

# North Santa Clara Resource Conservation District (NSCRCD)

## Community Grant Program Policy

### I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Governance. The Board of Directors (“Board”) for the North Santa Clara Resource Conservation District (“District”) consists of five members (“Director”) of the Board. As the governing body of the District, the Board reviews and approves District policies. The Board may choose to delegate responsibility for policy administration to the District’s Executive Director (“ED”), including but not limited to the development of procedures and internal controls to implement the policy.

Purpose of the Policy. As part of its commitment to conservation of natural resources within the region, the District provides community grants for outside projects and programs to assist the District in meeting its Long Range Plan’s goals. When resources are available, it also may provide grant-writing technical assistance to community-based organizations in Santa Clara County to help build their capacity and ability to contribute to achievement of goals shared by the District. This policy will guide the granting of funds and provision of grant-writing technical assistance in order to provide for a transparent and equitable process.

Policy Revisions. The Board reviews its policies annually. Any Director, Associate Director, or the ED may make recommendations for changes to a policy at any time, but all policy changes require approval by the Board.

Statement of Non-Discrimination. The District conducts its business on a non-discriminatory basis, without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, political affiliation or beliefs, religion, gender, gender identity or gender expression, age, physical and invisible disability, medical condition, marital status or pregnancy (as those terms are defined by the California Fair Employment and Housing Act -- Government Code Section 12900-12996). Additionally, the Board has adopted a District Environmental and Social Justice Policy to ensure diversity and environmental justice are key components of the District’s strategic planning and programmatic work.

### II. COMMUNITY GRANTS

Grantee Eligibility. Grantees shall be based within Santa Clara County, unless the Board makes a finding during the grant award process that the grantee has an established history of operating programs or conducting research that directly supports District goals. Eligible grantees are:

- Nonprofit organizations and educational institutions certified as tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and classified as “not a private foundation” under Section 509(a).

- Charitable organizations that do not have tax exempt status but have an eligible nonprofit organization serving as its fiscal sponsor. Organizations that have completed and filed Form 1023 but not yet received an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) determination letter must use a fiscal sponsor until the IRS determines they qualify for nonprofit status.
- Federal, state, regional or local government agencies.
- Native American tribal governments.

The District does not fund individuals; fundraising activities; debt reduction; sectarian religious activities; political lobbying or legislative activities; or institutions that do not adhere to the District’s non-discrimination policy (see Statement of Non-Discrimination in General Provisions) in policy or in practice.

Project Eligibility. Grant-funded projects shall support District goals. Applications shall demonstrate how the project will assist the District in meeting the goals and strategies identified in the District’s current Long Range Plan. Projects that demonstrate a direct benefit to members of disadvantaged communities or address climate action or sustainability will be prioritized during the ranking process.

Allocation of Funding. During the annual budget process, the Board will determine the amount of funding to be allocated to the grant program for the duration of the fiscal year; the number and timing of grant cycles; and how the allocation will be split between funding cycles. The Board is not precluded from revising the overall or cyclical funding allocation during the fiscal year based upon changing budget, program or other District requirements.

Grant Match. Applicants must demonstrate in the application how they will meet the match requirement if one has been established for the grant cycle. Applicants may use District grant funding to leverage additional funds from other agencies or foundations provided that the intent to use District funds as match is included in the application for consideration in the grant process.

Maximum Grant Amount. The maximum grant amount will be set by the Board during its annual budget process. The Board may amend the annual cap on a case-by-case basis based upon the merit of the proposed grant application.

Applications. The ED shall be responsible for development and implementation of the grant program, including the creation of guidelines, forms and screening tools. The grant review process will be conducted as follows:

- The ED shall screen the application for grantee eligibility. Those deemed eligible will move to the next step in the process. Those deemed ineligible will be returned to the applicant with a letter of explanation. Any applicant deemed ineligible by the ED during the initial screening process has the right to appeal that determination to the Board.
- If the grant is deemed eligible, the ED will designate volunteers to review the applications for project eligibility. Directors may serve as reviewers provided that no more than two (2) Directors participate throughout any designated funding cycle.

