

42. Approve delegation of authority to the County Executive, or designee, to submit Grant Application to Environmental Protection Agency relating to grant funding for pollution reduction, climate resiliency, and environmental justice in the amount up to \$20,000,000 for period Fiscal Year 2025 through Fiscal Year 2028. (ID# 24-4962)



24-4962

**DATE:** April 16, 2024

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Sara H. Cody, MD, Health Officer and Director of Public Health  
Jasneet Sharma, Director, Office of Sustainability

**SUBJECT:** Environmental Protection Agency's Inflation Reduction Act Community Change Grant

**RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Approve delegation of authority to the County Executive, or designee, to submit Grant Application to Environmental Protection Agency relating to grant funding for pollution reduction, climate resiliency, and environmental justice in the amount up to \$20,000,000 for period Fiscal Year 2025 through Fiscal Year 2028.

**FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

There is no requirement for local matching funds. Approval of the recommendation will have no net impact to the County General Fund.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION AND BACKGROUND**

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) provides \$2 billion in funding to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to work on environmental and climate justice activities. The EPA's Inflation Reduction Act Community Change Grants Program has released a new funding opportunity intending to fund local projects to advance environmental and climate justice activities that benefit disadvantaged communities through projects that reduce pollution, increase community climate resilience, and build community capacity to address environmental and climate justice challenges.

In response to the funding opportunity, the Public Health Department (PHD) will submit a joint proposal in partnership with the Office of Sustainability (OOS) and a community-based organization (CBO).

If awarded, PHD and OOS would advance the EPA's Community Change Grants Program by partnering internally with County departments and externally with CBOs serving vulnerable communities to increase the community's capacity for climate resilience and to

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build internal capacity for community engagement. PHD and OOS are currently working with a diverse range of CBOs across the county to solicit feedback on the needs of vulnerable communities, the type and scale of capacity building projects, and how to best operationalize and systematize community engagement to inform future County actions regarding climate resilience and environmental justice.

This project would build upon lessons learned from the COVID-19 response and climate resilience capacity building, and leverage and expand existing partnerships to address climate impacts in SCC. The EPA Community Change Grant Team would include the following strategies:

1. Green infrastructure and tree planting: Support nature-based solutions to protect, sustainably manage, or restore natural systems to address the impacts of climate change
2. Disaster preparedness/resilience hubs: Bolster community capacity to respond to emergency events by providing technical assistance to organizations that support Resiliency Hubs
3. Food systems: Expand PHD pilot program to re-direct recovered food to communities with higher rates of food insecurity
4. Riverine and flood risk: Implement structural and non-structural retrofits to Resiliency Hubs and other vital infrastructure
5. Electrification and energy efficiency transportation: Expand active transportation planning and coordination
6. Outreach and education: Develop cross-systems, multilingual, culturally relevant media communications about cooling centers and other climate impact resources available in SCC
7. Leadership and Training: Build the capacity of community organizations and community leaders to lead climate resilience by expanding the Climate and Health Resilience Leadership Academy for CBOs.

The recommended action supports the PHD Strategic Plan's goal of ensuring all residents of Santa Clara County live in communities designed to enhance health and prevent chronic diseases, as climate change threatens public health and basic human life support systems such as water, air, and soil quality, food, shelter, and security. The recommended action also supports the Office of Sustainability's Strategic Plan and the County Sustainability Master Plan goal of improving the overall health and well-being of all County employees, residents, and visitors and eliminate health inequities to minimize the potential impacts of disasters and climate change on the most vulnerable residents.

In 2020 Santa Clara County experienced unprecedented environmental, health, and social challenges from high heat, wildfires, and smoke, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. SCC received an "F" grade for particle pollution in the American Lung Association's *State of the Air 2021 Report*, and the County experienced 21 heat days above 90 F in 2022. The Santa

Clara County Extreme Heat Dashboard projects that the number of days with maximum temperatures above 95 degrees over the next decade in SCC will range anywhere from 5 days per year in the north part of the County to 10-13 days per year in San José and 14-25 days in the South County. Forecasts also predict up to a seven-fold increase in County wildfire risk. Recognizing that social determinants of health intersect with climate change to create health inequities, the County will focus EPA Grant activities on “priority populations” residing within East San José and South County that are most vulnerable to climate-related adverse health outcomes: young children; older adults; low-income persons living in inadequate housing; pregnant women; outdoor workers; unhoused; persons with disabilities; and those with asthma, diabetes, and other chronic health conditions. The EPA Grant requires applicants to focus their applications on “disadvantaged communities”: an EPA designation for census tracts that are disproportionately overburdened by pollution.

The EPA Grant’s work will build on the success of the South County-focused activities from the CDC BRACE Grant to expand and scale climate adaption activities to other priority geographic areas and among other populations who are at risk for adverse health outcomes related to climate-related events.

### **CHILD IMPACT**

Infants and young children are especially vulnerable to many of the harmful impacts of climate change, including extreme heat, air pollution, and emerging infectious diseases. According to the 2020 US Census population estimates, 20.3 percent of the county are under the age of 18. Actions undertaken by the County to increase health protective factors and advance resiliency and climate change adaptation by serving the economic, environmental and social interests of the community, including those impacting children and youth.

### **SENIOR IMPACT**

Older adults are likewise particularly vulnerable to many of the impacts of climate change, such as extreme heat or cold, power outages, and emerging infectious diseases. According to the 2020 US Census population estimates, 15.1 percent of the county is over the age of 65. Actions undertaken by the County to increase health protective factors and advance resiliency and climate change adaptation by serving the economic, environmental and social interests of the community, including those impacting seniors.

### **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

Implementation of adaptation actions enhance health equity by focusing on populations most vulnerable to the health effects of climate change and address social determinants of health in the context of climate change. Key outcomes will be increased knowledge of adaptation actions that reduce adverse health effects of climate change and an enhanced evidence base for effective climate and health adaptation actions. Activities will contribute to positive long-

term outcomes to reduce the negative health outcomes of climate change in vulnerable populations.

**CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION**

The Public Health Department would not be able implement the EPA’s Inflation Reduction Act Community Change Grant.

**STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL**

Upon approval, the Clerk of the Board shall notify Jasmine Luna in PHD.