award narrative reports submitted	34	
Grant prospects identified	172	
Funder meetings, including legislative offices, public funding agencies, private foundations.	30	
Grant requests submitted (pre-applications and full proposals)	16	\$50.2M
Grant requests awarded (including projects within the 1 FEMA portfolio that were awarded for reimbursement)	3	\$605K
Grant requests pending (including 1 FEMA portfolio of projects that was submitted prior to FY25 and <i>not yet awarded</i> for reimbursement)	13	\$41.7M
Grant requests declined	2	\$13M

Key Initiatives Advanced

During FY25, the Grants team has advanced several key initiatives as summarized below:

- **Understanding Impact - Grantmaking Program Strategic Review:** Completed three rounds of in-depth review of the Grantmaking Program (established in 2018). The findings and recommendations were presented to Executive Leadership in February and selected policy recommendations will be presented to LFPAC on July 15, 2025.
- **Advocating for Funding:** Together with the Government Affairs Program, participated in an inaugural advocacy trip to Washington D.C., meeting with funding agencies that included the Department of Transportation, National Park Service, and US Fish and Wildlife Service, along with various legislators and/or their staff.
- **Managing Staff Transitions:** In addition to onboarding a new Grants Program Manager, in August 2024, the Grants Program converted a half-time Senior Grants Technician to a full-time position. The program, in May 2025, also transitioned the workload of a limited-term, FEMA grant management position (established in 2023 to pursue federal funding for storm damage) to existing full-time Grants Program staff.
- **Improving Data Management:** Established a new ‘customer relationship management’ system using the HubSpot platform, an existing subscription database service that offers the potential for the Grants Program to improve the organization of and access to information about funder engagement activities as well as generate reports on program activities more efficiently.

“Moves Management” Strategy

Building off the existing structure and funder relationships, the Grants Program strives for a proactive, collaborative, diversified and trustworthy approach to grant revenue generation and management. The strategy includes four stages of activities that advance a funder relationship: Prospecting (grant research and analysis); Cultivation (external relationship and internal collaboration); Solicitation (proposal development); and Stewardship (grant management). As a whole, these activities are referred to as “moves management” with the Grants Program’s primary role being one that facilitates the funder relationship through these stages with the goal to deepen the relationship and increase funding over time.

The activities below, outlined by the moves management stages, are the Grant Program’s 2025 calendar year objectives.

Prospecting – Funding opportunity identification and qualification

- Diversify institutional funder prospects:
 - Expand awareness of and engagement with aligned private (including corporate) funding institutions
 - Establish a donor-advised fund (DAF) outreach plan through DAF-sponsoring institutions, particularly community foundations.
- Develop a grant prospecting system that includes a grants prospecting database subscription for private foundation and corporate grant opportunities; a grant prospect tracking system; and an internal grant opportunity notification method.
- Expand the Grants Program team’s grant prospecting skill set.
- Establish a project-based portfolio assignment model whereby each Grants Program team member is assigned a set of project types, e.g. wildfire and forest health projects, for which they identify funder prospects and qualify those opportunities with possible projects.

Cultivation - External relationship building

Funders

- Develop and implement engagement strategies/objectives for funders within each funder within a project-based portfolio.
- Foster new funder relationships by leveraging forums (e.g., conferences, webinars, gatherings, site visits) as networking opportunities.
- Secure project review meetings with funding agencies; cultivate funders as ‘thought partners’.
- Leverage state and federal legislative consultants to support advocacy visits with public funding agencies and submission of member funding requests.

Colleagues

- Develop relationships with counterparts at public and private land protection, land management, and park recreation agencies to share knowledge, create partnerships, and celebrate successes.

Cultivation - Internal collaboration

- Foster a culture to support the full integration of grant revenue development and best practices throughout the organization.
- Meet periodically with primary² departments to review project funding needs.
- Participate in project coordination meetings to learn about project advancements and challenges and provide grant updates.
- Convene with project managers to review specific grant opportunities and discuss project readiness approaches.
- Work with project managers to coordinate processes for the development of timely and quality grant proposals, reports, reimbursement requests, and/or modification requests.

Solicitation –Proposal preparation and submission

- Develop and implement processes that result in requests for funding to funders, such as letters of introduction and inquiry, pre-proposals, and full proposals. Processes include engagement with contract grant writers as appropriate; a detailed review of grant guidelines (e.g., RFPs; Notice of Funding Opportunities); meetings with project staff and contractors to review content needs and establish, assign and schedule tasks; developing narrative and other proposal content; and setting up grant submission portal accounts.

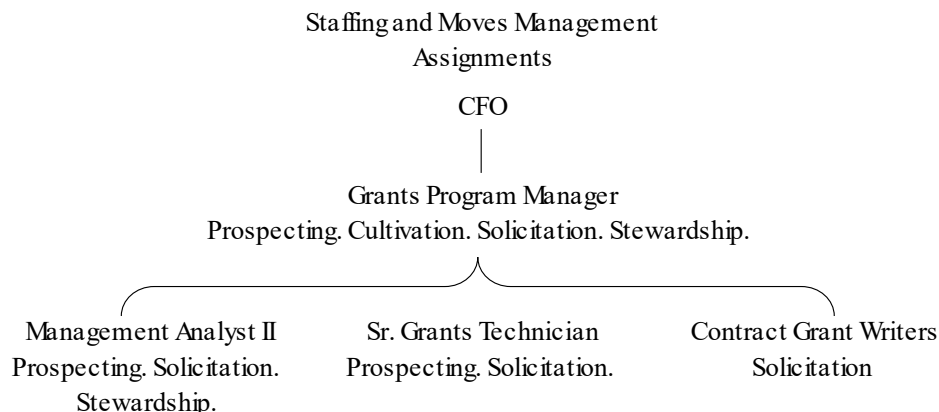
Stewardship - Grant management practices

- Submit to funders timely and quality grant reimbursement requests and reports.
- Communicate effectively with funders to keep them apprised of challenges or delays as needed.
- Create opportunities to meet with funders, virtually and/or on project site tours.
- Evaluate internal controls that impact grant development and management and make recommendations as appropriate.

Staffing Structure

The Grants Program includes 3 full-time equivalent positions – Grants Program Manager, Management Analyst II, and Senior Grants Technician – and a pool of grant writing contractors overseen by the Grants Program Manager. Each position has responsibilities for move-management stages. Those shown in the chart below are the current primary assignments. In addition to those responsibilities, the Grants Program Manager is also responsible for staff supervision and strategic planning, and the Senior Grants Technician manages grant consultant contract and invoice processes and coordinates the Grantmaking Program.

² Primary refers to the departments that primarily receive Grants Program services: Planning, Natural Resources, Land Stewardship and Trails (previously L&F), and Engineering and Construction.



Grantmaking Program (Award of Grants to Outside Partners)

Board Policy for the Grantmaking Program (Attachment 1) came into effect in February 2018, replacing the 2007 Resource Management Grant Program. Since its establishment, the program has completed three grantmaking cycles in 2019, 2021, and 2023, receiving a total of 89 applications and making 22 grants to 18 unique grantees totaling \$839,725. Shown in the table below, there was an increased number of applicants each cycle, growing from 21 to 28 to 40, respectively, with a corresponding increase in the total amount of funding requested.

Totals	2019	2021	2023
# of Applicants	21	28	40
Total amount requested	\$762,853	\$1,025,35	\$1,700,000
# Grantees	7	10	5
Amount awarded	\$248,104	\$341,852	\$249,769

A review of the Grantmaking Program was recently completed with policy and procedural recommendations identified. These recommendations will be presented and discussed with the Legislative, Funding and Public Affairs Committee on July 15. It is anticipated that the next round of Request for Proposals will be released in September/October 2025.

Grants Program Strategic Plan Update

The existing three-year (2018-2021) Grants Program Strategic Plan (Attachment 2) guided the program's early-stage development. A new Grants Program Manager was hired in June 2024 who has advanced the plan's broad goals, as listed below, while refining outcomes/objectives (as outlined previously) to reflect current needs.

- Increase public and private grant funding
- Increase the ability to leverage funds
- Embed the value and importance of the Grants Program in supporting long-term financial success across all levels of the organization
- Strengthen each staff member's skills and individual role in the Grants Program while ensuring adequate time is built into future project plans to secure grants
- Further the District's mission while expanding funding partnerships and collaborations through the Grantmaking Program and other venues.
- Develop and deepen partner relationships with outside funders.

In parallel with the implementation of activities to achieve the refined outcomes, in FY26 the Grants Program will initiate a comprehensive process to develop a renewed strategic plan to serve the District for another three to five years.

Board Support of the Grants Program

Opportunities exist for members of the Board to continue supporting the goals and objectives of the Grant Program through relationship building and advocacy with current and potential funders. For example, Board members may be able to open doors to new funding opportunities by leveraging networks and making introductions to potential funders; communicate to the Grants Program the conversations that may occur between a Board member and funder; and participate in meetings or site visits with funders. The Grants Program team will continue to reach out to Board members for opportunities to support funding pursuits when these arise, such as attending tours and meetings with prospective funders.

FISCAL IMPACT

The recommended action has no direct, immediate fiscal impact.

PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

None

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act, and an interested party public notice was emailed to the District's current list.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

This item is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act.

NEXT STEPS

The Grants Program will next present recommendations for improvements to the Grantmaking Program to LFPAC in July for their review and input and will follow with presenting the final recommendations to the full Board for consideration of approval. The revisions to the Grantmaking Program will take effect as part of the next round of RFPs, which is scheduled for September/October.

Attachment(s)

1. Board Policy 3.10, District Grantmaking Program
2. Grants Program Strategic Plan 2018 - 2021

Responsible Department Head:

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Prepared by/contact person:

Carol Schimke, Grants Program Manager, Grants Program

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Board Policy Manual

District Grantmaking Program	Policy 3.10 Chapter 3 – Fiscal Management
Effective Date: 02/28/2018	Revised Date: N/A
Prior Versions: 11/17/2010; 11/14/2007	

Purpose

The purposes of the District's Grantmaking Program are to a) support projects that further the District's mission, b) build the capacity of academic and nonprofit institutions in order to sustain and grow the conservation field; and c) facilitate the District's mission and work by building and strengthening partnerships.

Grantmaking programmatic focus areas*Programmatic priorities*

The District's Grantmaking Program will include a broad focus to ensure a range of projects are considered and reflect the diversity of work in which the District engages. Grantmaking will be guided by an emphasis on investments that reflect a regional focus and provide avenues for partnership, both with the District as well as among other stakeholders.

Using these guiding principles, eligible project categories will include proposals focusing on applied science; networks, partnerships; and access, education and interpretation. General grant parameters for each grant proposal category are outlined below, with the grant solicitation providing additional detail for each category.

Applied Science

Research proposals will include academic or practitioner science projects that support the protection and enhancement of natural resources on District lands. The purpose of this support is to develop and disseminate information that advances scientific understanding of natural processes. Projects with potential to increase the effectiveness of applied stewardship of resources on District lands will be preferentially considered. Types of projects may include applied academic research or proof-of-concept, with focus areas including 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-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.

Network and Partnership Support

In order to broaden its impact and ensure District priorities are aligned with multi-

jurisdictional conservation and recreation plans, grant proposals that cultivate, sustain, or grow established conservation networks will be accepted. Network or partnership support could take the form of facilitation or other consulting support, staff time for network participation, outreach, meeting supplies, etc.

Access, Interpretation and Education

Funding for access, environmental interpretation and education will be directed towards ensuring equal opportunity for all residents to take advantage of District lands while fostering an appreciation for open space protection, outdoor recreation, and environmental stewardship. The focus will be on funding projects that encourage access to and use of District preserves by all and in creating and executing nature-based educational and interpretive experiences for children and adults. Funding can be used for staff time to create or execute programming, transportation, educational and interpretive programming materials or supplies, facilitate knowledge of outdoor recreational opportunities, access to the outdoors, and environmental stewardship activities.

Grant management and internal controls

Program administration

The Grants Specialist will oversee the grant solicitation, selection, and grant management once selected. Other departments, including Visitor Services and Natural Resources, will be brought in for technical expertise to assist in evaluating proposals through a review committee. Once the grants have been selected, the Grants Specialist will oversee the administrative requirements for grant management, with at least one technical content expert from the relevant department assigned to assist in evaluating grant progress.

Proposal solicitation, selection and due diligence

The District is committed to soliciting proposals from a diverse range of organizations and application solicitations will be broadly disseminated to encourage organizations that reach underserved communities to apply. Additionally, the District will consider past District funding in its scoring criteria in order to increase the competitiveness of organizations that have not previously received District funding.

Eligible grantees will include accredited academic institutions, 501(c)(3) nonprofits, or public entities. Organizations without an IRS-designated status will be eligible for funding if a fiscal sponsorship is established prior to application submittal. A formal evaluation criteria will be used to select proposals for funding, including the organization's ability to administer the grant. Example evaluation categories include the applicant's ability to successfully complete the proposed work in the anticipated timeline and budget, past District funding, fit with District's mission, Board priority, and potential to develop new partnerships.

Grant terms and internal controls

The maximum award for individual grants will be \$50,000. The award can be expended as necessary within a three-year grant term, contingent on satisfactory progress on grant objectives. Grants will be administered on a reimbursement basis, with up to 15% available up front if the grantee has a demonstrable need. Grantees will be eligible for reimbursement costs

up until the original grant amount, contingent on satisfactory progress toward grant goals.

Grant applications and reporting

Grantees will be responsible for submitting annual or semi-annual reports that summarize activities and any relevant findings, alongside periodic check-ins with District staff. Additionally, grantees may also be asked to present the grant outcomes to the District staff and/or the Board in addition to formal reporting. Additionally, reimbursement submissions will require expenses to date recorded against the budget, along with invoices and accomplishments and milestones achieved during the reimbursement period.

The application and reporting process will be specific to a) the grant category, and b) the dollar amount awarded. Applications and reporting procedures will have two tiers of requirements (up to \$25,000 and up to \$50,000). This structure will ensure that smaller grantees are not prohibited from applying due to cumbersome application and reporting requirements in relation to the funding received. Additionally, the District will require that grantees make any acquired data, educational/interpretive materials, or conclusions available to the public. The Board will receive updates on the status of the grants and outcomes through an annual report.

Additional grant requirements and process

- Application solicitations will be released every year or every other year when funding is available and the District Grantmaking Policy will be evaluated every three years and updated as necessary. Grantees will continue to be eligible for additional application cycles, with no funding tenure limit.
- Eligible projects must not result in permanent damage and/or impairment to habitats or natural resources on District lands and will be in compliance with the District's Permit to Enter procedures (required for research projects).
- If indirect costs are costs incurred that do not have directly attributable expenses, they may be charged at no more than 10% of total grant cost. Examples include general and administrative costs, general equipment purchase or maintenance, and salaries and benefits of executive or administrative personnel who may not be directly engaged in the project. Subcontractors are excluded from indirect cost calculations.



