

Title:

Advanced Manufacturing as an Engine for Equity and Wealth Building along the Northern Waterfront communities of Contra Costa County

Introduction:

The Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative™ is a regional cluster-based economic development strategy with the goals of creating more good jobs closer to home for residents, while revitalizing older industrial areas and reinvigorating legacy industries. The Initiative leverages existing competitive advantages and assets by focusing on production in five targeted clusters (Advanced Manufacturing, Biosciences, Agriscience & Specialty Foods, Transportation Technologies, Clean Tech). The initiative is a collaboration between the County and seven partner cities, who work together on diverse actions to enhance the economic vitality of the region. The eight partners have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to implement the Initiative as a team. The Initiative has been formalized in a Strategic Action Plan, adopted by the County Board of Supervisors in 2019. This grant proposal implements the Strategic Action Plan.

Rationale:

This Build Back Better Regional Challenge grant seeks to boost the opportunities for disadvantaged communities and residents, particularly those disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Northern Waterfront communities contain census tracts identified as SB1000 communities and Opportunity Zones (previously designated areas of concern targeted for investment). Building upon this multi-jurisdictionally approved framework, while incorporating a pandemic recognition that we can do better, and utilizing commitments from across the private-public and civic sectors, this grant will bring together additionally and timely federal stimulus funding and a required stimulus council for the purposes of accelerating development projects which tackle long-term economic distress, invest in racial justice and equity in historically disadvantaged communities along the Northern Waterfront.

Organization:

The Department of Conservation and Development (DCD) is the planning and permitting agency for unincorporated Contra Costa County, and serves a coordinating role for economic development, affordable housing, and community investment countywide. DCD staff will serve as the grant lead and primary point of contact.

Project Description:

Identify compelling industrial development projects within the footprint and economic development framework of the Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative™. These projects should have broad-base support, environmental and historical documents in hand, and incorporate the ability to quickly galvanize the community around four tentpoles of: establish a green economy, tackle climate change, advance racial equity, and restore our global competitiveness.

The identified projects are taken from the existing, approved Strategic Action Plan (SAP), except for the analytic data update – which the need is, of course, an outcome of the pandemic. The SAP and Northern Waterfront MOU were completed in 2019, just before onset of the pandemic, and have needed an influx of resources to regroup and reignite the partnership in the wake of the changing business landscape.

The Build Back Better Regional Challenge grant will serve that catalyst role, directly serving Objectives and Action Items in the SAP supporting three of the target industries: Bioscience, Transportation Technologies, and Advanced Manufacturing. These three are deliberately selected to be the targets for the Build Back Better Regional Challenge grant because they are the most in need of a boost coming out of pandemic conditions, and least resourced from other funding streams.

Budget:

The total cost of Phase One of the Northern Waterfront Build Back Better Regional Challenge grant proposal is projected to be \$500,000 for technical assistance in four areas, which will cover:

- Complete, up to date business and industry data reflecting post-pandemic conditions (Action 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 3.1.1., and 5.1.3): \$100,000
- Conduct a Bioscience incubator feasibility study on County-owned land in Hercules (Action 4.1.1): \$100,000
- Develop Regional Northern Waterfront marketing materials including unified website, branding, and collateral (Actions 5.1.1 and 5.1.2): \$150,000
- Advance transportation technology cluster support at one or both of two sites in the Northern Waterfront area to foster an environment that can retain and attract this cluster in future regional development: GoMentum Station (privately owned vehicle technology testing site) on the Concord Naval Weapons Station (CNWS) and Buchanan Airport (publicly owned commercial airport with aviation technology space available) (Actions 1.1.2 and 4.1.2): \$150,000

Summary:

Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative™ is a private-public-civic sector led initiative aimed at spurring bottom-up economic rejuvenation and revitalization focused on the emerging industrial clusters of the future, while concentrating the tangible socio-economic benefits for long-time residents of the communities along the 55-mile Northern Waterfront that are experiencing disproportionate job loss, economic underinvestment, and excessive commute times.