



2020-2021

# Sustainable Communities Program

CALL 4: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, EQUITY & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

## Q&A SUMMARY

On July 13 and 15, 2021, SCAG held Listening Sessions to build and shape the Sustainable Communities Program Call for Applications for Civic Engagement, Equity & Environmental Justice. This Q&A Summary is a collection of questions and responses from both Listening Sessions. **Guidelines for Call 4 are still in development and responses are subject to change.** SCAG is sharing this document to provide preliminary responses and will continue to collect feedback. SCAG will update the Q&A Summary as program details are finalized.

Please submit comments or questions to Anita Au at [au@scag.ca.gov](mailto:au@scag.ca.gov).

## General

### What is SCAG?

Founded in 1965, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is a Joint Powers Authority under California state law, established as an association of local governments and agencies that voluntarily convene as a forum to address regional issues. Under federal law, SCAG is designated as a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and under state law as a Regional Transportation Planning Agency and a Council of Governments.

The SCAG region encompasses six counties (Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura) and 191 cities in an area covering more than 38,000 square miles. The agency develops long-range regional transportation plans including sustainable communities strategy and growth forecast components, regional transportation improvement programs, regional housing needs allocations and a portion of the South Coast Air Quality management plans. In 1992, SCAG expanded its governing body, the Executive Committee, to a 70-member Regional Council to help accommodate new responsibilities mandated by the federal and state governments, as well as to provide more broad-based representation of Southern California's cities and counties. With its expanded membership structure, SCAG created regional districts to provide for more diverse representation. The districts were formed with the intent to serve equal populations and communities of interest. Currently, the Regional Council consists of 86 members.

In addition to the six counties and 191 cities that make up SCAG's region, there are six County Transportation Commissions that hold the primary responsibility for programming and implementing transportation projects, programs, and services in their respective counties. Additionally, SCAG Bylaws provide for representation of Native American tribes and Air Districts in the region on the Regional Council and Policy Committees.

More information about SCAG can be found on our website: <https://scag.ca.gov/>

### What is the Sustainable Communities Program?

The Sustainable Communities Program (SCP) provides direct technical assistance and resources to local agencies to support local planning efforts in the areas of transportation, land use, housing, and sustainability, and enable implementation of the Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS), which today is called Connect SoCal.

The SCP will provide local jurisdictions with multiple opportunities to seek funding and resources to meet the needs of their communities, address recovery and resiliency strategies considering COVID-19, and support regional goals. SCAG will release Calls for Applications throughout Fiscal Year 20/21 and 21/22 to select projects within different program areas and funding categories.

The adopted Connect SoCal can be found here:

<https://www.connectsocial.org/Pages/Connect-SoCal-Final-Plan.aspx>.



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## General (continued)

### Can I suggest other organizations for SCAG to involve and share this process?

Yes. SCP information and SCAG staff contact information is open to the public to involve, share, and include organizations and other stakeholders in the process.

### Will the application materials be made available in Spanish?

Yes. SCAG will provide all SCP Call 4 information in Spanish. If you need assistance in a language other than Spanish or English, please contact Anita Au at [au@scag.ca.gov](mailto:au@scag.ca.gov).

### Who do I contact if I have more questions about the program?

Please direct any questions about the program to Anita Au at [au@scag.ca.gov](mailto:au@scag.ca.gov).

## Award Amounts

### What is the anticipated value of an award? Are there minimum or maximum values?

There are currently no minimum or maximum award amounts. Award amounts will vary based on the scope of the proposed project. SCAG does not intend to identify minimums or maximums at this time.

Budgets and project lists for the previous 2020 SCP grants approved by SCAG's Regional Council are publicly available on SCAG's Website:

- [Active Transportation and Safety Recommended Project List and Funding Plans](#)  
[Agenda Item 5 starting Packet Pg. 182]
- [Smart Cities & Mobility Innovations Award Recommendations](#)  
[Agenda Item 11 starting Packet Pg. 199]
- [Housing & Sustainable Development Recommended Applications](#)  
[Agenda Item 7 starting on Packet Pg. 115]

### How many projects will be awarded in each county?

The project award list will be determined through the evaluation process and approval by the Regional Council.