GRANTS PROGRAM STRATEGIC PLAN 2018-2021

OCTOBER 2018



Acknowledgements

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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- Yoriko Kishimoto, Ward 2
- Jed Cyr, Ward 3
- Curt Riffle, Ward 4
- Nonette Hanko, Ward 5
- Larry Hassett, Ward 6
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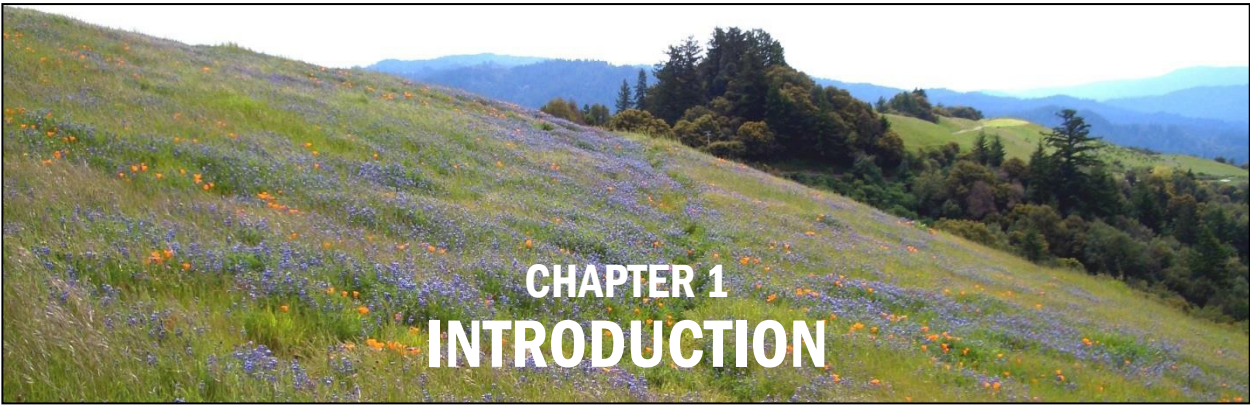
Finance

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1.1 BACKGROUND

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

Established 46 years ago, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) is an independent Special District that has protected 63,000 acres of public land in Santa Clara, San Mateo and Santa Cruz Counties. The District also manages 26 open space preserves and 238 miles of trails that host over two million visitors per year. The District's three areas of focus are regional open space greenbelt preservation; protection and restoration of the natural environment; and public access and education. The majority of the District's funding comes from property tax revenues (\$47 million). Measure AA, approved by voters in 2014, provides \$300 million in bond funding over 30 years for 25 Measure AA Portfolios focused on public access, restoration and land conservation. Other revenue for District projects and programs comes from three additional sources – grants, acquisition discounts, and donations of funds and property – with grants averaging about 2.5 percent of annual revenue.

GRANTS HISTORY

Prior to 2016, District project staff identified, wrote and managed grants. Grants secured from 1989 to 2010 for acquisition and development, resource management, and restoration totaled approximately \$50 million. Between 2012 and 2018, grant revenue averaged approximately \$1.2 million per year, with the majority of the grants supporting land acquisition and capital projects. Following the passage of Measure AA, grant revenue dropped due to increased staff focus on implementing the bond-funded projects.

1.2 THE GRANTS PROGRAM

PURPOSE

Recognizing the need to strengthen its grants capacity, the District established a centralized Grants Program in late 2016. In early 2017 it hired a Grants Specialist to build the Program. The Grants Program is intended to be a long-term investment that will both leverage and augment District funding, and help fill the gap between the original benchmark Measure AA conceptual cost estimates and present-day cost estimates refined by District staff.

Having a centralized program serves several purposes: it transfers much of the burden of identifying, developing and tracking grants from project staff; it begins to build a District-wide culture of grant-seeking; and provides the opportunity for a long-term focus on revenue generation from grants.

1. Introduction

In addition to seeking grants, the Grants Program is also responsible for the District's Grantmaking Program. This program will grant \$250,000 in grants on an annual basis to partner agencies and organizations. Funding through a previous version of this Program was occasionally available in lesser amounts for conservation-related academic research in District preserves. The updated program will expand both the amount of funding available and the eligible categories of funding.

WHAT IS A GRANT?

Funds generated and tracked by the Grants Program fall into four categories:

- Public agency grant funding, secured by the District, for District projects and programs
- Private foundation or corporation grant funding, secured by the District for District projects and programs
- Public or private grant funding, secured by another agency or organization, where the District provides a financial match or project support to complete a District and/or partner priority project or program
- Public or private grant funding, secured by the District where partners provide additional funding to complete a District and/or partner priority project or program

Grant payments can be received in one lump sum or can be distributed over the life of the grant based upon the District submitting reimbursement requests for time and/or expenses incurred, and the grantor providing reimbursement for eligible work accomplished.

The Grants Program does not work with landowners to seek property donations or discounts – this is the role of the Real Property Department– nor does it seek funding from individual donors. Individual donations are processed through the Public Affairs Department. Occasionally funding agreements occur in which an agency provides funds to the District to complete a project. These funds are coordinated through the department that is managing the project and the Grants Program is available to provide assistance in monitoring the expenditure and tracking for those funds.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

The Grants Program was established and the Grants Specialist was hired in early 2017. Since that time, the Grants Program and Grants Specialist have accomplished the following:

- Developed AmpliFund, a grant management database to track public and private grant opportunities and grants awarded
- Identified procedures and roles related to grant identification and application, grant awards, grant amendments and reimbursements, and grant monitoring and administration
- Summarized opportunities for legislative grant funding (Prop 1, SB 1, SB 5, and Coastal Conservancy) to provide information to staff about sources of potential funding
- Provided ongoing staff education and training to integrate grants into existing priorities, workflow, and budgeting
- Worked collaboratively with District departments to review potential grant opportunities and submit nine grant applications over 15 months that resulted in six successful grants/Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) totaling \$2.5 million
- Furthered partnership/external relationship-building with the Bay Area Trails Collaborative, California Landscape Stewardship Network and the Wildlife Corridor Working Group

- Participated in state agency meetings to build awareness of District priorities among potential funders in advance of seeking Prop 68 funding
- Managed the Grants Program Strategic Plan process
- Created project and issue-based factsheets and a funder/partner brochure to inform potential funders about key projects and facets of the District's work related to climate action, watersheds, healthy forests and regional trails.

1.3 GRANTS PROGRAM STRATEGIC PLAN

In early 2018 the District initiated the development of this Grants Program Strategic Plan (Strategy). This Strategy will guide the Grants Program over the coming three years (FY2018-19 through FY2020-21). The goals and desired outcomes of the Strategy are identified below.

GOALS

- Increase public and private grant funding;
- Increase the ability for the District to leverage funds;
- Embed the value and importance of the Grants Program in supporting the District's long-term financial success across all levels of the organization;
- Strengthen each staff member's skills and individual role in the Grants Program while ensuring adequate time is built into future project plans to secure grants; and
- Further the District's mission while expanding funding partnerships and collaborations through the Grantmaking Program and other venues.
- Develop and deepen partner relationships with outside funders.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- A comprehensive three-year Strategy that includes grant revenue and expense projections, key actions, timing, resources, responsibilities and measures of success.
- A clear process for identifying and prioritizing projects and programs that are grant-worthy.
- A protocol for identifying, evaluating and seeking grants.
- Annual targets for grant funds received.
- An approach to building relationships with funders and partner organizations.
- Methods to foster internal alignment around the Strategy and engage project staff throughout the grant's life cycle.

STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

This Strategy is designed to guide the District in building the Grants Program over time, particularly in the areas of staffing, funding expectations, and internal systems and communications. It is also designed to streamline grant processes and leverage staff expertise and knowledge while minimizing staff time spent on grant research, writing and reporting. The Strategy provides direction at both the strategic and tactical levels so that future Grants Specialists can understand both the rationale for the Strategy and the nuts and bolts of implementing it. This ensures optimum knowledge transfer and the continued growth and evolution of the Grants Program, regardless of individual staff.

STRATEGIC PLAN ELEMENTS

1. Introduction
2. Grant Program Assumptions 2018-2021
3. Structure and Staffing
4. Funding Sources and Priority Projects
5. Criteria and Measures of Success
6. Recommended Policies and Procedures
7. Revenue and Expense Projections 2018-2021

1. Introduction

The Strategy is a living document and is intended to be reviewed and updated annually as the Grants Program grows and evolves; new systems are put in place; procedures are evaluated and adapted; and annual work plans are developed, implemented and evaluated. It is anticipated that the Strategy will be completely revised in four years, after the Grants Program is well-established.

The Strategy includes hyperlinks to relevant Strategy sections that provide further explanation or definition of responsibilities, procedures or criteria.

1.4 GUIDING DOCUMENTS

Broad project priorities for the Grants Program are informed by the District's four key planning initiatives:

STRATEGIC PLAN AND ANNUAL UPDATES

In 2011, the District adopted a 15- to 20-year District-wide Strategic Plan to provide it with the flexibility, foresight and means to succeed in realizing the following goals:

PRESERVING OPEN SPACE

The Strategic Plan's goals for regional open space greenbelt preservation include expanding protected land to enhance biodiversity, climate change resilience, and scenic and rural character; protecting and stewarding watershed lands; linking preserved lands for habitat and people; and supporting working farms and ranches.

PROTECTING AND RESTORING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Goals related to environmental protection and restoration include water quality management; implementing management practices that benefit sensitive species and their habitats; managing wildfire to become a more natural component of the ecosystem while minimizing its negative effects; connecting the diversity of habitats; and protecting cultural resources.

PROVIDING PUBLIC ACCESS AND EDUCATION

The third component of the Strategic Plan focuses on increasing public access; creating linkages; providing natural and cultural resource education; ensuring safe, clean and inviting preserves; and engaging communities in ongoing conservation.

The Strategic Plan is reviewed annually to track progress toward goals, changes in the built and natural landscape, and trends and demographics that alter prior assumptions. The Strategic Plan serves as the foundation for the District's annual Capital Improvement and Action Plan.

VISION PLAN

In 2012, the District celebrated its 40th anniversary and recognized that its traditional focus on acquiring land needed to be expanded in the face of changing demographics, social values and priorities. To systematically arrive at a strategic course for the future, the District launched *Imagine the Future of Open Space*, an 18-month vision process to engage the community in a meaningful and structured conversation about the preservation and use of District open space; to assess critical opportunities for conservation within District boundaries; and to develop a regional vision for open space. From this process, 54 Priority Action Portfolios were identified that focused on land protection, habitat restoration and low-intensity recreation.

The 54 Priority Action Portfolios were prioritized by the public and approved by the District's Board of Directors in January 2014. This resulted in 25 high priority project portfolios that served as the basis for the Measure AA ballot initiative in June 2014. The 29 remaining Vision Plan portfolios will be completed as time and resources allow.

MEASURE AA PRIORITIES

Measure AA is a \$300 million general obligation bond approved in June 2014 by over two-thirds of voters living within the District's service area. Proceeds from bonds, are sold in a series over approximately the next 20-30 years, and will be used to:

- protect natural open space lands
- open preserves or areas of preserves that are currently closed
- construct public access improvements such as new trails and staging areas
- restore and enhance open space land, which includes forests, streams, watersheds, and coastal ranch areas

Measure AA is focused on the top 25 Measure AA Portfolios identified in the Vision Plan. These project portfolios are phased over the life of the bond. Measure AA projects, along with the Vision Plan projects, provide the basis for the annual Capital Improvement and Action Plan.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT AND ACTION PLAN

Each year the District develops its Capital Improvement and Action Plan that establishes project priorities, staffing and resource needs for the coming year. The document highlights the key projects the District will focus on in the coming year and also includes a three-year capital improvement needs assessment. These one- and three-year projections provide a broad set of priorities for grant-seeking.

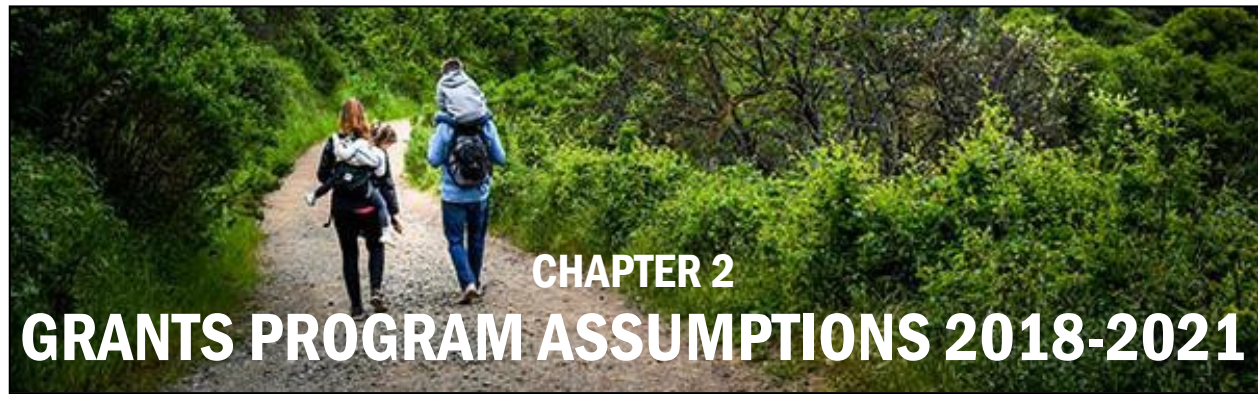
1.5 PLANNING PROCESS

The Grants Program was established in December 2016 as a centralized hub for coordinating public and private grant-seeking under the purview of a Grants Specialist. The program was developed to optimize the District's ability to secure grant funding, collaborate with its partners, and leverage Measure AA funding and tax revenues. In April 2018, the District retained consultants to work with District staff and Board members to develop a comprehensive Strategy that defines the structure, systems and procedures of the newly created Grants Program. The planning process to develop the Strategy included the following steps:

- Review of background data and information
- Interviews with the District's General Manager, Assistant General Managers, Department Managers and departmental teams to elicit their ideas and concerns (see [Appendix 1](#))
- Review of past and current grants processes and procedures, resulting in a Grants Program Audit that summarizes significant findings (see [Appendix 1](#))
- Interviews with Grants Program staff from other agencies and nonprofit organizations to elicit best practices and lessons learned (see [Appendix 1](#))
- Regular meetings with the District's Project and Management Teams to secure guidance and direction

1.6 KEY FINDINGS AND BEST PRACTICES

Key findings from the interviews, audit and the best practices of other agencies are included in [Appendix 1](#). A separate report containing all findings derived from the audit and internal and external interviews is available on the District's server or from the Grant Specialist.



The following assumptions will guide the grants program for the coming three years – from FY2018-19 through FY2020-21.

2.1 STRUCTURE AND STAFFING

- In order to maximize grant funding, the staff capacity of the Grants Program will be expanded over time to include outside contractors and additional staff. Benchmarks will be developed to identify how scaling will occur.
- In order to maximize income and the potential to secure funding from existing and new public funding sources, the Strategy assumes the near-term hiring of contract grant writers to assist the Grants Specialist in matching projects to funding sources and writing grants, as well as expanding the role of the District's lobbyist to position the District for maximum success with Prop 68 funding and the potential Water Bond funding in November 2018. The lobbyist's role will be reviewed after two years and is likely to diminish as grant guidelines and criteria are established at the State level.
- The Grants Specialist will track the time spent on the various elements of the job to understand how much more time becomes available as the Grants Program becomes fully functional. Ultimately, the Grants Specialist's time will be allocated as follows: 50% on grant-seeking, 20% on the Grantmaking Program, 15% on managing active grants, and 15% on program coordination.
- The Grants Specialist will have more time for grant-seeking in FY2019-20 as the Grants Program is established and the Strategy is complete and implementation underway. In FY2019-20, the Grants Specialist will focus on implementing the immediate recommendations in the Strategy, including developing key policies, and establishing the Grantmaking Program. In FY2019-20, it is expected that the Grants Specialist will spend approximately 40% of her time seeking grants. In 2020-21, the Grants Program will be fully established with all policies and recommendations completed and the Grants Specialist will be able to devote 50% of the time available to grant-seeking.
- Twenty percent of the Grants Specialist's time will be focused on the District's Grantmaking Program. This program provides an opportunity for the District to build and strengthen external partnerships.
- The District will allocate time to key departmental staff to assist with identifying and evaluating potential grants and projects; informing go/no-go decisions; developing grants for projects and programs in their departments; and participating in post-award activities, including audits, reimbursements and progress reports.

