

December 15, 2017

Elizabeth Grassi
Strategic Growth Council
1400 Tenth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Draft Research Investment Plan for the Climate Change Research Program

Dear Ms. Grassi,

The Alliance of Regional Collaboratives for Climate Adaptation (ARCCA) welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the Draft Research Investment Plan for the Climate Change Research Program.

ARCCA is a robust network of leading regional climate collaboratives – each encompassing a diverse group of public agencies, nonprofits, universities, and private sector companies – working together to build resilience to climate change impacts throughout California. As a statewide network bringing together some of the leading voices and thinkers on climate adaptation at all levels of society.

We offer a few comments and recommendations for consideration, which have been organized to align with the layout of the Draft Investment Plan:

Program Goals

1. We enthusiastically support the fund’s inclusion of “supporting climate adaptation and resilience.” It is important that research proposals recognize the diversity in adaptation issues across the state as experiences and responses vary between regions. Each region encounters a unique combination of climate change impacts, risks, and vulnerabilities, as well as different interests, priorities, capacities, and resources. In order to ensure equitable distribution to under-resourced regions, we suggest defining regional targets. We also suggest providing an explicit description of the State’s climate change goals to which proposals should demonstrate a clear connection.
2. We appreciate the focus on disadvantaged communities; however, research related to vulnerable and low-income communities, which are often communities of color, must be done in collaboration with these communities and not solely about these communities. As currently written, this goal allows researchers to proceed without an appropriate level of partnership and collaboration to advance equitable outcomes. Additionally, research funding must recognize the necessity for adding capacity over time in disadvantaged communities to support multi-year research and to ensure research results truly identify issues that communities are facing. Furthermore, we recommend SGC partner with other state agencies to connect research with implementation projects to provide tangible outcomes for communities in need. We suggest reframing this goal to require coordination and collaboration with any affected communities as a prerequisite and combining this goal with goal #5 to emphasize the importance of meaningful community engagement.

3. To build a program that augments, builds connections, and fills gaps across existing research programs, it will be critical to provide guidance on how innovative and cross-disciplinary approaches will be measured and where those investments are so that proposers can effectively demonstrate augmentation, build connections, and fill gaps across existing research programs. Providing a matrix or pointing applicants to existing compilations of climate change research would enable greater comparison across proposals and also allow applicants to focus on their value-add. We suggest explicitly pointing to the regional collaboratives as a resource to help identify key stakeholders and multi-sector and jurisdictional projects that may not be visible to researchers.
4. We appreciate the goal to prioritize outcome-based research linked to practical climate action. In order to enable applicants to develop proposals that achieve this goal, we suggest providing examples of outcome-based projects and expanding on the program's intent of "enabling climate actions."
5. We greatly appreciate the inclusion of meaningful engagement with the research community, community-based organizations and other stakeholders at all stages of the program as a goal, and suggest providing more explicit guidance to ensure the equal treatment of participants. Currently, only academic research institutions are eligible to apply and will thus set the terms of this relationship. We suggest a greater level of definition of intent and suitable approaches for this goal to ensure that research results in authentic collaborations and does not result in superficial treatment of community partners.
6. We strongly support this goal and recommend providing a basis for proposers to make the case that they are working towards a common platform. We suggest providing some details on the existing framework (one that the State already has in place or is using) to enable proposers to achieve this goal.
7. We suggest combining this goal with goal #3 as they seem to overlap, or providing additional clarification to make this goal more distinct.

Research Priorities

- A. California's small and rural communities include some of the most economically disadvantaged communities in the state, and also face additional vulnerabilities related to isolation, lack of access to services (e.g. healthcare and broadband), limited staff capacity within public agencies, and greater dependency on weather and natural infrastructure for jobs and local economies. While it is clear that rural communities need greater levels of investment and resources to play a larger role in the state's climate strategy, the current eligibility requirements may unintentionally preclude rural communities from accessing this program since they have fewer academic and research institutions. In order to provide the needed support to rural disadvantaged communities, we suggest defining a rural allocation target, in addition to determining regional targets, as well as encouraging researchers to work across the urban-rural divide. In addition to supporting rural communities, we recommend considering what resources are needed to assist low-income and disadvantaged communities across the state to meet their local adaptation goals, and recommend research that helps communities – particularly disadvantaged communities to evaluate the costs and benefits of resilience investments (especially as a means to protect GHG reductions), so they can better prioritize needed expenditures.