### How will community-based organizations (CBOs) receive a “bigger piece of the pie” considering the small amounts historically allocated to them?

Proposals shall include budgets that identify appropriate compensation for CBOs to lead key elements of the project. In addition, the application and evaluation criteria emphasize equitable, respectful, and reciprocal partnerships.

### Is it possible to pursue a multi-year funding model? Can these funds be used to cover operating costs?

The Sustainable Communities Program aims to provide funds for planning projects and does not currently provide multi-year funding for general operations.



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## Project Types/Qualifications

### Can existing projects apply for resources?

Yes. Applicants may submit proposals for new or on-going (or existing) projects. Projects will be evaluated based on the available scoring criteria.

### Should applicants build the scope based on a single project type? Can applicants submit a project that is not on the list of example project types?

Projects should respond to local need. Project scopes may include multiple project types or fall under a project type not identified by SCAG. This Call for Application includes projects focused across multiple categories. All proposed planning strategies and project types must have a stated regional transportation planning nexus. To learn more about regional transportation nexus please refer to Caltrans Grant documentation: [Grant Application Guide](#).

### What is the difference between Resilient Communities and Climate Action and Resilience?

These project types have been combined into one project type, with a revised description to address their respective similarities.

### Can applicants submit multiple applications?

Yes. Applicants may submit multiple applications and shall indicate project priority on submitted their applications.

### Are planning projects eligible? Are implementation projects eligible?

At this time, planning projects, engagement activities, and studies are eligible. More information will be provided in the next version of this Q&A Summary.

### Can an organization receive funding for advocacy-motivated community engagement?

The application guidelines will outline “Local Campaigns & Organizing” as a project type, and will include planning projects that utilize project ideation, research, direct engagement and people to engage in redefine their relationships to each other and to those in positions of power, building civic engagement and institutions that can address complex problems, represent the will and power of the community, and contribute knowledge and experience that other communities can use. Lobbying efforts and/or political campaigning are not allowable expenses.

## Applicant Eligibility

### Who is eligible to apply as an Agency Applicant?

- Local or Regional Agencies - Examples include cities, counties, councils of government, Regional Transportation Planning Agencies, and County Public Health Departments.
- Transit Agencies - Any agency responsible for public transportation that is eligible for funds under the Federal Transit Administration.
- Natural Resources or Public Land Agencies - Federal, State, or local agency responsible for natural resources or public land administration.
- Tribal Governments - Federally-recognized Native American Tribes.



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## Applicant Eligibility (continued)

### How is a Co-Applicant defined? What are the minimum requirements for a Co-Applicant? Are organizations with a fiscal sponsor eligible?

The following entities, within the SCAG region, are eligible to apply for this Call for Applications as Co-Applicants with an eligible Agency Applicant:

- Community-based organizations, non-profits, and social enterprises that fulfill a social or public service mission.
- Multiple co-applicants may apply alongside the Agency Applicant.
- An organization that utilizes a fiscal sponsor is eligible to apply.

All awarded Co-Applicants are expected to undergo SCAG's risk assessment process to ensure that recipients of grant funds maintain adequate financial management systems prior to receiving the funds. Awardees and co-applicants are required to maintain an accounting system that properly records and segregates incurred project costs by line item. The accounting system of the awardee, including its co-applicants and subcontractors, must conform to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles that enable the determination of incurred costs at interim points of completion and provides support for reimbursement payment vouchers or invoices sent to or paid by SCAG. Allowable project costs must comply with applicable cost principles and regulations.

### Have community-based organizations (CBOs) received Sustainable Community Program resources in the past?

The Sustainable Communities Program has not directly awarded resources to CBOs in the previous calls. This fourth Call for Applications adopts an approach to strategically invest in local community-led planning efforts with the direct involvement of CBOs as Co-Applicants.