- Department managers will sign off on final grant proposal language.
- The Grants Program will remain centralized and will not return to the prior model where each department was responsible for identifying, developing and tracking its own grants.
- There is a point at which adding more staff will not result in significantly more revenue. There is a limited pool of large funders and these funders, especially public funders, allocate their funding to many qualified recipients. Additional staff may allow for many more grant applications but may not result in an exponential increase in funds.

2.2 FUNDING SOURCES

- In order to leverage time and staff resources, in the coming three years the Grants Program will focus primarily on securing state grant funding (including Prop 68, California Climate Investments, and Water Bond should the measure pass in November 2018) and local funding (including Santa Clara Valley Water District and others).
- Foundation and corporate funding opportunities will be identified, evaluated and applied for based upon the criteria in [Chapter 5.2](#).
- Corporate grant-seeking can be implemented once Board-defined policies for accepting corporate grants are approved. (see [Chapter 6.1B](#))
- Federal funding opportunities will be identified, evaluated and applied for based upon the criteria in [Chapter 5.2](#).
- The Grants Program will not actively seek or track funds from individual donors; this will remain with the Public Affairs Department.

2.3 PROJECT PRIORITIES

See [Chapter 4.2](#) for more discussion on priority projects and [Chapter 5.1](#) for criteria to determine grant priority projects for inclusion in the Grants Specialist's annual Work Plan.

- The annual priorities established in the Capital Improvement and Action Plan are the broad set of priority projects for the coming year. Criteria in [Chapter 5.1](#) will guide the identification of the subset of these projects where grant funding is most suitable.
- Measure AA projects will take priority over non-Measure AA projects.
- Grant opportunities will be evaluated using the criteria in [Chapter 5.2](#) for potential revenue, alignment with Capital Improvement and Action Plan priorities, grant restrictions, and reporting requirements.
- The potential for grant funding will be considered as part of the annual Capital Improvement and Action Plan process. (See [Chapter 6.2A](#))
- If a grant opportunity arises that suits a project that is planned for a future year, the District may shift the priority/timing of that project in order to avail itself of the opportunity.
- As a general rule, grants for new projects, not included in Measure AA and the Vision Plan, may be considered with the approval of the General Manager on a case-by-case basis. These include projects that involve working with partners on regional priorities. Grants will support District projects rather than drive District projects.

2.4 PROJECTIONS AND DATA COLLECTION

See [Chapter 7](#) for more discussion on potential Revenue Projection Scenarios based upon different revenue assumptions.

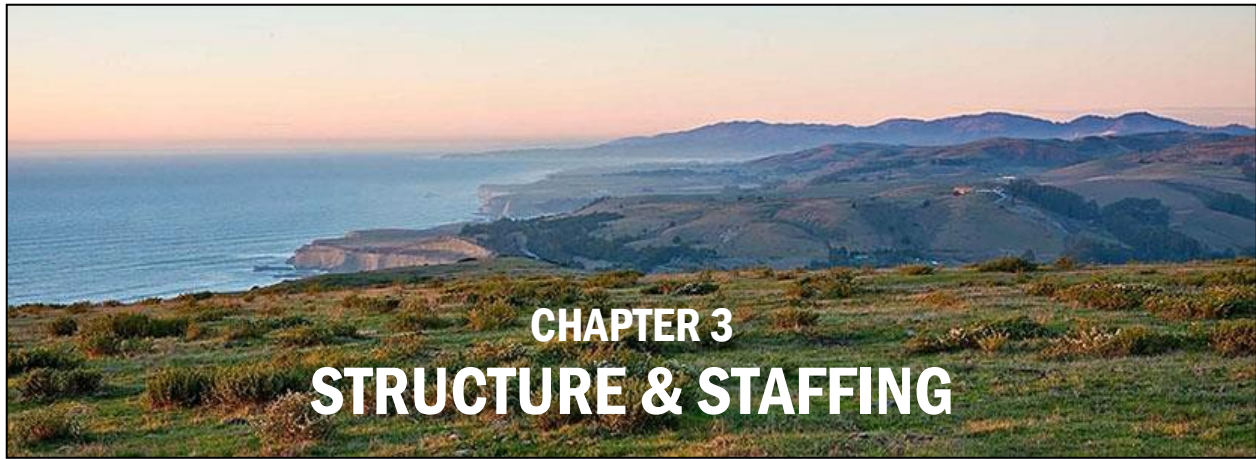
- The Grants Strategy is being developed in a period of economic strength where the opportunities for receiving grant funding may be higher than they would be in an economic downturn. Foundations have significant funds to invest, and state voters recently passed Prop 68, which funds parks and open space, and may also pass the Water Bond in November 2018. Although the Grant Program processes and procedures remain the same in good times and bad, revenue projections are based upon seeking grants in the current economy and revenue may be lower during a downturn.
- The first 18 months of the Grants Program have been focused on establishing the processes, procedures and systems for a centralized program and developing the Strategy. Because of this, grant data collected for these first 18 months does not necessarily reflect the full potential of the Grants Program when the Grants Specialist is fully focused on grant-seeking.
- Continued data collection is critical to understand the year over year success of the Grants Program. Following each year of data collected, projections will be revised to reflect a combination of prior year activity and successes, grant funding potential, new grant funding opportunities, and projects that may reflect an unusual opportunity for private or public funding.
- The overall goal is for grant revenue to increase year over year acknowledging that total grant funding awarded can vary dramatically from year to year and is difficult to predict. Therefore, average annual grant revenue from prior years will be used to establish goals for grant revenue in the coming year. Revenue projections for FY2018-19 will be based upon the data collected during FY2017-18 with revenue projected to increase by 25%. Projections for FY2019-20 will be based upon the data collected during the first 24 months of the program with revenue projected to increase by 25%. Projections for FY2021-21 will be based upon the prior 36 months of data with revenue again expected to increase by 25%. These projections will be adjusted annually as part of the Work Plan development process ([Chapter 6.2E](#)) to reflect actual grant income. (See [Chapter 7](#))
- To guide Strategy implementation, the Grants Specialist will develop an annual Work Plan with input from Department Managers and senior leadership that identifies target grants to be sought, key projects, and the revenue projection for the year based upon total revenue sought and average revenue received over the prior three years. (See [Chapter 6.2E](#))
- Annual grant revenue generated will be calculated based upon the total dollar amount of grants awarded each year because once grants are received they can be paid out over a number of years.
- Although average annual grant revenue will be tracked and reported on annually, the Grants Program and the Grants Specialist will be evaluated on metrics in addition to income, including year over year increases in revenue; success rates (number of grants applied for and number of grants received); number of new funders and size of grants received; and internal satisfaction with the program as measured by data collected in the annual administrative survey. (See [Chapter 5.4](#))

2.5 PRINCIPLES FOR MAXIMIZING POTENTIAL GRANT REVENUE

The grants process is highly competitive and funding is never guaranteed. However, there are a number of ways that the District can position its projects and programs to increase the likelihood that the District's grant

applications are as competitive as possible. Broad considerations that make projects (and agencies) most desirable to funders and therefore help the District to be most competitive for grant funding include:

- Packaging its work and projects into themes that convey environmental impact rather than just discrete project outcomes. Current themes that are compelling to funders include climate adaptation, partnerships, forest health and fire prevention, and increasing access for underserved communities.
- Demonstrating responsiveness to, and awareness of, state and local priorities as well as funder priorities. These priorities may be part of the themes described above but may also reflect narrower themes and areas of importance.
- Building funder awareness about the District, its guiding themes and the key projects within those themes. Ongoing engagement with both current and potential funders is essential to increasing this awareness as grant success often stems from relationships with funders.
- Creating a district-wide understanding of the Grants Program, including themes, upcoming grant possibilities and project priorities will help staff and board be aware of potential funding opportunities, and increase the potential for securing grant income. This not only helps develop a culture of grant-seeking where everyone becomes an advocate for the grants program, but also increases overall understanding of the District's priorities, programs and partnerships.
- Cultivating an engaged public that understands and supports the work of the District can also help position the District for future funding. Community awareness of the value of the District's work garners positive press and future support for District endeavors.



The following chapter details the current and proposed staff capacity of the Grants Program and the roles and responsibilities that different departments within the District will have in relation to the Grants Program.

3.1 REPORTING RELATIONSHIP

The Grants Program is located within the Administrative Services Department and the Grants Specialist reports to the Chief Financial Officer (CFO). In the future, additional staff and/or contractors hired to assist the Grants Program will report to the Grants Specialist.

3.2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Grants Program is directed by the Grants Specialist with support from departmental project staff, Senior Leadership, the Board, and the Budget, Finance, Legal, Public Affairs and Information Technology Departments. In the short term, it is assumed that the Grants Specialist will be assisted by contract grant writers and a contract lobbyist. In the future, these activities may be moved in-house and additional staff may be hired to serve the Grants Program.

The Grants Program is responsible for identifying, seeking and managing external grants to the District and managing the District's Grantmaking Program. The Grants Program does not seek, manage or track District funding related to land discounts or donations of land or funds from individuals.

For each role identified below, primary responsibilities related to the Grants Program are described along with implementation timing. For certain responsibilities, implementation information is included in other chapters of the Strategy. Where this is the case, the relevant chapters are noted.

GRANTS SPECIALIST

The Grants Specialist directs the Grants Program and is responsible for its management, implementation, evaluation and results. The Grants Specialist's responsibilities may evolve over time as staff or consultants are added to the Program. The Grants Specialist works closely and collaboratively with Project Managers, the Executive Team and each department to ensure that the Grants Program is well-integrated into District operations.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

Ongoing/As-Needed beginning September 2018

- Set strategy and direction for the Grants Program
- Research and identify grants (See [Chapter 4.1](#) and [Chapter 5.2](#))
- Develop grant fact sheets to share with staff

- Identify grant-worthy projects in conjunction with District staff (See [Chapter 5.1](#))
- Support the creation of summary funding plans for each priority project in collaboration with Project Managers, Finance, Budget and Analysis, and others (See [Chapter 6.2F](#))
- Develop and submit three to six grant applications quarterly with support from project staff and consultants.
- Share grant wins with District leadership, staff and public affairs. (See [Chapter 6.2B](#))
- Manage active grants
- Develop themes that convey the grant-worthiness of a project or group of projects to funders with input from the Executive Team, Project Managers and department staff. (See [Chapter 6.2G](#))
- Update AmpliFund, the District's grants tracking software, to track when grants are submitted and received, and when reports for existing grants are due and submitted (See [Chapter 6.2C](#))
- Develop a Grants Program dashboard to track and report on Grants Program overall progress (See [Chapter 6.2D](#))
- Develop new and maintain existing public and foundation funder relationships (See [Chapter 6.2I](#))
- Manage the District's Grantmaking Program (See [Chapter 6.1A](#))
- Supervise and direct Grants Program consultants and staff
- Work with the District lobbyist to provide key project and District information to key funders and build a case for funding District projects from Prop 68 and other state funding sources
- Assist in drafting comment letters on grant guidelines
- Facilitate external communications and relationships about the Grants Program, including securing permission from funders to publicize grant awards
- Stay abreast of legislative and tax issues that relate to grants
- Assist departments with tracking grant requirements that project managers must implement (e.g., grantor signage installed at project site)

Quarterly beginning September 2018

- Meet with General Manager
- Participate in the Budget and Finance team meetings

Annually beginning June/July 2019

- Prepare for and participate in Grants Program annual evaluation (See [Chapter 6.2H](#))
- Prepare a grants calendar and annual Work Plan for the upcoming fiscal year, reflecting priority projects for grant funding, funding sources and funding amounts. Review and coordinate with appropriate Department Managers. Approved by CFO and Senior Leadership (See [Chapter 6.2E](#))
- Disseminate calendar and Work Plan to Management and project staff
- Discuss Work Plan priorities with project staff at July bi-annual meetings, gather information for grants research, identification and writing
- Prepare Grants Program annual report for Senior Leadership and Board detailing results, successes, revenues and expense, significant findings, and trends
- Provide annual data about the Grants Program to Budget and Analysis for use in the annual District accomplishments report and the Bond Oversight Committee Report.
- Provide Grants Program update to the Board

3. Structure & Staffing

Annually October to March beginning October 2018

- Participate in the annual Capital Improvement and Action Plan development process (See [Chapter 6.2A](#))
- Participate in Project Planning and Delivery meetings in September (Current Year Projects) and October (Upcoming Projects)

Twice Yearly beginning in September 2018

- Internally communicate about Grants Program to staff by meeting at least twice-yearly with the Planning, Real Property, Natural Resources, Engineering and Construction, Land and Facilities, Visitor Services and Public Affairs departments and the Management Team. Communicate grant opportunities, secure updates/changes on projects, discuss status of Work Plan implementation and successes to date. Frequency and type of meeting is dependent on department size, number of projects and potential grant opportunities. Where possible, meetings should occur as part of regularly scheduled meetings.

One-Time – timing as noted

- Roll-out the Grants Program Strategic Plan to District departments (Fall 2018) (See [Chapter 6.1F](#))
- Develop six-month Work Plan (September 2018) (See [Chapter 6.2E](#))
- Develop Board Grant Approval Policy (October 2018) (See [Chapter 6.1C](#))
- Develop Grantmaking Program Board and administrative policies and guidelines (October 2018) (See [Chapter 6.1A](#))
- Develop Funder Agreement Policy (June 2019) (See [Chapter 6.1B](#))
- Develop Grant Contract Routing Process (June 2019) (See [Chapter 6.1D](#))

DEPARTMENTAL MANAGERS

The Grants Specialist will identify grants for projects within each of the District's departments with a focus on those with the largest capital funding needs. Department Managers are expected to facilitate opportunities for the Grants Specialist to meet with their departments to allow the Grants Specialist to share grant opportunities and build an understanding of key projects suitable for grant funding.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES AND TIMING

Ongoing/As-Needed beginning September 2018

- Provide project information for grants and grant reports
- Write or assign to subject matter experts technical portions of grant applications
- Review final grant applications
- Relay any grant-related leads or information from external partners to the Grants Specialist
- Make the Grants Specialist aware of relevant external meetings and tours with potential funders
- Participate in, and engage departmental staff in, the development of methods to convey the grant-worthiness of a project or group of projects to funders (See [Chapter 6.2G](#))
- Support the creation of summary funding plans for each priority project in collaboration with Project Managers, Finance, Budget and Analysis, and others (See [Chapter 6.2F](#))
- Assist in evaluating individual grant opportunities
- Track active grant budgets and relay information about changes to Grants Specialist
- Approve reimbursements and progress reports prior to submittals to grantors
- At least twice annually, involve Grants Specialist in either a regularly-scheduled department meeting or a meeting with key project managers to share information on programs and projects, updates on

changes to projects that are currently grant funded, and to build departmental understanding of public and private funding opportunities.

- In cases where the District has approved funding to other entities, manage the funding agreements in AmpliFund with support from the Grants Specialist, if needed.