- B. We greatly appreciate the inclusion of research priority #2 to identify the most valuable areas for the state to leverage its limited resources. Land use decisions are impactful across many years, and better decisions supported by multiple benefits to natural and social systems are critical for the state to successfully meet its ambitious climate change goals. We encourage the State to utilize the results from this program to guide infrastructure investments and SB-375 plans. In addition to research to understand the relationships between natural and social systems, research on specific linkages and feedbacks between current and future climate impacts should be considered (e.g. are these positive or negative and are some mitigation measures more effective across the spectrum than others?).
- C. We suggest including how legitimate citizen science efforts and community participatory research could be supported and utilized to collect more real-time and ongoing data points as a specific research topic. Regional collaboratives and agencies can also support greater data accessibility and planning support through capacity-building research, coordination, regional dissemination, and knowledge transfer between local and state agencies.
- D. Given recent and ongoing fires throughout California, we suggest explicitly including the relationship between the electric grid and wildfires, and potential solutions that can help reduce wildfire risk while advancing climate change mitigation and adaptation goals (e.g. micro-grids) as a specific research topic. Additionally, more information and research are needed to increase recognition of climate change being a present risk that can be quantified and responded to. Research on fiscal needs, costs, co-benefit valuation, and mainstreaming climate adaptation is also needed to support transitions to climate smart communities.

Program Structure

- A. Not all researchers working on climate change are embedded in academic institutions. This is particularly true for community-focused practitioners. To support the broadest potential contributions, we encourage SGC to consider allowing California-based accredited independent researchers or groups with defined research expertise, skills, and capacity to apply for this grant. For example, the current scope would exclude the prestigious San Francisco Estuary Institute and Southern California Coastal Water Research Project Authority.
- B. We greatly support the emphasis on partnerships. It is critical to have community partnership approaches as a distinct funding category. We recommend clearly defining what a partnership means in terms of quality (e.g. what participation means) as well as quantity (e.g. who participates). We also encourage allowing for non-profit organizations and regional climate change collaboratives to be permitted to partner in these grants. We also suggest allowing for public-private partnerships, which can lead to ongoing collaboration following the grant period.

Program Administration and Application Instructions

- A. We suggest changing the second sentence to “how the research will benefit and include low-income or disadvantaged communities.”
- B. We suggest including academic practitioners and non-governmental organizations that demonstrate research team capacity as eligible applicants to enable diversity.
- C. The limitation of the grant duration to one year for both the research project grants and the research partnership grants appears to constrain the type of research and data collection eligible

for the grant. We encourage extending the timeframe to at least 2-3 years to allow for more in-depth studies that require data collection over multiple seasons and to provide researchers with the time necessary to develop authentic community partnerships. If extending the timeframe is not possible, we suggest referencing existing programs and resources that could help researchers accomplish the program goals within the short timeframe (e.g. CivicSpark, Governor Brown's initiative AmeriCorps program that places 70 Fellows each year with public agencies and non-profit organizations to complete an array of climate change and water management projects during their 11-month service year).

- D. We encourage reflecting the program's commitment to engaging and generating positive outcomes for disadvantaged communities by providing additional weight to these criteria in the scoring matrix.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. We welcome the opportunity to discuss any of our comments further.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Parfrey, ARCCA Chair
*The Los Angeles Regional Collaborative for Climate
Action & Sustainability*



Kathleen Ave, Executive Committee Member
Capital Region Climate Readiness Collaborative



Nikki Caravelli, Executive Committee Member
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