



DATE: December 4, 2014

TO: Recycling Board

FROM: Wendy Sommer, Deputy Executive Director

BY: Meri Soll, Senior Program Manager

SUBJECT: Grants to Nonprofits Program – Review and Focus Areas

BACKGROUND:

The Recycling Board has awarded grants through the Grants to Nonprofits program for the past eighteen years via an open Request for Proposal process, totaling approximately \$7.25 million dollars in grant funding. This memo provides an overview of the different grant programs available to the nonprofit community, including an introduction to 2 new focus areas for FY 14/15.

In FY 13/14, \$300,000 was budgeted for the Grants to Nonprofit Program. The table below identifies the different grant requests and funds disbursed through a variety of grant programs.

Grant Program	Applications Received	Funds Requested	Applications Approved	Funds Awarded
Competitive Grants to Nonprofits	3	\$94,700	3	\$ 94,700
Reuse Operating Grants	6	\$90,000	3	\$ 45,000
Mini Grants	18	\$73,625	7	\$ 25,657
Charity Thrifty Block Grant	2	\$16,970	2	\$ 16,970
Community Outreach Mini Grants	18	\$90,000	17	\$ 85,000
TOTAL	47	\$365,295	31	\$267,327

(Grant applications not funded had varying levels of deficiencies that led staff to conclude they should not be funded without substantial revision.)

In addition, the Agency has awarded Food Waste Prevention grants totaling \$40,000 to two nonprofit organizations involved with the recovery and redistribution of food. In the past, these grants were part of the Grants to Nonprofit solicitation process but now are administered through the Waste Prevention: Institutional Food project.

DISCUSSION:

The Grants to Nonprofits program creates specific focus areas to align with and support the Agency’s Strategic Plan goals. For FY 14/15, in addition to the same focus areas offered last year, we are adding 2 new categories.

1. Competitive Grants to Nonprofits	\$ 100,000
2. Reuse Operating Grants	\$ 60,000
3. Mini Grants	\$ 15,000
4. Charity Thrift Block Grants	\$ 15,000
5. Community Outreach Mini Grants	\$ 70,000
6. Lawn to Garden Conversion Mini Grants	\$ 25,000
7. HOA Lawn Conversion Design Grants	\$ 15,000
TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE:	\$ 300,000

1. Competitive Grants to Nonprofits

Funds for nonprofit entities for innovative projects that increase individual and community involvement in source reduction and recycling efforts, decrease the amount of waste generated and sent to the county's landfills, and encourage the development, marketing and use of recycled products. Grant awards generally range from \$15,000 to \$45,000. Past funded projects include improving recycling operations at the largest nonprofit recycler in Oakland, development and distribution of a least-toxic pest control product directory as well as greening Alameda County preschools that predominately serve low income students.

2. Reuse Operating Grants

The Reuse Operating Grants category was developed to provide funding for ongoing expenses to nonprofit reuse organizations. Reuse is at the top of the recycling hierarchy and therefore the most desirable end use; however, it also tends to be labor intensive with low retail sales prices, making it difficult to sustain over time. While reuse activities typically generate revenue, nonprofits need supplemental funding to continue these activities and/or expand them. Awards in this category are not to exceed \$15,000 per grantee to assist in the continued ability to operate reuse enterprises. Past grant recipients include collection and distribution of newborn baby clothes for low income mothers, expansion of bicycle repair and reuse program to increase the involvement of low-income/poverty level at-risk youth, as well as collection of surplus materials from businesses to create hands-on educational activities.

3. Mini Grants

This category is designed to effectively meet the needs of a wide variety of potential applicants who need access to a relatively small amount of money, within a brief period of time, for a specific and limited purpose. The goal is to fund innovative projects which will increase individual and community involvement in source reduction efforts; decrease the amount of waste generated and sent to the County's landfills, and encourages the development, marketing and use of recycled products. Eligible organizations can receive up to \$5,000 for a variety of projects and programs. Past funded projects include establishing "Fix It Clinics" in Alameda County where residents are provided instruction on the repair of consumer electronic items in a public clinic setting, purchase and installation of water hydration stations to reduce plastic water bottle consumption, and construction of compost bins as part of an educational garden project at a low income high school in Oakland.