EXECUTIVE TEAM

The Executive Team includes the General Manager (GM), the two Assistant General Managers (AGMs) and the CFO. The Executive Team plays a critical role in supporting the Grants Program and building a culture of grant-seeking within the District where everyone plays a role in supporting the grant-seeking process.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES AND TIMING

Ongoing/As-Needed beginning September 2018

- Promote and support the Grants Program and its priorities to staff (GM/AGMs/CFO)
- Participate with the Grants Specialist in external funder relationship-building (e.g., site visits, trips to Sacramento, etc.) (GM, AGMs)
- Develop new funder relationships (GM, AGMs)
- Make the Grants Specialist aware of relevant external meetings and tours with potential funders (GM, AGMs)
- With the Finance and Budget and Analysis Departments, Project Managers, the GM and the Grants Specialist support the development of project funding plans (GM) (See [Chapter 6.2F](#))
- Provide input on high-level messaging about District priorities and areas of focus (GM, AGMs, CFO) (See [Chapter 6.2G](#))
- Provide support and mentoring of the Grants Specialist (GM/AGMs/CFO)
- Participate in the go/no go decision for each grant (AGMs/CFO) (See [Chapter 5.3](#))
- Review and approve all grant applications (GM/AGMs/CFO) (See [Appendix 2](#))
- Approve all grant awards up to \$50,000 (GM)
- Provide additional resources, including contractors and staff, to scale the Grants Program when workload and grant opportunities indicate that more personnel are required (GM/AGMs/CFO)
- Work with the Grants Specialist to celebrate grant wins both internally and externally (GM/AGMs/CFO) (See [Chapter 6.2B](#))
- Encourage a District-wide culture of grant-seeking, whereby every staff member understands the importance of securing grant funding for District projects and programs, and is encouraged to work collaboratively with the Grants Program, to convey grant related information and support grant applications (GM/AGMs/CFO)
- Assess and provide additional resources, including contractors and staff, to assist Departments in implementing projects that are grant funded; or reprioritize Department work plan priorities in order to focus on implementation of grant-funded priorities. Provide additional project management resources to departments to implement grant-funded projects.

Annually beginning in June/July 2019

- As the Executive Team, conduct an annual evaluation of the Grants Program using the [Measures of Success](#) to evaluate the prior year's results, identify any changes to the Grants Strategy, and build the Grants Specialist's Work Plan for the coming year (GM/AGMs/CFO) (See [Chapter 6.2E](#))

3. Structure & Staffing

Annually October to March beginning October 2018

- As part of the annual budgeting and resource-loading process, assign time for departmental project staff to participate in the grants process (GM/AGMs/CFO)

Twice-Yearly beginning September 2018

- Provide the opportunity for the Grants Specialist to provide Grants Program updates and build an understanding of District projects and programs to the Management Team. (GM/AGMs/CFO)

BUDGET/FINANCE/LEGAL/PUBLIC AFFAIRS/IT

The Budget and Analysis Department develops the annual Capital Improvement and Action Plan and develops the annual District accomplishments and Bond Oversight Committee report. The Finance Department processes grant reimbursement checks. The Legal team reviews all grant agreements to ensure that the District can comply with the grant requirements and that there are no conflicts with District policies or procedures. Public Affairs is responsible for external communications about the District, including announcing grant wins and projects on the District's website and managing legislative affairs. Information Technology supports Grants Program technology including AmpliFund.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES AND TIMING

Budget and Analysis Department

Ongoing/As-Needed beginning September 2018

- Track grant revenue in AmpliFund and incorporate into the annual budget
- Review fiscal impact of grant income
- With the Finance Department, Project Managers, the GM and the grants specialist, develop project funding plans (See [Chapter 6.2F](#))
- Update the Capital Improvement and Action Plan project evaluation criteria to include grant criteria. (See [Chapter 6.1F](#))
- Include annual Grants Program outcomes in the annual District accomplishments report and the Bond Oversight Committee Report.

Annually October to March beginning October 2018

- Include Grants Specialist in the Capital Improvement and Action Plan development meetings to equip Grants Specialist with the information needed to build the Grants Program's annual Work Plan and communicate priorities with departments. (See [Chapter 6.2A](#))

Finance Department

Ongoing/As-Needed beginning September 2018

- Process grant payments
- With the Budget and Analysis Department, Project Managers, the GM, Assistant General Managers and the Grants Specialist, develop project funding plans (See [Chapter 6.2F](#))

Legal Department

Ongoing/As-Needed beginning September 2018

- Review grant agreements prior to submitting grant applications and provide feedback on whether the District should apply for the grant and advise on what legal concerns may be associated with grant conditions
- Review and approve all contracts before signing

Public Affairs Department

Ongoing/As-Needed beginning September 2018

- Communicate externally about grant wins and projects receiving grant funding (upon grant award)
- Review communication requirements of grants (upon grant award)
- Provide direction on high level messaging related to District and projects
- Assist in developing external communications tools, including brochures and factsheets
- Filter down relevant legislative news
- Manage individual donations
- Ongoing coordination between legislative affairs and grants program about program intersection

Information Technology Department

Ongoing/As-Needed beginning September 2018

- Maintain and support AmpliFund
- Support Grants Program Sharepoint implementation

Fall 2018

- Develop and implement policy and procedures to certain information that is needed to develop grant proposals to be stored on the District server (See [Chapter 6.1E](#))

PROGRAM ASSISTANT

The Program Assistant would be a District staff role supporting the Grants Program in general and the Grants Specialist in particular. This position would be recommended at the time the Grants Program workload is large and stable enough to merit the hiring of District staff rather than the use of contractors. The Program Assistant should have project management skills and be able to do some of the work that the Grants Specialist does, thereby removing day-to-day responsibilities from the Grants Specialist so that he/she may concentrate on identifying and securing additional grant funding.

POTENTIAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND TIMING

Ongoing/As-Needed upon hiring

- Manage active grants, including tracking all deadlines for reporting and invoicing
- Assist departments with tracking grant conditions that need to be implemented (e.g., grantor signage installed at project site)
- Prepare all invoices for grant reimbursements and secure approval from departmental staff
- Prepare draft grant applications and reports for review by the Grants Specialist
- Edit, review and proofread grant applications and reports
- Update and maintain AmpliFund, the District's Grants Program database
- Prepare draft staff reports and presentations for Board meetings
- Manage the grant reporting and reimbursement process related to the District's Grantmaking Program
- Augment grant research and identification
- Assist in Grantmaking Program
- Assist in drafting comment letters

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board provides the highest level of Grants Program oversight. One of the Board's strategic priorities is ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of the District, with an objective being the pursuit of funding opportunities to augment existing funding. The Board approved the addition of the Grants Program in 2016 in order to increase the District's ability to attract grant funding.

3. Structure & Staffing

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES AND TIMING

Ongoing/As-Needed beginning September 2018

- Review all grant contracts over \$50,000
- Delegate authority to General Manager for execution of grant-related activities

Annually in July

- Grants Specialist updates Board on the Grants Program

One-time – timing noted below

- Review Board Grants Approval Policy. (Fall 2018) (See [Chapter 6.1C](#))

Annually October to March beginning October 2018

- Establish priorities for grant funding through annual Capital Improvement and Action Plan process

CONTRACT GRANT WRITERS

Contract grant writers add capacity and technical expertise to the Grants Program when a grant proposal is technically complex or there are multiple proposals underway simultaneously. Contract grant writers are supervised by the Grants Specialist and can also provide general Grants Program support. Responsibilities will be assigned based upon the needs of the Grants Specialist.

POTENTIAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND TIMING

Ongoing/As-Needed beginning in Fall 2018

- Draft grants
- Conduct research into private and public funding opportunities
- Draft grant reports
- Attend meetings with District staff and funders if requested by Grants Specialist

CONTRACT LOBBYIST

Currently, Environmental and Energy Consulting (EEC) is the contractor that represents the District with legislators and agency representatives to ensure awareness of the District and its mission while also identifying public funding opportunities for District projects. The lobbyist is knowledgeable about guidelines governing Prop 68 and other public funding sources and will help the District understand how to best match projects with available funding. Key lobbyist tasks to be completed in concert with the Grants Specialist include identification of priority projects for public funding, establishment of target funding levels, evaluating probability of success, and informing policy makers about the District and its projects. Responsibilities will be mutually agreed upon annually based upon a proposed scope of work developed by the contractor and agreed to by the District.

POTENTIAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND TIMING

Ongoing/As-Needed beginning in September 2018

- Provide monitoring and reporting on agency funding programs, guideline development, and solicitation releases.
- Advise the District on how to build strong legislative relationships and champions, as well as agency relationships. Provide support in obtaining regular meetings with agency staff.
- Provide project development and funding support with state agencies- especially related to Prop 68, California Climate Investments, and future bond investments.
- Guide District on ways to translate projects into competitive applications.
- Meet with state agencies and their program staff to understand project interests, as well as promote individual project awards.

3.3 STAFFING SCENARIOS AND BENCHMARKS

Findings from other Grants Programs indicate that a small investment in additional Grants Program capacity yields a greater return than could be expected from the Grants Specialist working alone. However, beyond a certain point additional capacity does not yield significantly more grant funding. Identifying the balance between the Grants Specialist working alone, having the support of contractors, and hiring additional staff will require ongoing evaluation of Grants Program capabilities and accomplishments.

Consultants and external contractors are an ideal way to scale the Grants Program. Benefits of external support include lower costs due to the absence of overhead associated with their time, the addition of technical expertise, and because of their specialization, their ability to provide maximum support with less supervision than required for a staff person.

The Grants Strategy assumes the following staffing scenarios for the coming two years.

FY2018-19 AND FY2019-20

ASSUMPTIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Grants Specialist

In FY2018-19 and FY2019-20, the Grants Specialist will spend less time building the Grants Program and supporting development of the Strategy and will be able to dedicate approximately 40% time to identifying and applying for grants, and collaborating with District staff to identify potential grant-funded projects. Twenty percent will be spent building the Grantmaking Program, and the remaining time will be dedicated to other tasks identified above including implementation of the one-time recommendations in [Chapter 6](#).

Contractor Support

In FY2018-19 and FY2019-20, the Grants Specialist will be supported by contractors to allow for maximum flexibility to respond to and create funding opportunities, identify and secure Prop 68 funding (and, if passed, Water Bond funding), and keep costs to a minimum. Two contractor types are recommended:

- **Lobbyist.** It is recommended that EEC be retained to help the District match funding priorities with public funding sources, initially related to Prop 68 and California Climate Investments, and subsequently to the Water Bond, if passed. EEC knows the District and its programs and will enhance and expand the Grants Specialist's understanding for securing bond funding. They will also accelerate the knowledge transfer required in training the Grants Specialist in public funding politics and the building of relationships with and awareness of the District among the people and agencies involved. It is recommended that EEC be contracted for two years as the funding from Prop 68 (and the Water Bond, if passed) is not likely to be awarded until at least 2019. The EEC contract will be evaluated at the end of FY2018-19 to determine whether the level of effort provided in FY2018-19 should be maintained in FY2019-20.
- **Grant Writing Contractors.** Grant writing and reporting assistance will be provided by contract grant writers recruited by the Grants Specialist. They will have public and private funding experience and will be able to leverage the Grants Specialist's time and increase the number of grants submitted.

Implementation Timing

- **Lobbyist.** EEC is likely to be retained in fall 2018 to work with the Grants Specialist to build Prop 68 and other public funding opportunities. The suggested contract for FY2018-19 will be agreed upon and potentially resized annually.

3. Structure & Staffing

- **Grant Writing Contractors.** A request for proposals will be distributed in September 2018 to seek contract grant writers with the skills, interest, and flexibility to work with the District on an on-call basis. The goal is to create a stable of grant writers that can be deployed as needed when workload exceeds the Grants Specialist's ability to respond quickly to grant opportunities, when a proposal needs more research or technical expertise, or a grant report needs completing. The estimated FY2018-19 cost for grant writers is \$42,750 (three grant writers, \$95/hour, 50 hours per year).

FY2020-21

ASSUMPTIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION

By FY2020-21, the Grants Specialist will be spending at least 50% time dedicated to grant-seeking and writing. After being supported by the District lobbyist and external grant writers for two years, the Grants Specialist and District management will need to evaluate whether the current staffing model is working or if changes to the existing model need to be implemented. This evaluation will occur as part of the evaluation of the Grants Program (see [Chapter 6.2G](#)) and Grants Specialist's Work Plan. (See [Chapter 6.2E](#))

Changes to the staffing model could include reducing or increasing the lobbyist's time and contract, hiring more or reducing the number of contract grant writers retained, hiring an internal Program Assistant, and/or another solution that becomes apparent as the Strategy is implemented. Key considerations related to scaling the staffing include:

- Is the current model increasing grant revenues year over year?
- Are the goals and actions set forth in the Grants Specialist's Work Plan being accomplished or are there tasks left undone? If so, are these tasks something that could be taken on by another staff member, freeing up the Grants Specialist to seek more grants? Do the undone tasks require a full-time staff person or could a part-time contractor with grants expertise assist with some of these tasks, reducing the costs associated with additional staff?
- Is the Grants Specialist spending an inordinate amount of time managing contractors and providing them information, impinging on the time that could be spent writing and seeking grants?
- Based upon discussions with the lobbyist and the Grant Specialist's experience, is the contract at the right size or could additional effort from the lobbyist yield greater results?
- Is more support or different types of expertise needed from contract grant-writers?



4.1 FUNDING SOURCES

Two types of funding are considered in this Strategy – public funding (including federal, state and local government funding) and private funding from foundations and corporations. Private funding from individual donors is not considered as part of this Strategy. Funding sources will be identified through a combination of research and work with the lobbyist.

FUNDING RESEARCH

Funding sources and requirements change frequently. The sources identified below are current as of this writing but research into public and private funding opportunities should be conducted on an ongoing basis. Criteria for grant identification and selection are included in Chapter 6.2. AmpliFund has a grants search feature and the following websites are also helpful for conducting research. This list should be regularly reviewed and updated.

- Federal Grants: www.grants.gov.
- Federal, State, Local and Private Grants: Bay Area Focus (list updated annually):
<http://www.sfbayiv.org/funding-list.php>
- California Natural Resources Agency Grants including California Department of Conservation, Energy Commission, Department of Fire and Forestry Protection, Department of Fish and Wildlife, State Parks, Department of Water Resources, and Wildlife Conservation Board, State Water Resources Control Board and the Coastal Conservancy (list updated regularly):
<http://resources.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Final-Agency-Grants-and-Loans-as-of-July-2018.pdf>
- California Climate Investments:
https://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/capandtrade/auctionproceeds/summary_appropriation2-15-18.pdf?_ga=2.250596102.1466552817.1532960765-205258993.1517551879
- Foundation Center grants research directory by subscription at: <https://foundationcenter.org/> (Also available at the Los Altos Public Library).
- Prop 68 – California Natural Resources Agency:
[http://bondaccountability.resources.ca.gov/\(S\(zdajug55psahdk45v25tftja\)\)/ProgramList.aspx?Prop=49&ChapterPK=all&ChapterName=Prop.%2068](http://bondaccountability.resources.ca.gov/(S(zdajug55psahdk45v25tftja))/ProgramList.aspx?Prop=49&ChapterPK=all&ChapterName=Prop.%2068)

4. Funding Sources & Priority Projects

PUBLIC FUNDING

FEDERAL

Federal funding for parks and open space-related activities, including acquisition, restoration, and trails, comes from a variety of agencies and departments, including the Department of Agriculture/Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Department of Transportation, the Environmental Protection Agency, and others. Overall, there is less funding available from federal funding than in the past due to the current political climate, but this may change over the coming years.

