



ARCCA

Alliance of Regional Collaboratives
for Climate Adaptation

April 15, 2023

Lynn von Koch-Liebert
Executive Director
California Strategic Growth Council
1400 Tenth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Regional Climate Collaboratives Program Round 2 Draft Program Guidelines

Dear Lynn von Koch-Liebert and SGC Staff:

The Alliance of Regional Collaboratives for Climate Adaptation (ARCCA) welcomes the opportunity to provide comments in response to the Regional Climate Collaboratives Program Round 2 Draft Program Guidelines (Draft Guidelines).

[ARCCA](#) is a California-based network of regional climate collaboratives – each encompassing a diverse, multisector network of agencies and organizations working together to accelerate climate adaptation throughout their region and to catalyze on-the-ground resiliency-building initiatives. As a statewide network, ARCCA brings together thought leaders and practitioners to advocate for equitable and effective adaptation principles and policies, to collaborate towards innovative and holistic solutions, and to build a culture of prioritizing climate and community resilience.

Our member collaboratives represent the following regions: North Coast, Sierra Nevada, Greater Sacramento Area, San Francisco Bay Area, Central Coast, Greater Los Angeles, Inland Southern California, and the San Diego Region. ARCCA is a coalition program of [CivicWell](#), formerly the Local Government Commission (LGC), a 501(c)3 nonprofit working to create livable communities throughout California by advancing policies, connecting leaders, and implementing solutions.

We respectfully offer our comments and recommendations to support the finalization of the CRC Program Round 1 Guidelines. Our comments are intended to provide high-level recommendations and reflect [ARCCA’s Guiding Principles](#), the California Resilience Partnership’s [Climate Crossroads Recommendations Report](#), the diversity of California’s regions and their priorities, and the diverse needs and perspectives of adaptation practitioners and community leaders. While our network includes over



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300 individual public agencies, nonprofits, community-based organizations, Tribes, businesses, and academic institutions from across the state, the comments provided in this letter are not necessarily endorsed by each of our individual members.

Overarching Comments

First, we would like to thank you and your team for developing a comprehensive set of updated draft guidelines for the new Regional Climate Collaboratives (RCC) program and this opportunity to provide feedback. We greatly appreciate the Summary of Proposed Changes that clearly highlights the main changes made to the Draft 1 Guidelines and simplified our review process. We also appreciate that the Draft 2 Guidelines are much more concise than the Draft 1 Guidelines, eliminating redundancy and providing significantly greater clarity. We recognize the multi-faceted challenge of designing a new program to meet SB-1072 legislative mandates and the ambitious, cross-cutting goals of the RCC program while navigating the existing regional climate collaborative landscape. We commend SGC for rising to this challenge by creating additional opportunities for stakeholders throughout California to engage in and inform the guidelines development process. The comments we provide in this letter are primarily in support of the proposed changes.

I. About the RCC Program

- **Support Expanded Timeline:** We are pleased to see that the application timeline for Round 2 provides ample time for submission, aligned with a key recommendation from the [Climate Crossroads Report](#). Flexibility in the grant timeline can allow for more opportunity for potential applicants to dedicate the appropriate resources needed to developing robust applications. We encourage SGC to be mindful of other grant opportunities that may have similar timelines to the RCC program to minimize grant writing capacity constraints.

II. Eligible Activities

- **Support Leveraging Existing Efforts:** We support the requirement for RCCs to leverage, complement, and build on existing regional efforts and resources for capacity building and technical assistance when developing and implementing their work plans. Although the State's climate resilience budget package is injecting much-needed resources into climate adaptation coordination, planning, and implementation, climate adaptation work overall remains significantly underfunded. This includes funding to sustain existing and ongoing efforts, as well as funding for new programs and projects that will need to be implemented as the impacts of climate change continue to worsen. We encourage the continued development of the RCC program in a way that avoids reinventing the wheel or duplicating existing efforts. We suggest providing assistance to applicants to connect them with existing regional efforts, an effort that ARCCA would be happy to support.



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- **Support Increased Award Size:** We support the increased award size for both small and large grants. We believe that the larger grant award size allows for more opportunity for grant activities to be fulfilled. Each activity, considered independently, could easily consume a significant portion of the project budget, and an increase in the award size will allow new RCCs to conduct the required activities more equitably and comprehensively. Additionally, considering the severe capacity constraints experienced by the existing climate adaptation workforce, this additional funding would likely be needed to hire new staff or to increase the capacity of existing staff in order to implement the RCC scope of work.
- **Support Peer-to Peer Learning:** We are pleased to see the inclusion of Peer-to-Peer Learning as an integral part of the RCC program and believe that peer-to-peer learning among the collaboratives will be an essential element of their long-term success. We support SGC’s involvement in leading trainings and contributing to the peer-to-peer learning sessions. We also support the additional targeted assistance that will be provided to RCCs based on their expressed training needs in the survey and through quarterly virtual training and knowledge exchanges. We recommend SGC regularly share program updates, best practices, learnings, and resources with the public to support effective collaboration throughout the state and to further the goals of RCCs beyond the program itself.

IV. Region and Project Area Eligibility

- **Support Flexible Regional Definition:** We appreciate that applicants now have the option to define their own regions as the previous, more restrictive requirements were more limiting and created confusion and could be limiting. We would like to point out the potential challenges of maintaining an 8-county maximum as the population size could vary considerably. For example, 8 counties in Southern California could easily have 5 or 6 times the number of individuals within its boundaries than 8 counties in Northern California.

