



SCWP Research Showcase

Thursday July 27, 2023

# Who is OWLA?



- Diverse coalition of community leaders and organizations from across Los Angeles County
- United to create a strong water future for Los Angeles
- Our goal is to secure clean, safe, affordable and reliable water for drinking, recreation and commerce now and for the future
- Commitment to seeing prioritization of projects that achieve Safe Clean Water Program objectives of water quality, water supply, nature-based solutions, and community investment.

# Methodology

- We reviewed the recommendations from the ARLA Working Group, SCOPE, LA Waterkeeper, UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation and Stantec, and the Scoring Committee as well as our historic stances and recommendations
- We identified where recommendations overlapped
- We made an effort to consolidate and condense the recurring recommendations into the following summarized recommendations

# Water Quality

Convene expert panel of water quality experts to assess and make recommendations on how the SCWP can maximize water quality benefits most effectively and efficiently, including whether:

- **Scoring criteria** incentivizes projects that are overbuilt
- **Project categorization** of wet vs dry is sufficient or whether adjustments are needed
- Appropriate to adopt a **mass pollution reduction** load for larger watersheds/projects
- **Cost-effectiveness criteria** is appropriate and the best way to determine effectiveness of projects



# Water Supply

Use existing ROC Water Supply Working group to assess and make recommendations on how the SCWP can maximize water supply benefits most effectively and efficiently, including:

- Expansion of **what constitutes beneficial use of water**, including potentially adding shallow groundwater recharge and environmental uses of water
- Developing protocols to **ensure that water is not double-counted** between upstream and downstream projects
- **Prioritizing groundwater recharge projects and onsite -use** over wastewater recycling

# Nature-Based Solutions (NBS)

- Redefine NBS in the feasibility study guidelines by incorporating 2022 interim guidance that **differentiates between *natural processes* and *nature mimicking strategies***
- Update scoring criteria to adopt a **sliding scale** (rather than all-or-nothing score) that incorporates a metrics-based “**good, better, best**” framework
  - good = climate friendly vegetation;
  - better = native vegetation;
  - best = diverse native plant communities, including groundcover, shrub, trees
- Update scoring criteria to **encourage more hardscape removal** by establishing a scale-dependent scoring rubric

# Community Investment Benefits (CIB)

- Require applicants to **demonstrate community need** for project CIB (e.g., reduce flooding, mitigate heat island) through data (photos, heat index, parks needs assessment) or community needs assessment to achieve points
- Replace the current “yes/no” system with **clear metrics** for community benefits to set specific goals and outcomes. Additionally, establish minimum thresholds that must be met to be awarded points
- Embark on ongoing **community needs assessment** (part of outreach program) and build out easily accessible portal to continuously track

# Benefits to Disadvantaged Communities

- Provide **clearer definition** of “DAC benefitting” grounded in strong CIB, community engagement, and displacement avoidance standards
- Adopt ARLA WG recommendation to **calculate DAC benefits based on proportionality** (who benefits from project based on well-established metrics/criteria) for DAC 110% determination and project scoring
- Incorporate **DAC mapping platform** into application portal that includes socioeconomic data & environmental challenges to ID priority sites for DAC & severely DAC communities
- Require applicants to clearly **demonstrate indirect displacement avoidance strategies**



# Community Engagement & Support

- **Update and clarify scoring for community engagement** so that expectations and standards are clear. Consider using Rosa Gonzalez of Facilitating Power as a guide
- **Set minimum requirements** (for eligibility) of “Consult” based on *Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership* and allocate increasing points to projects that demonstrate activities that “Involve,” “Collaborate,” and “Defer to” the impacted community
- Require applicants to **conduct early and meaningful community engagement with federally and non-federally recognized tribes** if it is of interest and with appropriate capacity building in place
- Establish a **bench of CBOs/NGOs** that can be employed or deployed to conduct community engagement by applicants