STATE

State funding for park and open space-related projects is available through a number of state agencies including the California Department of Conservation, Energy Commission, Department of Fire and Forestry Protection, Department of Fish and Wildlife, State Parks, Department of Water Resources, Department of Food and Agriculture, and Wildlife Conservation Board, State Water Resources Control Board and the Coastal Conservancy.

There are two key targets for state funding that will be the focus for the Grants Program in the coming two to three years. These are:

California Climate Investments

Revenues derived from California's Cap and Trade Program are deposited into the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund to fund state programs designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and provide economic, environmental and public health benefits. The District has prioritized climate change as one of its action portfolios this year making this source of funding relevant.

Proposition 68

Proposition 68 is a \$4.1 billion statewide bond measure passed by voters in June 2018 that will provide funding for parks, water projects, flood protection projects and open space protection. Guidelines for Prop 68 funding will be developed in FY2018-2019. Funds will be disbursed through a number of different public agencies. Funding from Prop 68 will not become available until 2019 but guideline development and the application process will begin in late 2018.

In general, bond funding breaks down as follows:

- Parks and Recreation: \$1.283 billion for neighborhood parks in low-income communities, plus city and county park facilities.
- Natural Resources: \$1.547 billion for conservation projects and climate change preparedness.
- Water: \$1.27 billion for drinking water treatment, groundwater clean-up and flood protection.

Specific Funding Allocations for the Bay Area:

- \$21.25 million for San Francisco Bay Conservancy Program (Coastal Conservancy)
- \$20 million for restoration grants (Coastal Conservancy)
- \$14 million for the Ocean Protection Trust Fund (Coastal Conservancy)
- County, city, and special district funding for local parks (per capita and other programs)
- \$3 million for Los Gatos Creek and Upper Guadalupe River (Natural Resources Agency)
- \$3 million for Russian River (Natural Resources Agency)

Water Supply and Water Quality Bond Act of 2018 (Possible Future Source of Funding)

This bond measure will appear on the November 2018 ballot and, if passed, will invest \$8.877 billion in California water infrastructure. Funds will benefit individual water users, agriculture and the environment, and include \$3 billion for drinking water projects, \$2.9 billion in watershed and fisheries improvement, and \$940 million in habitat protection, with the rest going for groundwater storage, dam repairs and other water infrastructure.

Other Potential Sources

In addition to competitive grants, other sources of external revenue are also possible, including per capita funding from Prop 68, carbon credits, and mitigation credits through the state's new Regional Conservation Investment Strategy program. Opportunities to leverage these non-traditional sources of external revenue are expected to become more widely available over time.

LOCAL

Santa Clara Valley Water District

The Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program is a 15-year initiative launched in 2014 to provide funding to local grantees for water conservation, water quality, restoring wildlife habitat, and providing access to trails (among other things). \$7.6 million was provided in the first five years of the program and a similar amount is planned for 2019 through 2023. The District has a current grant from the Santa Clara Valley Water District for invasive species removal.

PRIVATE

Private funding sources include foundations, corporations and individual donations. Individual donations are not part of this Strategy but are managed and tracked by the Public Affairs Department.

FOUNDATIONS

In the past, the District has received funding from several local foundations, with the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation providing the largest grants for land acquisition. Project Managers have long-standing relationships with these funders and can provide insight and advice regarding what foundation to approach.

CORPORATIONS

The District may have the opportunity to approach corporations for specific funding opportunities. Solicitations should follow the development of Board-approved policies regarding the public relations and public recognition aspects of being affiliated with specific corporations; public recognition requirements imposed by the corporation; and employee engagement programs requested in consideration for corporate funding. See [Chapter 6.1B](#) for development of a policy related to corporate funding.

4.2 PRIORITY PROJECTS

The Capital Improvement and Action Plan and the Capital Improvement Plan dictate overall District priorities and provide the menu of possible grant-funded projects for each fiscal year. A subset of these projects will be identified as suitable for grant funding with Measure AA projects having the highest priority for grant-seeking. The criteria for selecting the projects that will be in the annual Grants Program Work Plan are provided in [Chapter 6.1](#) of this Strategy. There are also 29 Tier 2 projects than can be funded through grants but have a lower priority than the 25 Measure AA projects. The Grants Specialist will make the lobbyist aware of these projects in the event that public funding opportunities arise.



Criteria for determining grant priority projects, for identifying grants, and for making go/no go decisions on a specific grant are closely interwoven and inter-related. Although grants can be identified without a project in mind, and projects can be deemed grant-worthy without a specific grant in mind, generally these two tasks are a back and forth process that results in a match between a grant and a project. Once this match has been made the ultimate decision needs to be made based on whether the project and the grant tell a compelling enough story to apply for the grant.

Occasionally, a grant may surface that is well-suited for a project that is not included in the Grant Specialist's Work Plan but is included as a Capital Improvement and Action Plan priority. In these instances, the grant and the potential project will be reviewed using the go/no-go criteria in [Chapter 5.3](#).

It should be noted that the evaluation of projects and grants is more of an art than a science. The criteria below will help senior leadership, project staff and the Grants Specialist discuss and evaluate projects and grants and identify the grants that have the highest potential for success.

5.1 CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING GRANT PRIORITY PROJECTS FOR INCLUSION IN THE ANNUAL WORK PLAN

The Grants Specialist will work with departmental staff to identify the subset of the Capital Improvement and Action Plan projects to include in the Grants Specialist's annual Work Plan in order to direct the Grants Specialist's time toward mutually agreed-upon priorities. Grant-seeking will focus on this subset of projects for the coming one to three years. The criteria below can be used to weigh several projects against each other to help focus staff time and effort. Some criteria will not be applicable to certain projects.

- Project is included in either the one-year Capital Improvement and Action Plan or the three-year Capital Improvement Plan
- Project is a Measure AA project
- Project has a significant budget gap
- Project has significant visibility and public interest (e.g., Highway 17, Cloverdale, San Jose Water acquisition and resource management projects related to watershed, climate change and fire/forest health)
- Project provides partnership opportunities, including working with partners on regional priorities

- Project increases access for underserved communities
- Project reflects alignment with state and local priorities (e.g., watershed protection, climate adaptation, etc.)
- Project reflects the District's values, including those of transparency and being a responsible community partner

5.2 CRITERIA FOR GRANT IDENTIFICATION

Preliminary research and identification of potential grants will be conducted by the Grants Specialist. When researching potential grants, the projects included in the annual Grants Program Work Plan have highest priority. However, those projects identified in the annual Capital Improvement and Action Plan and the three-year Capital Improvement Plan but not identified as priorities in the Grants Specialist's annual Work Plan should also be kept in mind. There may be grants that are opportunistic – they are a good fit for a project that is not included in the Grant Specialist's Work Plan but is an excellent fit with a key project. Criteria to be considered for all potential grants are:

- Minimum public agency grant award is \$100,000
- Minimum corporate or foundation grant award is \$25,000
- Minimal and/or reasonable additional resource investment required for application and post-application requirements
- Whether the value of the grant outweighs the grant restrictions, management efforts, and the staff capacity and costs related to execution of grant funded work, compliance and monitoring.
- Availability of staff or consultant time for application and grant execution
- Competitiveness of application/likelihood of receiving grant
- Opportunity to forge new partnerships or deepen existing partnerships
- Existing priority projects exist that fit the grant requirements

5.3 CRITERIA FOR GO/NO GO DECISIONS

The go/no-go decision involves considering the grant and the project simultaneously and determining whether the grant and a project are a good fit and if so, whether a grant application should be submitted. Selecting grants and projects for application will be a joint process involving the Grants Specialist, Assistant General Managers, the CFO, relevant Department project staff and occasionally the General Manager. The Go/No-Go Process is outlined in [Recommendation 6.2I](#). The evaluation process considers the grant's likelihood of success and appropriateness for District pursuit and should be undertaken using the following criteria, some of which have been already considered but warrant a second review:

- Does the project align with the goals of the grant and the funder?
- What is the likelihood of success in receiving the grant?
- Would the grant allow the District to meet the project goals and timeline as established or would it require acceleration of the timeline?
- Does the project meet the goals of multiple partners?
- Is there a prior relationship with the grantor that would increase the chances of success?
- Could the application be viewed as competitive with the District's partners?

5. Criteria and Measures of Success

- Could the work be undertaken in partnership with another agency and/or nonprofit organization, thereby reducing costs and sharing success?
- Is the project at a stage where the grant funding could be used when it is awarded?
- Can an excellent application be completed efficiently using available resources?
- Are there measures of success that can be used to make the case for funding?
- Does the value of the grant outweigh grant restrictions, management efforts, and the staff capacity and costs related to execution of grant funded project, compliance and monitoring?

5.4 GRANTS PROGRAM MEASURES OF SUCCESS

As part of the initial launch of the Strategy, it is important that the District articulate measures of success that can be reviewed on an annual basis to help guide program implementation in subsequent years. Levels of activity, rather than income goals, will be used as performance benchmarks. The Grants Program and Grants Specialist will be reviewed annually in June. Measures of Success are:

- At the end of FY2020-21, average annual grant income will have increased from the FY2017-18 baseline (\$950,000).
- At the end of FY2020-21, the number of grants submitted annually will have increased from the FY2017-18 baseline (seven grants).
- The District's Grantmaking Program is operational in FY2018-19 and provides \$250,000 in grants to new partner organizations.
- At the end of FY2020-21, the number of projects fully or partially funded by grants will have increased from the FY2017-18 baseline (five projects).
- At the end of FY2020-21, the number of grants pursued and received with District partners will have increased from FY2017-18 baseline (one project).
- The results of the annual Administrative Survey will be used to evaluate year-over-year staff satisfaction with the Grants Program. Questions that should be asked of staff include:
 - Is your time as a staff member being used effectively by the Grants Specialist?
 - Compared to a year ago, do you understand what types of grants are most suitable for your projects?
 - How would you rate your working relationship with the Grants Specialist?
 - What is your overall level of satisfaction with the Grants Program?



6.1 ONE TIME RECOMMENDATIONS

The following policies and procedures are recommended for development in FY 2018-19. These include policies to guide the District's Grantmaking Program, corporate outreach, Board approval of grant awards, and access to data on the District server as well as procedures for rolling out the Strategy to District departments. The Grants Specialist will draft the policies described below and Senior Leadership will provide feedback and endorsement, forwarding those that require Board approval to the Board.

6.1A. GRANTMAKING PROGRAM POLICY

The District's Grantmaking Program will provide \$250,000 annually through five grants to partner agencies and organizations. FY2018-19 will be the first year that the District's Grantmaking Program is under the oversight of the Grants Program. Board and administrative policies as well as Grantmaking Program guidelines should be developed to define and support the Grantmaking Program. Grantmaking Program policies and guidelines will be collected from other agencies to expedite policy development. Elements to consider include:

- Board role in approving grantees
- Annual calendar
- Grant solicitation procedures
- Guidelines for applicants
- Desired project type(s) and goal(s)
- Use of funds
- Timing for project completion
- Constituencies served
- Geographic criteria
- Reporting and monitoring requirements – frequency and timing
- Partnership opportunities – how could grants leverage or launch collaborative projects?
- Evaluation, including measurable outcomes
- Evaluation criteria and decision-making process for grant awards
- District grant administration guidelines and procedures
- Public relations procedures to increase District's visibility/goodwill

6. Recommended Policies & Procedures

6.1B. CORPORATE AND FUNDER AGREEMENT POLICIES

The District is likely to seek grant funding from a variety of sources including federal, state and local agencies, corporations and foundations. Prior to entering into a relationship with a funder the District should consider any potential public relations and conflict of interest issues. For example, many environmental organizations will not accept funding from resource extracting corporations due to community/supporter concerns. There are several Silicon Valley companies that could be potential funding partners for the District, but these may be perceived by the public as contributing to traffic, housing shortages and environmental issues. The Funder Agreement Policy helps the District evaluate the funder and avoid any concerns from the community or District supporters before accepting grant funding. Funder agreement policies will be collected from other agencies to expedite policy development. Possible elements to incorporate into a funder agreement policy include:

- Funding shall be compatible with the District's Strategic Plan, mission and policies
- Acceptance of funding should not pose a conflict of interest for the District
- Acceptance of funding should not influence District priorities or actions
- Acceptance of funding does not imply an endorsement of an organization's products, policies or services
- Decision to accept funding rests solely with the District
- Additional criteria necessary to select suitable funding partners
- Guidelines for recognition opportunities, employee engagement, and public relations
- Tax implications for gifts/grants from funders
- Reporting requirements
- Use of funds
- Timing of grant award and project completion
- Opportunities for increasing District's visibility/goodwill

6.1C. GRANT APPROVAL POLICY

The Board approval process for grants should be simple, transparent, and informative and meet the needs of the Board, staff and public. Some agency policies require Board approval of all grant applications and delegate authority to the General Manager to address all subsequent actions related to the grant. Others allow the General Manager to approve the grant application and require that the grant agreement be approved by the Board. For the District, it is recommended that the Grant Approval Policy include the following:

- Board approval of all grant contracts over \$50,000 upon receipt of a grant award
- General Manager has the authority to approve all grant agreements up to \$50,000
- General Manager approval of grant applications and authority over all grant actions once the Board approves the contract
- Purpose of the Grants Program
- Grant applications will be reviewed by the Board before submittal only when a resolution is necessary to complete the application

The Grants Award and Acceptance Process is illustrated in [Appendix 2](#).

6.1D: GRANT CONTRACT ROUTING PROCESS

An internal process for routing and approving all grant contracts once the grant has been awarded will be developed to ensure that the District can comply with all grant requirements. Grant contract routing procedures will be collected from other agencies to expedite development of this process.

6. Recommended Policies and Procedures

6.1E. PROJECT DATA ON DISTRICT SERVER POLICY

The Grants Specialist could be more effective if project data were accessible on the District server. Most project data are currently held by individual departments or project managers, making it difficult for the Grants Specialist to access project descriptions, timelines, and budgets when developing a grant. An ideal policy would require certain documents such as the project budget, schedule, and scope of work to reside on the District's primary server where information can be easily accessed.

6.1F. ROLL-OUT GRANTS STRATEGY

Once the Grants Program Strategic Plan is complete, the Grants Specialist should provide a presentation of the Strategy to each department and the Management Team. These sessions should focus on the purpose and intent of the Strategy, and the key funding themes. The Grants Specialist should also share the completed FY2018-19 six-month Work Plan with staff at these meetings and confirm potential grants and discuss how each department's priority projects fit within the overall funding themes.

6.1G. DEVELOP GRANT FUNDING CRITERIA FOR THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT AND ACTION PLAN PROCESS

Currently, the criteria used to evaluate projects in the Capital Improvement and Action Plan process do not include grant potential. The project selection criteria should be revised to add grant fundability criteria into the decision-making process. Key grant-related evaluation elements could include:

- Does the project fit within one of the overall thematic areas that can maximize grant revenue?
 - Climate adaptation
 - Forest health and fire prevention
 - Partnership focused work
 - Expanded access for underserved communities
 - Education and interpretation
- Is the project responsive to current state and/or local priorities?
- Does the project increase the District's visibility within the community?
- Does the project have distinct implementation partners?