4. Charity Thrift Block Grants

This block grant was developed by the Waste Management Authority Board in 1998 in response to requests from local charity thrifts to provide partial relief from high disposal expenses, due in part to WMA fees. Funds are available for Alameda County nonprofits that reuse donated goods or materials and receive more than 50 percent of their revenue from the hauling and sale of those donated goods or materials. The organization must demonstrate that a maximum of 40 percent of materials collected/received are sent to landfill and a minimum of 60 percent of materials are either resold and/or recycled to be eligible for grant funding. The

grant program currently offers reimbursement to charity thrifts at \$6.49 per ton (up to \$15,000 per grant) for materials sent to landfill for a one-year period.

5. Community Outreach Mini Grants

These \$5,000 mini grants continue with last FY's emphasis on the traditionally difficult to reach low income/non-English speaking communities. We will continue to tap into local organizations that have the ability to most effectively motivate, train and educate their communities. Through this grant program, we endeavor to keep the recycling message relevant and address potential challenges for community members to implement recycling. While the focus remains on promoting and improving participation in food scrap recycling, we have revised the grant protocol to better align with the way these organizations operate with the low income and non-English speaking communities. Grant deliverables include delivery of a customized, comprehensive outreach campaign to their community/membership using the Ready Set Recycle campaign materials provided by StopWaste. Grants have been very successful (with at least half in the South and East portions of Alameda County) and we are reaching organizations and communities that we typically do not work with.

6. Lawn to Garden Conversion Mini Grants (new focus area)

Building upon the successful Community Outreach Mini grants, staff has expanded the scope of these grants to expand the reach of StopWaste's lawn conversion project to new audiences using existing educational and outreach materials. The lawn conversion project supports the Recycled Content Compost and Mulch project, by promoting sheet mulching over an existing lawn with recycled content cardboard, mulch and compost to establish a new planting area. The target focus to date has been on residential and civic commercial audiences. The \$5,000 mini grants are for conversion of small lawns into sustainable landscapes at nonprofit facilities located in Alameda County. Grant funds can cover the costs of supplies, plants and technical assistance. Priority will be given to organizations who reach non-English speaking, disadvantaged communities. As communities regularly congregate at these types of facilities, projects in these public settings will provide excellent opportunities to promote lawn conversion to communities we traditionally do not reach. Community members would be invited to participate in converting the lawn so that they would then be able to do the same with their own lawns – the ripple effect. This model has been successful in the neighborhood lawn-to-garden parties and the school-to-neighbor parties.

7. Home Owners Association (HOA) Lawn Conversion Design Grants (new focus area)

This new focus area will offer \$5,000 mini grants to nonprofit HOAs to develop and adopt lawn conversion designs as an approved HOA landscape option. Currently, many HOAs require lawns and lawn maintenance (watering) as part of landscape requirements. Eligible grant activities include HOA hosting StopWaste staff demonstrations on lawn conversion, educating their members about lawn conversion opportunities, providing sustainable landscape design drawings to members as well as distributing Agency developed toolkits to homeowners who want to convert their lawns. HOAs would be required to change their lawn requirements and allow homeowners to replace their lawns with sustainable landscapes.

Grant Administration

All grant applications and supporting materials will be ready for distribution and posted on the Agency website by mid January 2015. Competitive and reusable grants require submission by March 2015; all other grant funding will be distributed on a first come - first served basis, until funds are expended.

Grant approvals under \$50,000 are processed administratively; using the Executive Director's signing authority. All grants issued under the Executive Director's signing authority are listed in a summary provided at the

regularly scheduled Recycling Board meeting. Recommended grants greater than \$50,000 are brought to the Recycling Board for approval. In addition, when there is room on the Board Agenda, recent grant recipients and their accomplishments are highlighted to keep the Board informed.

The grants program are promoted in a variety of ways including press releases, outreach to member agencies, mailing to nonprofits in Alameda County, as well as direct contact to potential recipients. The Agency also regularly uses social media to promote grant funding opportunities.

We encourage organizations to apply for funding from the grant program that best suits their project type and funding needs. A nonprofit can only request funding from *one* grant program category (identified above) with the exception of charity thrifts. Charity thrifts may apply for funding from the Charity Thrift Block Grant and one other grant category.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for information only. Board members are encouraged to help spread the word about the grant availability in January 2015. All grant information will be posted on www.stopwaste.org