VI. Collaborative Stakeholder Structure

- **Provide Additional Guidance for Collaborative Stakeholder Structures:** We appreciate the detail included in this section and support the development of Collaborative Stakeholder Structures as the decision-making bodies of RCCs. As a network of collaboratives, we understand the importance of establishing clear governance structures that uphold trusted, collaborative spaces for group dialogue and decision-making. We also understand that the process of developing collaborative governance procedures can be a time-intensive process that relies upon the trust established between Partners. We offer a few comments to clarify the timeline and requirements of developing Collaborative Stakeholder Structure (CSS).

- o We commend and support SGC for recognizing the importance of compensating participants for their time informing and contributing to Collaborative governance. However, it is unclear how much of the CSS should be developed as part of the application process or after awards are made. We recommend clarifying the timeline for developing CSS and suggest a phased approach that allows participants to be compensated for their contributions.
 - o Underserved community-based organizations are already understaffed and are increasingly asked to participate in committees, working groups, and panels with piecemeal funding for each that rarely add up to fund an ongoing staff position. We strongly recommend reflecting these realities in the Final Guidelines and providing strategies and suggestions for engaging and compensating community partners in ways that can address these challenges.
- **Provide Greater Support to Managing Stakeholders:** We agree that the Managing Stakeholder will serve an important role within Collaboratives and are encouraged to see that Round 2 will allow for TA and SGC to provide additional support for Managing Stakeholders to operationalize the Collaborative Stakeholder Structure. Based on our collective experiences, as established regional collaboratives, management-related functions are critical yet potentially time-consuming activities. While existing collaboratives have established effective organizational management systems and trust with their members and partners, newly forming RCC Collaboratives will not have existing infrastructure to lean on (infrastructure specifically designed and developed to serve the Collaborative). While we recognize that management requirements will vary based on the number of Partners, existing relationships/networks, geographic scope, and other factors, the extensive requirements of the RCC program requires an efficient management approach that upholds collaborative governance - an admittedly tough balancing act.
 - o We recommend in addition to TA and SGC support, SGC create and/or source templates, case studies, and/or examples of best practices to share with the Managing Stakeholder to alleviate likely capacity constraints.
 - o We recommend organizing peer-to-peer learning calls specifically for Managing Stakeholders to discuss their approaches, challenges, and solutions with their peers.

VIII. Evaluation

- **Fund Statewide Evaluation:** We support the inclusion of ongoing and iterative evaluation to ensure effective project implementation. With consideration to the numerous additional required activities of Collaboratives, as well as the ongoing staff capacity constraints that Collaborative Partners will likely be experiencing when RCC-funded projects launch, we



appreciate that “grantees will receive assistance with the evaluation components of their RCC project, including development of the Evaluation Plan”. If possible, we would recommend hiring an external evaluator to ensure a consistent approach and methodology across RCCs and to ensure the best use of program budget as this will likely be much more cost-effective than RCCs hiring their own external evaluators.

- **Streamline Reporting Requirements:** We appreciate SGC and third-party support to assist Collaboratives in developing their annual reports. We encourage SGC to continue considering the purpose and utility of the information being requested from each Collaborative to identify opportunities for streamlining reporting requirements and minimizing administrative burdens.

XI. Program Thresholds and Scoring Criteria

- **Support Alignment with Existing Efforts:** We appreciate the clarity provided in the scoring criteria regarding the prioritization of applications that clearly demonstrate alignment with existing efforts. We believe that this will help minimize unnecessary and inefficient duplication of existing efforts. We also appreciate the prioritization of applications that clearly demonstrate active coordination and collaboration with existing regional efforts, which can help to bolster the success of RCCs while helping to sustain progress made once the program ends and funding discontinues.
- **Support Two-phased Application Process:** We appreciate the clarity provided for the requirements of the two-phased application process that can support capacity-constrained organizations to navigate and apply to the RCC program. We support the inclusion of third party TA providers to support applicants and encourage SGC to provide more detailed feedback for Pre-proposals for Round 2.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Round 2 Draft RCC Guidelines and provide comments. We greatly appreciate your time in considering our previous and current recommendations and your commitment to assisting under-resourced communities to access funding for climate change mitigation and adaptation projects. Please do not hesitate to reach out to Julianna DeNike at judenike@civicwell.org if you would like to discuss any of our comments further or if you have any questions.

We look forward to working in partnership with the SGC to support the successful implementation of the Regional Climate Collaboratives program.

Respectfully,



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Darbi Berry, *ARCCA 2023 Chair*
San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative (SDRCC)



Kaeleigh Reynolds, *ARCCA 2023 Vice Chair*
Sierra Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Partnership (Sierra CAMP)



Erin Couetts
Los Angeles Regional Collaborative for Climate Action & Sustainability (LARC)



Michael McCormick
Bay Area Climate Adaptation Network (BayCAN)



Karen Gaffney
North Coast Resource Partnership (NCRP)



Heather Allen
Central Coast Climate Collaborative (4C)



Julia Kim
Capital Region Climate Readiness Collaborative (CRCRC) / CivicWell



Ari Simon
Inland Southern California Climate Collaborative (ISC3)