6.2 ONGOING PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

6.2A. INCORPORATE GRANT CONSIDERATIONS INTO CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT AND ACTION PLAN PROCESS

The potential for grant funding is not currently considered when potential projects are evaluated during the Capital Improvement and Action Plan process. In order to further integrate grants into District-wide planning, the potential for grant funding should be incorporated into the District's process for evaluating projects. This will occur in two stages. The first stage is for the Grants Specialist to participate in the Capital Improvement and Action Plan process and verbally provide advice related to the grant fundability of a project. Key elements to consider during the Capital Improvement and Action Plan process are similar to those identified in [Recommendation 6.1G](#) above. Once Recommendation 6.1G is implemented, the criteria will help guide decision-making.

The Grants Specialist should participate in the Capital Improvement and Action Plan process at several key junctures in order to better integrate these considerations into District priority setting. The Capital Improvement and Action Plan process has four stages:

- Strategy (October) – setting high level priorities
- Scoping (January) – defining what each project will look like in the coming year
- Resource Loading (February/March) – identifying how much staff time is needed to work on projects (and grants)
- Budgeting (April/May) – developing detailed budgets for each project

6. Recommended Policies & Procedures

It is recommended that the Grants Specialist participate in the Strategy, Scoping and Resource Loading phases. Participation in the Strategy phase allows the Grants Specialist to provide input on which projects are most compelling from a grants perspective and also allows the Grants Specialist to gain a broad understanding of all the potential projects under consideration for the coming year. Participation in the Scoping phase provides similar benefits as participation in the Strategy phase, but with more detail. Participation in the Resource Loading phase allows the Grants Specialist to request time from the departments where grant applications will most likely be focused.

6.2B. ANNOUNCE GRANT WINS

When a grant is awarded to the District, it is an opportunity to share and celebrate a common success. Upon receipt of a grant award, the Grants Specialist should notify the department where the project originated, the AGMs, CFO, and General Manager. The award should be announced at subsequent meetings with staff, including the all staff meeting and the Management Team meeting, and included in the bi-weekly report. The Board will be made aware of the grant win through the grant agreement approval process. The Grants Specialist should work with Public Affairs to announce the award on the District website and social media.

6.2C. TRACK AND REPORT GRANTS DATA IN AMPLIFUND

In order to continually refine the program and create realistic standards of performance for both the Grants Specialist and the Grants Program, it will be important to track and report on grant activity and dollars received each year. AmpliFund, the grants' tracking system put into place by the Grants Specialist in FY 2017-18, should be used to track and report out the following data:

- Number of grants submitted, to whom, when and for how much
- Terms of the grant including restrictions, requirements, monitoring, etc.
- Funding agency or organization
- Purpose of grant
- Date when reports due
- Yearly data, including number of grants submitted, total grant funds awarded, dollars received or reimbursed, reports written and submitted

6.2D. CREATE AND MAINTAIN A GRANTS DASHBOARD

Using data from AmpliFund, the Grants Specialist will create a dashboard in Sharepoint/Project Central in September 2018 that rolls up all the important measures of the Grants Program into a single report and tracks progress toward the annual goals of the Grants Program. Every grant submitted will be delineated in the dashboard. Year-over-year outcomes to track include number of proposals submitted, number of grants awarded, number of grant reports submitted, increases in funding by type of funder, number of meetings with existing and new funders, number of proposals to new funders, number of awards from new funders, number of awards from repeat funders, and average percent increase in grant funding over the prior year and three years (when enough data has been collected). The Dashboard will be shared with the Management Team and project staff during regularly scheduled meetings.

6.2E. DEVELOP GRANTS SPECIALIST ANNUAL WORK PLAN

The Grants Specialist will prepare a six-month Work Plan in September 2018 and an annual Work Plan in March of each year to guide the activities of the Grants Specialist and the Grants Program throughout the year. The annual Work Plan will be prepared with input from Department Managers and senior leadership; approved by Senior Management staff; and shared with Project Staff. The Work Plan will include the Grants Specialist's tasks and measurable outcomes for the coming year. The Work Plan should be developed in a

6. Recommended Policies and Procedures

simple spreadsheet, and shared with staff as part of the Grants Specialist's ongoing departmental meetings. The spreadsheet should include:

- project priorities defined through the Capital Improvement and Action Plan process and in conjunction with department staff;
- total funding needed for each project;
- grant funding sought for each project for the coming year and subsequent years, including funder and amounts;
- District departments and personnel involved in each grant;
- potential partner agencies; and
- grant application due dates.

The Work Plan will also identify other key tasks to be accomplished by the Grants Specialist during the coming year including oversight of staff and consultants, implementation of the Grantmaking Program, and participation in District meetings. All tasks should have timeframes and measurable outcomes.

6.2F: DEVELOP FUNDING PLANS FOR KEY PROJECTS/INITIATIVES

Funding plans provide a detailed overview of how a project or initiative will be funded over time, and include all sources of revenue, not just grant revenue. The funding plan serves as a tool to evaluate a project's funding potential and whether projections regarding funding sources and amounts prove to be accurate over time. Leadership of funding plan development will vary depending on the project and project phasing. Assistant General Managers are the project sponsors for the business lines and will take the lead role in working with project managers, Finance, Budget and Analysis, the Grants Specialist and the GM to develop project funding plans. Key tasks include provision of budget and budget gap information and funding plan development. The Grants Specialist will provide information about grants that can fill the funding gaps and the General Manager will reach out to external partners to help fill funding gaps.

6.2G: AGGREGATE PROJECTS INTO ENVIRONMENTAL THEMES

To date, the District has conveyed its work to funders as, and sought funding for, individual projects. As noted in Principles for Maximizing Revenue ([Chapter 2.5](#)), taking a broader view and packaging the District's projects into themes that convey environmental impact is a more compelling approach and one that appeals to funders. Current themes that are of interest to funders include climate adaptation, forest health and fire prevention, partnerships, and increasing access for underserved communities. Other thematic areas such as education and interpretation could also be developed. The grants specialist will work with each department to incorporate priority projects into thematic areas thereby making the work that the District is already doing better aligned with key environmental themes that are priorities for funders.

6.2H. GRANTS PROGRAM AND GRANTS PROGRAM STRATEGY ANNUAL EVALUATION

The Grants Program and Grants Program Strategy will be evaluated annually at the end of the fiscal year by the Executive Team (GM, AGMS and CFO). The Grants Program will be evaluated based upon the [Grants Program Measures of Success](#), data tracked in AmpliFund and the Dashboard, and the goals established in the Grants Specialist's prior year Work Plan. Based upon the results of this evaluation, the Grants Specialist will prepare the Grants Specialist Work Plan for the coming year.

The Grants Strategy was developed for the newly created Grants Program and is expected to be a living document that evolves over time based upon evaluation. In the first years of Strategy implementation, it is likely that additional procedures, criteria and responsibilities may become apparent. As part of the annual evaluation by the Executive Team, the Strategy will be reviewed and adjusted to ensure a smoothly

6. Recommended Policies & Procedures

functioning Grants Program. The entire Strategy, including the underlying assumptions, should be reviewed and updated in three to five years when the Grants Program is fully established.

As part of this evaluation, the Executive Team will also discuss the staffing model for the coming year using the guidelines included in [Chapter 3.3](#).

6.2I. GO/NO-GO DECISIONS

The go/no-go decision relates to whether or not the District will pursue a specific grant for a specific project. The decision will be informed by the criteria included in [Chapter 5](#). Grant timelines are often tight and long deliberations about whether or not to pursue a grant detract from the time needed to prepare the application. Therefore, for efficiency, the Grants Specialist will evaluate the grant and the proposed project with the project manager and Department Manager and prepare a summary of the pros and cons of seeking/not seeking the grant and provide a recommendation about how to proceed (Go/No-Go). The AGMs and CFO will review the pros and cons of the recommendation and make the final decision on whether the District should pursue the grant. Where there is dissention about whether or not to pursue the grant, the GM will make the final decision.

6.2J. MAINTAIN FUNDER RELATIONSHIPS

Based upon research into grants program best practices, it is recommended that the Grants Specialist focus on building new and maintaining existing relationships with potential funders including state legislators, agency staff, and local and regional foundation officers. Desired outcomes of these efforts are a) the funder understands the District, its key programs and projects and value to the community and region, and b) the Grants Specialist understands upcoming funding opportunities. The Grants Specialist should include regular check-ins with funders in the annual Work Plan. All touchpoints with funders should be tracked in the Dashboard. The Grants Specialist should also work with District staff to understand their project- and program-level relationships and how those relationships may affect potential grants and partnership opportunities.

6.2K UNDERSTAND POTENTIAL FUNDING PARTNERS

Most District staff members maintain relationships with their peers at other agencies. As identified in the grants program best practices, these relationships are not the purview of the Grants Specialist. As one of the keys to a strong organization is a strong network of community relationships maintained at all levels of the organization. However, District staff need to inform the Grants Specialist when these relationships, many of which relate to specific projects, appear to be evolving into potential grant-seeking opportunities. This is important for two reasons:

- One of the goals of the Strategy is to collaborate with partners wherever possible
- Because of the plethora of nonprofits and public agencies in the region focusing on parks and open space, there is strong competition for both public and private grants. Whenever possible, to enhance the District's competitive edge in seeking grants, funding should be sought in conjunction with the District's local partners.

6.2L. PROCEDURES FOR INDIVIDUAL GRANTS

Similar processes and procedures will be followed for every grant – from initial grant identification to the final reporting and closing of the completed grant. There are many players involved in the lifecycle of a grant but the Grants Specialist controls the workflow and engages other departments as needed. Other players include project staff, the AGMs and CFO, Legal, Finance and Public Affairs Departments, the General Manager and the Board. The flow of an individual grant follows a predictable trajectory as described below. Each of the following procedures is diagrammed in [Appendix 2](#).

6. Recommended Policies and Procedures

Grant Identification and Application

This diagram illustrates the process for an individual grant from identification through submittal. Project staff, Senior Leadership and the Legal and Finance Departments assist the Grants Specialist with decision-making and the grant application. The Board passes a resolution authorizing the submittal, if required by the grant.

Grant Award and Acceptance

If the grant is awarded, the win is communicated to district management and staff, the Grants Specialist updates the database and the grant agreement is reviewed by the Legal and Finance Departments. Public Affairs announces the win on the District website and social media.

Grant Lifecycle

The overall lifecycle of a grant includes tracking the grant budget and schedule and setting reminders so that reports and reimbursement requests are completed and submitted on time. Once the grant-funded project is complete it is closed in the grants database and the Finance Department is notified.

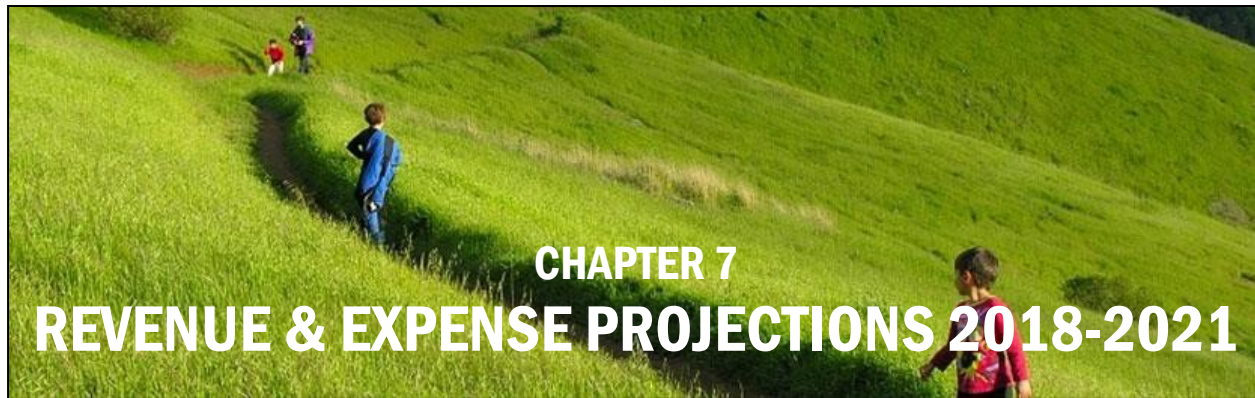
Grant Reimbursement

Most grants are not provided as a lump sum but are paid as reimbursements for work completed. Reports on grant expenditures and progress are submitted with the reimbursement request in coordination with involved department or project staff. Reimbursement requests are authorized by the CFO. When payment is received, the grants database is updated.

Grant Amendment

Occasionally grants are amended due to budget, scope or schedule changes. If an amendment is required, the Grants Specialist will work with the funder and District staff to request and prepare the amendment. Amendments are reviewed and signed by Senior Management.

The Grant Process diagrams included in [Appendix 2](#) identify the parties responsible for each activity. These are the Grants Specialist, Project Staff, AGM/CFO, Finance/Legal/Public Affairs, the General Manager and the Board. Where a diagram refers to a subsequent diagram, the workflow box is shaded red. Where there is a key decision, the workflow box is outlined in red. Items that straddle two columns (e.g., Grants Specialist and Department Staff) indicate a joint responsibility for that task.



The table on the following page illustrates Grants Program expenses and two potential revenue scenarios for the coming three years.

7.1 EXPENSE ASSUMPTIONS

Key assumptions inherent in the expense projections are:

- Grantmaking Program: \$250,000 per year.
- Grants Specialist: Based upon FY2017-18 salary and benefits of \$124,000 increased annually by 3%.
- Program Assistant: Based upon FY2017-18 salary and benefits of \$105,000 increased annually by 3%.
- Consultants: Strategic Planning - \$43,400 split over FY2017-18 and FY2018-19.
- Consultants: Contract Grant-writers – three at \$95 per hour and 50 hours per year and expanded by 10% per year.
- Consultants: Lobbyist – FY2018-19 and FY2019-20 includes \$45,000/year. FY2020-21 includes \$25,000/year. Support from lobbyist ends in FY2021-22.
- AmpliFund: \$20,000 per year with 5% annual increase.
- The expense projections are based upon potential future staffing scenarios that may change based upon a mutual decision reached by the Grants Specialist and Senior Management based upon analysis of the Grants Specialist's workload, number and size of potential grant opportunities, external expertise required, and management demands placed on the Grants Specialist to coordinate the Grants Program.

7.2 POTENTIAL REVENUE SCENARIOS

Grant revenue is difficult to predict over the long term due to economic and political cycles and uncertainty of funding sources. It can also fluctuate widely from year to year. However, the overall goal for the Grants Program is for grant revenue to increase year over year.

The potential revenue scenarios on the following page indicate three ways the Grants Program could grow over time. These are tools to illustrate the difference between steady growth of the program, steady growth

7. Revenue & Expense Projections 2018-2021

plus the receipt of one large grant, and steady growth plus the receipt of two large grants due to more time spent by the Grants Specialist on grant-seeking.

The revenue scenarios below as well as future grant program revenue projections will be based upon average annual grant revenue from prior years.

In Revenue Scenario 1 below, revenue projections for FY2018-19 are based upon the data collected during FY2017-18 with revenue projected to increase in FY2018-19 by 25%. Projections for FY2019-20 are based upon the data collected during the first 24 months of the program with revenue projected to increase by 25%. Projections for FY2021-21 are based upon the prior 36 months of data with revenue again expected to increase by 25%. In all three years, grant revenue increases annually..

Revenue Scenario 2 assumes a 25% annual increase in grant revenue over the average revenue but also assumes a \$2 million grant in FY2019-20.

Revenue Scenario 3 assumes a 25% annual increase in grant revenue over the average revenue but also includes the addition of a half time Program Assistant in FY2019-20 and a full-time Program Assistant in FY2020-21 that allows the Grants Specialist to increase the time devoted to grant-seeking. It assumes a \$3 million grant in FY2019-20 and a \$2 million grant in FY2020-21.