# Leveraging Funds

- Provide more **clarity as to what constitutes leveraged funding**, specifically addressing internal cost-share, phased projects, O&M (does construction count as leveraged funding), how certain leveraged funding is, and staff time
- Establish a **graduated sliding scale** to award points for leveraged funding like the Water Supply pilot
- Pilot a track for leveraged funding that allows projects to promise to use SCWP funding to leverage additional funding (**using SCWP funds as a match for federal/state grant programs**)

# Workforce Development/Good Jobs

- Include section on application portal to **quantify workforce impact of project**- specifically, is the project covered under a CWA/PLA, will Conservation Corps be part of the workforce, how many construction and how many O&M jobs will be created
- **Roll out workforce development program** as soon as possible

# Process Improvements

- **Separate design, construction and O&M applications** now (*longer-term, craft relevant scoring rubric for each application type*)
- **Streamline SCWP process** to provide as much deliberation time as possible to WASCs
- **Empower ROC** to provide appropriate oversight during SIP reviews
- **Assess WASC performance** examining the makeup of the WASCs and fair decision-making practices

# Monitoring & Reporting

- Establish a **public monitoring dashboard** that is user-friendly and includes which stage the project is in (completed, design, construction, O&M)
- Develop **specific metrics to quantify, track, and monitor progress** for the SCWP and use monitoring to inform adaptive management
- Develop a **monitoring program** that includes compliance monitoring, program monitoring, watershed monitoring, and project monitoring with a strong and transparent review process, ideally conducted by a third party
- Offer a County **approved O&M provider or County workforce** as an option to complete O&M if funded by SCWP dollars



# Other Considerations

- Explore potential for **parcel-based program**, such as residential retrofit (with direct install for equity purposes)
  - Consider pilot project with different criteria for regional funds and/or incentives for municipalities to allocate local return funds to such projects
  - Explore and pursue strategies to **get school districts to more effectively engage** in SCWP (w/ projects that actually green schools and provide community-wide benefits)
  - Explore any other strategies that will **accelerate replacement of hardscape** with greenspace, especially in park-poor communities

# Additional Assessments Needed

- Municipal program (\$112M per year)
  - What are funds being used for?
  - Are municipal funds augmenting or offsetting past spending?
- Other elements of regional program
  - Scientific studies (*e.g., should we identify and pursue specific research needs, such as goal of shifting program to be more proactive?*)
  - Technical Resources Program (*e.g., should applicants be allowed to use funds to conduct their own Feasibility Study?*)
- District program
  - Outreach, education & workforce development

# Key Constituents to Consult

- WASCs (chairs)
- Scoring Committee
- Watershed Coordinators
- Applicants both funded and non-funded

# Crafting a Proactive Approach

- Shift SCWP Regional Program from reactive grants program to **proactive funding program**
- Based on existing data and community needs assessment, **identify best project types (and projects)** for various locations to maximize overall program benefits
- Use scientific studies money to launch **data assessment**
- Use outreach program to support **community needs assessment**
- **Vision** should include specific goals, objectives, targets, metrics, action plan & timelines

# Benefits of a Proactive Approach

Moving from one-size-fits all competitive grant approach to more visionary, proactive funding program will allow us to:

- Better **address specific watershed characteristics** (soil type, how much water already captured, amount of hardscape, water quality)
- Better **address community needs and goals** (ID where greening is most critical, where more opportunity exists for water supply, where water quality compliance is most critical)
- More fully **incorporate full-cost accounting** principles (to help ID best types of projects for various locations), which is challenging in grant program
- Can incorporate **beneficial projects/programs that may not score well under current rubric** (e.g., parcel-based programs)
- **Maximize cost-effectiveness** of SCWP investments; allow more creativity in leveraging funds
- **Maximize overall program benefits** by being more targeted in investments!



# Priorities

- Take all steps to **prioritize hardscape removal**, and creation of NEW green space – especially at **schools** and park-poor communities
- Adopt more **metrics and clearer definitions** around Community Investment Benefits, Community Support, NBS, and DAC Benefitting
- **Ensure water quality** and **supply benefits** being fully met (monitoring; avoiding redundancy)
- Take steps to move program from reactive grants program to **visionary and proactive investment program**