### Could community members bring project ideas to SCAG?

Yes. Community members are encouraged to share thoughts and ideas on how SCAG can improve the lives of Southern Californians, including through project ideas. This program specifically aims to build community capacity, trust, and sustainable relationships with stakeholders. Feel free to connect with SCAG and send project ideas to Anita Au at [au@scag.ca.gov](mailto:au@scag.ca.gov).

## Partnerships

### How do potential applicants identify partnerships? Can SCAG facilitate partnerships between co-applicants and local agencies?

One of the main goals of Call 4 is to help foster meaningful working relationships between local governments and community-based organizations to facilitate and inform equitable community planning and development to address the pervasive and deep inequities experienced in historically under-resourced communities.

To facilitate application development, SCAG staff will be available via office hours, and host Application webinars open to the public, to assist with development. In addition, SCAG will be available to help community-based organizations identify potential agency partners.



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## Partnerships (continued)

### Would community-based organizations (CBOs) be the main implementation partner?

This Call for Applications allows Agency Applicants to apply in partnership with Co-Applicants. The Agency Applicant may apply with CBO Co-Applicant partnership.

Under an Agency and Co-Applicant partnership, Co-Applicants would be compensated to lead key elements of the project. In addition, a consultant team may be procured to perform identified work on behalf of the Agency and Co-Applicant Partnership.

### Can community-based organizations (CBOs) partner with universities?

The Agency Applicant must be an agency as defined in response to question 16. CBOs may partner with universities as a part of a coalition of community-based partners.

### Can a jurisdiction partner with a coalition of community-based organizations?

Yes. Multiple Co-Applicants may apply alongside the Agency Applicant.

### What if there is a lack of trust between community-based organizations and local agencies?

SCAG has taken this comment into consideration and is prioritizing evaluation criteria to address and help foster meaningful working relationships between local governments and community-based organizations, supporting local agencies in developing community capacity, trust, and sustainable relationships.

### Can “Sub-Applicant” shift to “Co-Applicant” to remove the implication that community-based organizations will have less power?

Yes. SCAG has taken this comment into consideration and as a result, SCAG is using the term Co-Applicant, to better representation the joint responsibility of applicants, and to align with the Agency's Racial Equity Early Action Plan goal of engaging and co-powering partnerships in this application.

### Will there be an opportunity to provide a pre-proposal or pre-application materials? Will the application materials be required?

Applicants are invited to submit an optional survey, to be made available on the SCP website, to describe basic proposed project information. Once SCAG receives the survey, SCAG will work with interested Applicants, as needed, to determine needed support and project feasibility. To facilitate application development, SCAG staff will be available via office hours, and host Application webinars.

## Capacity

### Will SCAG offer technical assistance to help applicants develop a proposal?

To facilitate application development, SCAG staff will be available via office hours, and host Application webinars to assist with project refinement. More information on office hours and Application webinars will be made available on the [SCP Call 4 website](#).

### Will SCAG offer technical assistance to awardees during the project?

SCAG staff will work with awardees to complete procurement and contracting. SCAG may serve as the administrative project manager, managing the contract and invoices.



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## Capacity (continued)

### What reporting process can an awardee anticipate?

Awarded applicants can anticipate submitting quarterly reports to align with SCAG's Overall Work Plan reporting requirements.

### Do applicants need to use evidence-based tools to substantiate what they want to do?

SCAG expects the projects to serve local needs; the methods used to measure or describe those needs do not need to be strictly quantitative, nor predetermined by SCAG. SCAG will work with and learn from applicants to understand the information available, especially where qualitative data is provided.

### Do potential applicants need to pay a fee to receive advice?

No. There are no fees to seek technical assistance from SCAG.

## Timing

### When should projects start? When do projects need to be completed by?

The timeline for this program is still in development, however staff currently anticipates projects to start in Winter 2023 and will need to be completed by Spring 2024, unless additional resources become available.

### When will we know more about timelines?

The schedule for SCP Call 4 is still in development, however staff currently expects to seek approval of SCP Call 4 Guidelines by the Regional Council in Winter 2021. The application period will open upon the Regional Council's approval. SCAG will aim to provide more precise dates in the next version of this Q&A Summary.