When the actual grant revenue numbers for each year are known, the projections should be revised to create more accurate projections. Projections will be adjusted annually as part of the Work Plan development process to reflect actual grant income.

7. Revenue & Expense Projections 2018-2021

Grants Program Expenses and Revenue Projection Scenarios				
	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Projected Costs				
Staffing Assumptions	Grants Specialist; Consultants: Strategic Plan; Amplifund	Grants Specialist; Consultants: Strategic Plan, Grant Writers, Lobbyist; Grant-Making Program; Amplifund	Grants Specialist; Consultants: Grant Writers, Lobbyist; Grant-Making Program; Amplifund; half-time Program Assistant	Grants Specialist; Program Assistant; Consultants: Grant Writers, Lobbyist; Grant-Making Program; Amplifund
Total Annual Cost	\$ 166,000	\$ 508,000	\$ 551,000	\$ 599,000
Revenue Scenario 1: Average increase in revenue of 25% per year				
Revenue: Actual	\$ 950,000			
Revenue: Projected		\$ 1,187,000	\$ 1,336,000	\$ 1,447,000
Revenue Scenario 2: Average increase in revenue of 25% per year with one \$2M grant in FY2019-20				
Revenue: Actual	\$ 950,000			
Revenue: Projected		\$ 1,187,000	\$ 3,336,000	\$ 2,281,000
Revenue Scenario 3: Average increase in revenue of 25% per year with a \$3M grant in FY2019-20 and \$2M in FY2020-21.				
Revenue: Actual	\$ 950,000			
Revenue: Projected		\$ 1,187,000	\$ 4,336,000	\$ 4,697,000



This chapter includes the key findings from the Grants Program audit; the internal interviews with District staff; and the external interviews with the managers of other agency and nonprofit grant-seeking programs. Findings were distilled into a comprehensive analysis of Grants Program strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

AUDIT FINDINGS

The Audit involved a comprehensive review of existing systems, procedures and workflows as well as findings from departmental interviews. The Audit provides the baseline for understanding the current Grants Program and helped build a Strategy that addresses the challenges associated with the current program.

Audit Finding 1: The District has been successful in obtaining grants in the past.

Prior to 2016, departmental program staff identified, wrote and managed grants. Grants secured from 1989 to 2010 for acquisition and development, resource management, and restoration totaled approximately \$50M.

Audit Finding 2: Between 2010 and 2018 grants were not well-tracked, making reporting on grant success difficult.

Grants received since 2010 have not been consistently tracked but it appears that for the period between 2012 and 2018, grants received averaged about \$1,200,000 per year and, depending on the year, have accounted for between 0 percent and 5 percent of annual District revenue.

Audit Finding 3: Since the passage of Measure AA in June 2014 through the end of FY2016-17, grant revenue dropped but FY2017-18 shows grant revenue increasing with the establishment of the Grants Program.

Annual grant revenue for 2014 through 2017 averaged approximately \$500,000 per year. Records indicate that no grants were received in FY2014-15 and FY2016-17. Since the establishment of the Grants Program in 2017, the total dollar amount of grants received has exceeded the amount of grant funding received in any of the prior five years.

Audit Finding 4: Establishing and integrating the Grants Program has been a complex process.

The Grants Program and the Grants Specialist position were new to the District in 2017. Both the Grants Specialist and the District have experienced significant learning curves as they try to centralize this once dispersed role and integrate the program into the District during a time of growth, change and leadership flux.

Audit Finding 5: The Grants Specialist has created new processes and procedures to allow the Grants Program to function.

The Grants Specialist has developed workflows, reports, and written procedures that both define and describe the Grants Specialist job and inform District staff how to engage with this new program. The Grants

Appendix 1. Findings & SWOT

Specialist has also worked collaboratively with project staff to apply for grants and has taken on management of the District's Grantmaking Program.

Audit Finding 6: The Grants Specialist's interface with project staff could be expanded.

With the establishment of the Grants Specialist position, some program staff expressed concern that it could add another layer of complexity to grant-seeking due to the need to coordinate efforts with the Grants Specialist and educating the Grants Specialist about the specific projects that require funding.

It also became apparent during the audit that the Grants Specialist had not participated in many of the regularly scheduled meetings where Project Staff and the District as a whole set priorities, share information, and develop the Capital Improvement and Action Plan. Through the interviews conducted during the planning process, management and project staff identified important existing channels of communication that would allow for seamless incorporation of the Grants Specialist into the project work, thereby reducing redundancy and increasing the effectiveness and integration of the Grants Program and the Grants Specialist's role within the District.

Audit Finding 7: Since the establishment of the Grants Program, there has been an increase in grants applied for and received.

In the past 18 months, the Grants Specialist has worked closely with project managers to submit nine grants of which five were received, totaling approximately \$1,949,500. The District also assisted partner agencies in developing two proposals for projects that coincide with District priorities but can be funded and implemented by partner organizations.

Audit Finding 8: As the Grants Program becomes more established, the Grants Specialist will have more time to devote to grant-seeking.

Early on, the majority of the Grants Specialist's time was spent clarifying and defining the Grants Program and is currently focused on guiding the Grants Program Strategy to its completion. Now that the infrastructure and direction for the Grants Program has been established, the Grants Specialist's time can be focused on identification of grant opportunities, coordination with project staff, and writing and administering grants.

DEPARTMENTAL INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Interviews were conducted with District management and each District department to better understand the successes and challenges of past and present grant-seeking, departmental roles and responsibilities, and recommendations for the Strategy. The findings below helped define and structure the Strategy to be responsive to the needs of District staff.

Interview Finding 1: The addition of a Grants Specialist has improved the grants process.

Staff felt that the newly created Grants Specialist position has resulted in improvements to the selection, coordination, submission and tracking of grants.

Interview Finding 2: Staff has concerns about the grants process based upon experience with prior grants.

Staff concerns related to past grants and procedures included that grants should not drive projects or require significant amounts of staff time. Grants with costly and time-consuming reporting and tracking processes should not be pursued.

Interview Finding 3: Larger organizational issues need to be considered in the Strategy development.

Current work environment challenges include staff turnover, rapid growth, staff being at or beyond capacity, and leadership flux. Project timelines are much shorter than they used to be. This poses a challenge to staff needing to meet project deadlines while finding grant funding quickly enough to meet the project schedule. Conversely, if funding is found, it may cause a delay in project completion.

Interview Finding 4: A clear process for information sharing and communication is needed.

Developing a clear, consistent, two-way process for sharing information was identified as a critical element of the Strategy. It has been hard for project staff to know enough about potential grant opportunities and the types of projects that might fit with those grants, and also difficult for the Grants Specialist to clearly understand each project and the priorities and deadlines for each department.

In order for both the Grants Specialist and project staff to become more aware of grants and projects, most interviewees felt that it was very important for the Grants Specialist to attend departmental and Project Management meetings on a regular basis to discuss current projects and possible grant funding opportunities. In addition, the Grants Specialist needs to be able to access all files on the server that contain critical project information.

Interview Finding 5: The Grants Specialist should be engaged in the budget development process.

The annual Capital Improvement and Action Plan development process establishes project priorities for the coming year and includes project review and scoping. The process includes extensive Board involvement with the final result being development of the upcoming fiscal year's operating Capital Improvement and Action Plan and a three-year Capital Improvement Plan. The Grants Specialist has not been a part of this process but interviewees noted that this is the most important place for the Grants Specialist to be engaged. This is where projects are defined, budgets are developed, and funding needs become clear. Participation by the Grants Specialist would help build an understanding of upcoming project priorities and help identify grant possibilities for each project well before the beginning of the current budget year. It would also help elevate the visibility and importance of the Grants Program to the Board and staff. Interviewees also noted that the potential for grant funding should be added as a component of the criteria used to evaluate future projects for inclusion in the Capital Improvement and Action Plan and Capital Improvement Plan.

Interview Finding 6: The District needs to develop an approach to secure Prop 68 funding.

Several interviewees noted the importance of positioning the District to develop partnerships and seek Prop 68 funding as soon as the bond act was passed. The District needs to develop a priority list of projects, identify potential partners and begin to work on building those partnerships. Potential projects identified include Cloverdale Ranch and San Jose Water.

Interview Finding 7: Grants should be the right fit in terms of size, type, and time to administer and monitor.

Interviewees had many cautions about the District getting involved in grants that had so many requirements that the grant wasn't worth pursuing. There has been some experience with grants of this type where early research into grant requirements was lacking and the District ended up with a grant that seemed to cost more than the income it delivered. The Strategy will include criteria for evaluating a grant for its funding size and type, restrictions, reporting requirements, and time commitment for monitoring and reporting.

Interview Finding 8: An effective strategy should include a variety of essential elements.

Interviewees noted a number of elements they would like to see included in the Strategy, including Program structure, criteria and guidelines, staff roles and responsibilities, pre-application review and approval process

Appendix 1. Findings & SWOT

and measures of success. Staff also indicated the importance of building on internal efficiencies, including external subject matter experts, and maintaining Board support and buy-in.

EXTERNAL INTERVIEW FINDINGS – BEST PRACTICES

Interviews were conducted in June 2018 with 13 agency and nonprofit grant managers and with the District’s lobbyists. Three closely interwoven and interdependent areas of best practices for establishing and operating a successful Grants Program emerged as well as advice from the District’s lobbyist about being competitive for Prop 68 and other public funding.

FIVE KEY ROLES OF THE GRANTS SPECIALIST

The most important roles of the Grants Specialist are building strong internal relationships; ensuring regular two-way communications; conveying grant opportunities; understanding the projects; and supporting project staff in much the same way a consultant would serve a client.

FIVE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE GRANTS PROGRAM

Interviewees noted that the most important elements of a successful Grants Program are well-defined roles and responsibilities; appropriate support (either internal or external); a dedicated system for tracking grants; a method of identifying project priorities; and a method for making go/no go decisions in grant-seeking and/or grant acceptance.

GRANTS PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Interviewees also noted that the Grants Program must evolve and change in response to evaluation; that direction and support for the program needs to come from the top; and that there must be realistic expectations for what the program can achieve.

BEING COMPETITIVE FOR PROP 68 FUNDING

One of the District’s lobbyists defined the strategy that the District needs to follow to be competitive for Prop 68 funding:

- Identify two categories of projects/programs – those that are highest priority for the District and those that are less of a top priority, but that can make the lobbyist aware of them, as there may be funding appropriate to these projects, even though they aren’t the top priority.
- Lay out how much money the District needs and by when. Identify each project, its cost, local match, any other funding, and timing.
- Establish meetings with the District’s lobbyists and state agencies to build awareness of projects, priorities and funding needs.
- Engage in agency meetings where Prop 68 grant guidelines are being developed.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS

The key findings described above were used to define the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges the District faces as it implements the Grants Program. This analysis guides the structure and recommendations in the Strategy – building on the strengths and opportunities, and developing strategies to address the weaknesses and threats.

STRENGTHS

- The District has adequate funding to provide a match for grant funding.
- The District has well-established funding priorities (Measure AA, Vision Plan).

- The District has an excellent reputation, with a strong partnership ethic and delivery on promises.
- The District had the foresight to establish a formal Grants Program and develop a Strategy to guide it.
- Development of the Strategy involved key staff and management, increasing understanding and investment by staff and the potential success of the program.
- By involving all project and management staff in the creation of the Strategy, everyone at the District now has a vested interest in helping the Grants Program succeed and operate in ways that are more efficient, inclusive and effective.
- The addition of the Grants Specialist has resulted in the receipt of more grant income in FY2017-18 than in any of the prior five years, indicating that grant income can grow as more time and attention is focused on grant-seeking and more of the Grants Specialist's time is dedicated to grant-seeking.
- We have a suite of capital projects that are in the process of being implemented due to Measure AA so this is a particularly important time to seek bond funding because these are projects that are well-matched to grants vs. operational costs.

OPPORTUNITIES

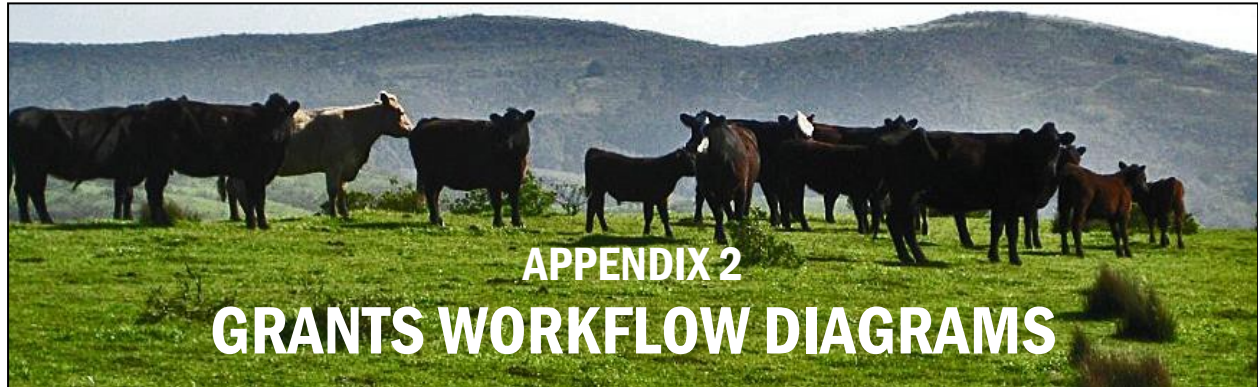
- There are several state funding opportunities, including the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund and Prop. 68, passed in June 2018, as well as the potential for a new Water Bond in November 2018.
- Upcoming land acquisitions present opportunities for significant public and private funding as well as joint funding possibilities with local partners.

WEAKNESSES

- Staff members have had prior negative experiences with grants and have concerns about integrating a new program and systems and the impact this could have on workload.
- The Grants Specialist is new to the job and new to grant-seeking, and the District is new to a centralized grant-seeking program. The result has been a steep and process-heavy learning curve, limiting the time that could be spent on grant-seeking.
- Measure AA has increased staff workload and shortened project timelines, making it more difficult to secure staff time for grants.
- Realistic expectations for the Grants Program have not yet been established.
- The District's recent period of staff growth in the last three years, make it a challenging time to integrate and implement the newly established Grants Program.
- Increasing costs for capital projects, resulting in greater gaps between Measure AA funding projections and actual implementation costs, make it difficult to project total project costs overtime.
- As a government agency, the District has a set process for budgeting and project prioritization. This combined with its size (175 staff) makes pivoting to new projects to be responsive to grant opportunities more difficult.
- The District has had a very small state presence even though it is a well-established agency. Legislators and agency staff in Sacramento confuse the District with POST and/or other open space districts/authorities and nonprofit organizations.

Appendix 1. Findings & SWOT**THREATS**

- Prop 68 funding priorities or program guidelines may not dovetail with the District’s work or constituencies served.
- Competition for Prop 68 funding will be stiff.
- The 2018 Water Bond may not be endorsed by voters, reducing potential grant funding available to the District.

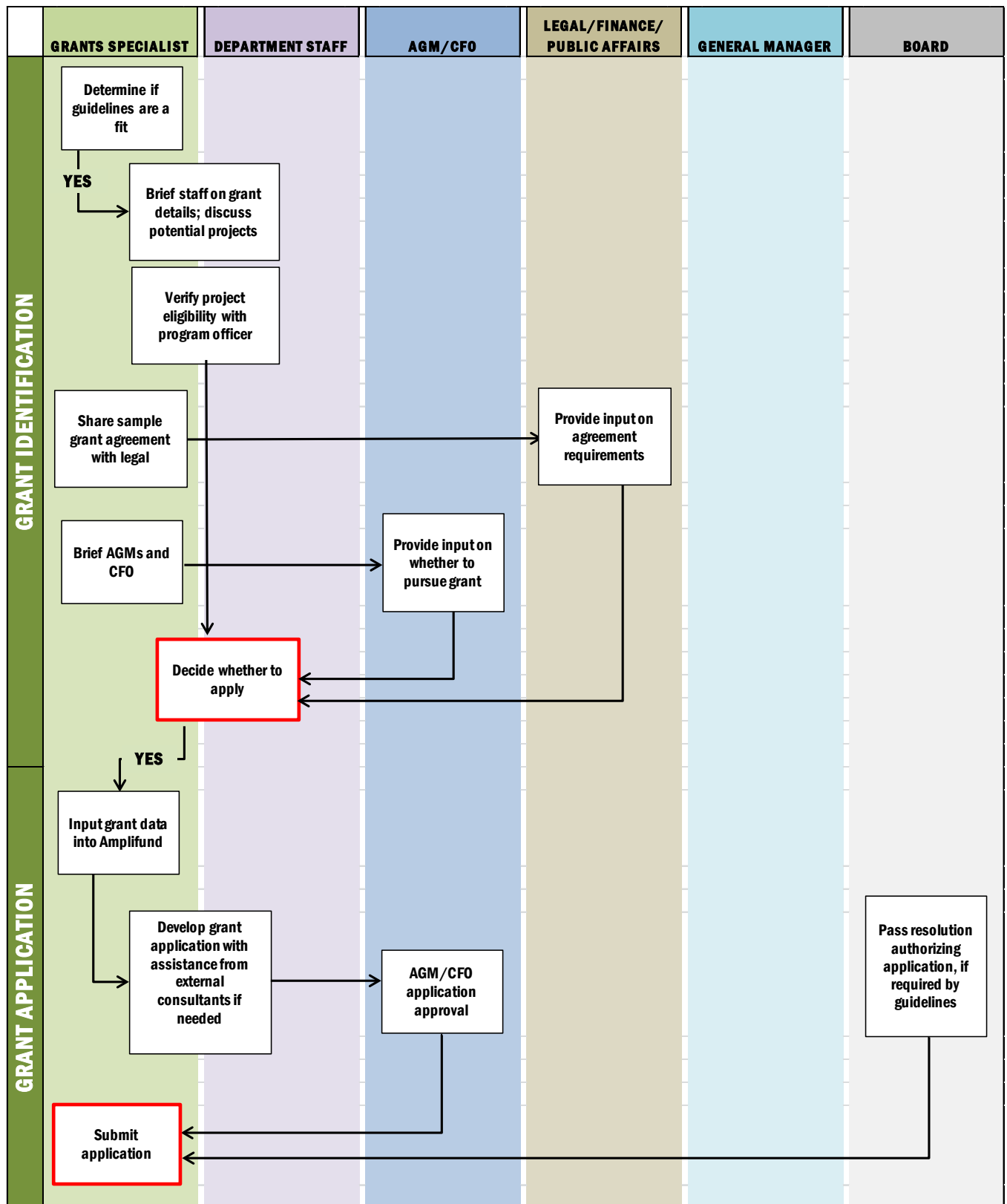


The following work flow diagrams illustrate the processes related to the following stages of the grant lifecycle:

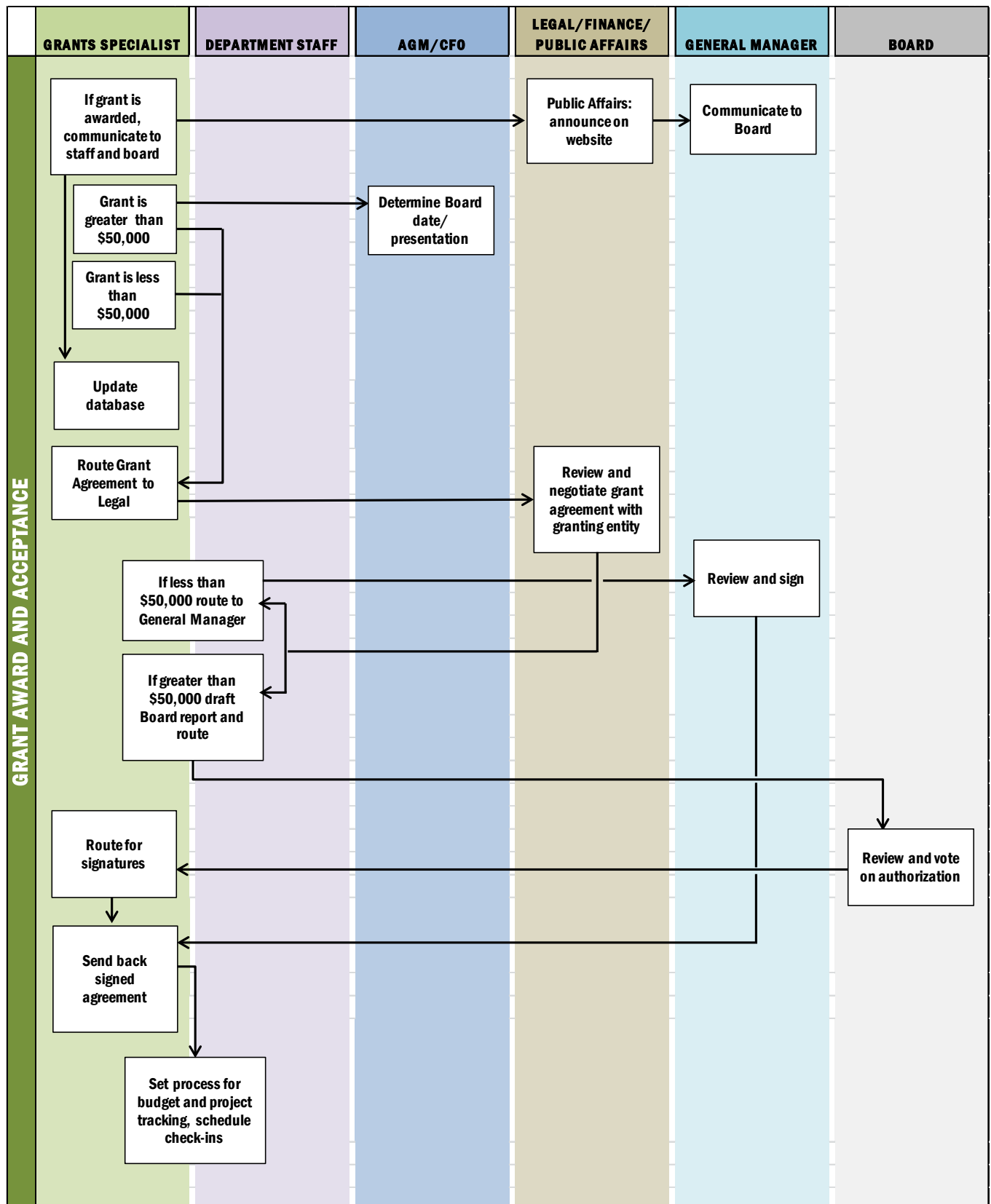
- Grant Identification and Application
- Grant Award and Acceptance
- Grant Lifecycle
- Grant Reimbursement
- Grant Amendment

Appendix 2. Grants Workflow Diagrams

INTERNAL WORKFLOW: GRANT IDENTIFICATION AND APPLICATION

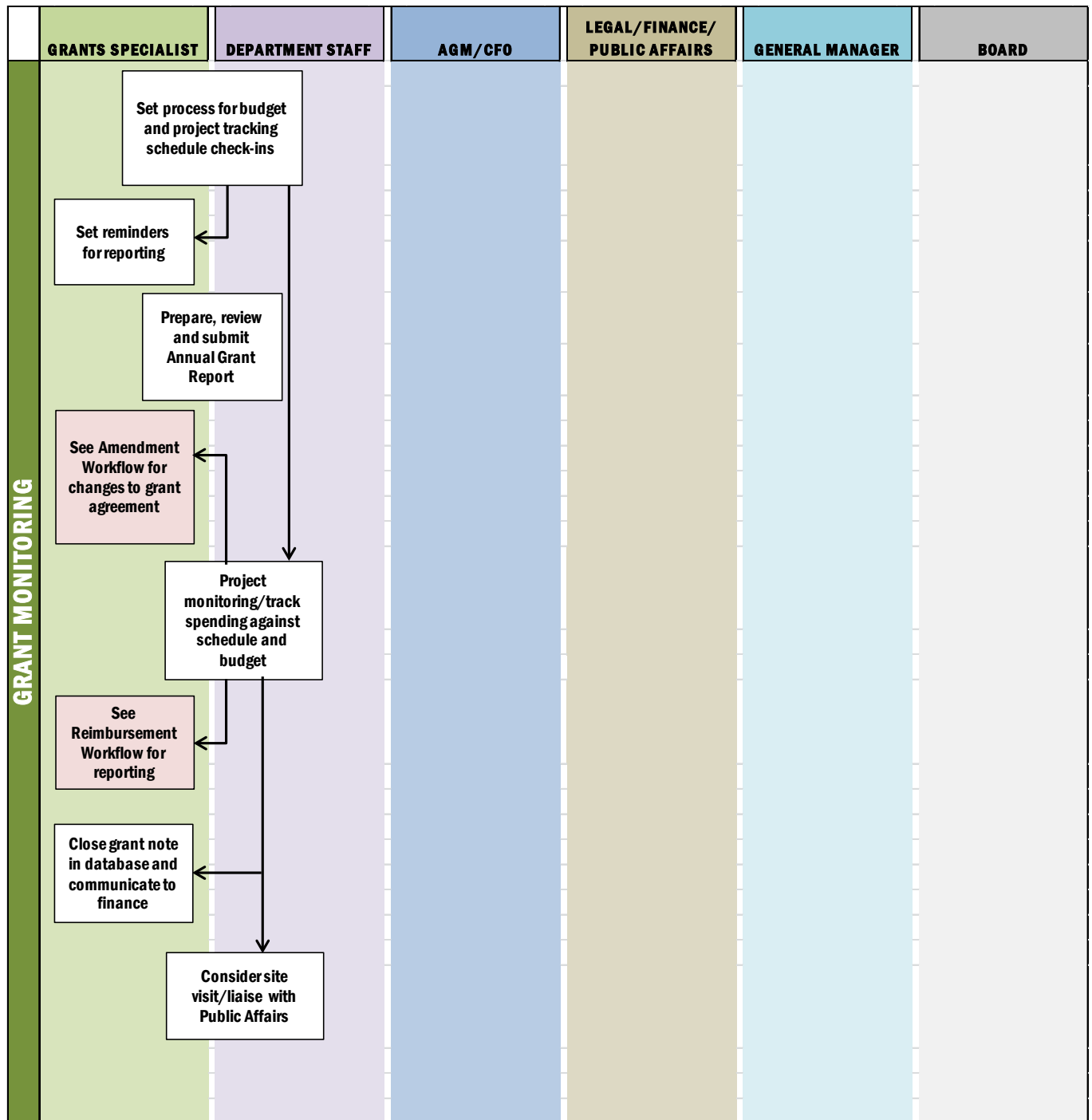


INTERNAL WORKFLOW: GRANT AWARD AND ACCEPTANCE

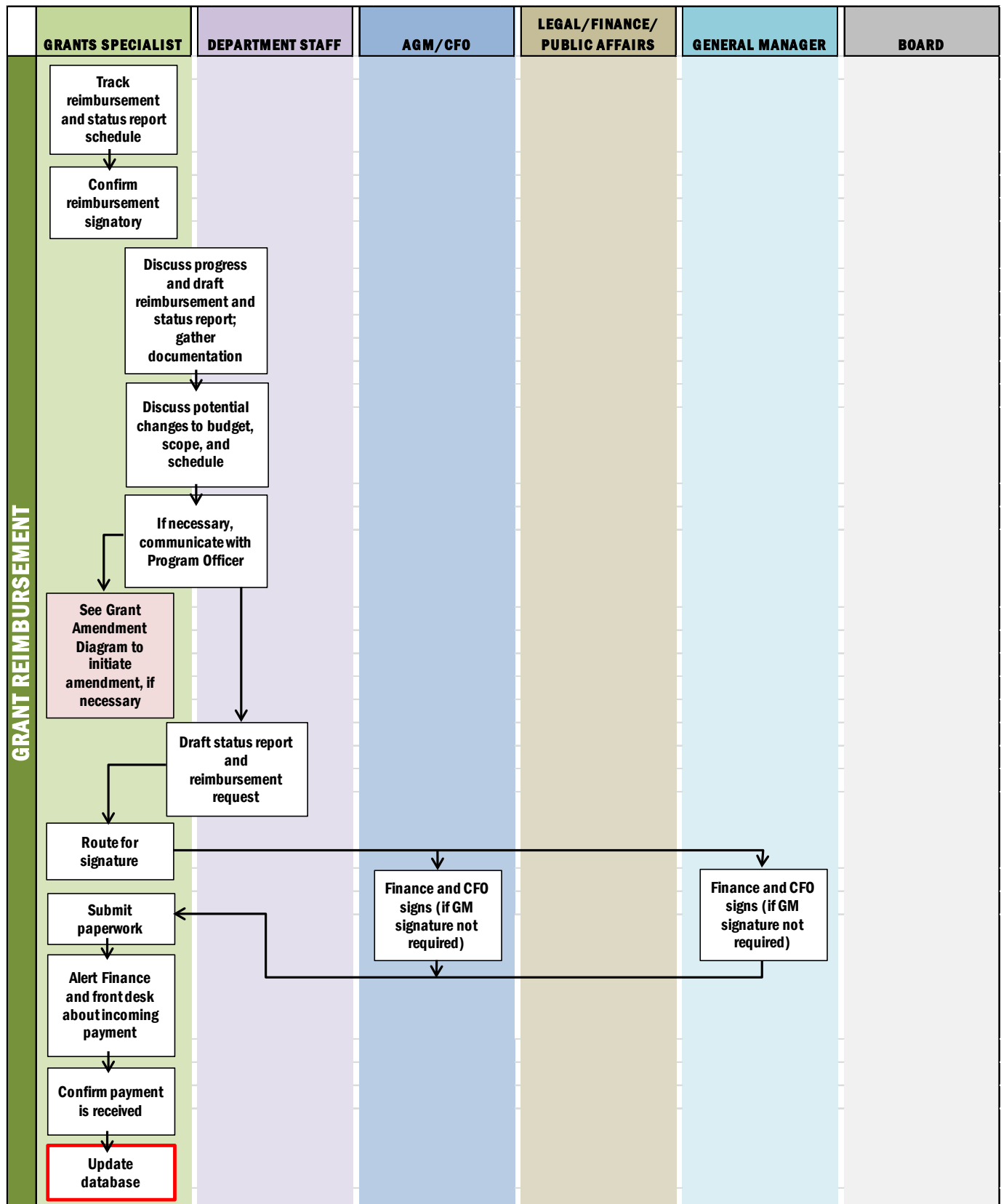


Appendix 2. Grants Workflow Diagrams

INTERNAL WORKFLOW: GRANT LIFECYCLE



INTERNAL WORKFLOW: GRANT REIMBURSEMENT



Appendix 2. Grants Workflow Diagrams

INTERNAL WORKFLOW: GRANT AMENDMENT