Associate Directors may also serve as reviewers. Reviewers will perform their review confidentially, independently, and without consulting each other.

- Once the application review is complete, the ED will compile the results, rank the grant applications, and prepare recommendations for the Board to consider for funding.

Board Review and Selection. The Board shall consider applications for grant funding at a regular or special Board meeting. Eligible applicants will be notified of the Board date and time so they can participate in the meeting. The Board will select for available funding the applications it determines are best suited to help meet the goals of the District. The Board may reject any and all proposals received.

Funding Agreement. Grantees are required to enter into a funding agreement with the District as a condition of the grant award. The ED shall be responsible for developing the agreement's scope of work to match the grant proposal, and shall be authorized to sign the agreement on behalf of the District. No funding shall be disbursed until a completed and signed funding agreement is in place.

Funding Advances. Funding shall be disbursed on a reimbursement basis unless the Board determines there is good cause to authorize the ED to advance the Grantee some or all of the grant funds

District Recognition. Grantees shall be required through their agreement with the District to provide recognition of the grant award on location, on marketing materials, on their website, and/or through their social media accounts, depending on the specific situation.

Reports. Grantees shall be required to file written reports of grant activities, as determined by the ED and in accordance with the terms of their agreement.

Amendments to the Agreement.

- The ED is authorized to make non-substantial changes to the scope of work, dates of completion, and/or line-item detail of the budget.
- Requests for substantial changes to the agreement for additional funding, substantial changes in scope of work, or any other requests that the ED determines warrant Board referral shall require approval by the Board.

### **III. GRANT-WRITING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Availability of Services. When resources are available, the District may offer grant-writing services to local community-based organizations (CBOs) and tribal governments providing services furthering the District's mission in order to help build their capacity to provide those services within their communities.

Recipient Eligibility. Eligible recipients must be based in Santa Clara County and are:

- Nonprofit organizations and educational institutions certified as tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and classified as "not a private foundation" under Section 509(a).
- Native American tribal governments.

Priority will be given to CBOs and tribal governments providing services to members of disadvantaged communities. The District does not provide grant-writing technical assistance to individuals; for the purpose of providing sectarian religious activities or political lobbying or legislative activities; or to institutions that do not adhere to the District's non-discrimination policy (see Statement of Non-Discrimination in General Provisions) in policy or in practice.

Applications. The ED will be responsible for program development and implementation, including the creation of guidelines, forms, and screening tools. Upon receipt of an application, the ED will screen it to determine eligibility. Eligible applications will be ranked according to various criteria, including but not limited to the existing capacity of their organization; budget and other resources they have available; where they are operating; the communities they serve; and the time-sensitivity of specific grants in which they may be interested. Applications deemed ineligible will be returned to the applicant with a letter of explanation. Any application deemed ineligible by the ED during the initial screening process has the right to appeal that determination to the Board.

Selection of Service Recipients. The ED will select for available technical assistance the applications they determine are best suited to help build capacity, as well as meet the District Long-Range Plan goals. The ED may reject any and all applications received.

Multiple Applicants for Same Grant. In the event that the District is approached by two or more different CBO's to provide grant-writing services for the same funding opportunity during the same funding cycle, and the CBO's are each eligible to receive services, the ED will provide services to the CBO who submitted the first application and notify the other CBOs that there is a conflict.

Technical Assistance Agreement. Organizations are required to enter into a technical assistance agreement with the District as a condition of receiving services. The ED shall be responsible for developing the agreement's scope of work and shall be authorized to sign the agreement on behalf of the District. District resources will not be committed until a completed and signed agreement is in place.

#### **IV. ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS**

Public Information. Information regarding the Community Grant Program, including application deadlines, shall be posted on the District website. The website shall also include links to the District's Community Grant Program Policy and the application form to be used to apply for funding or technical services.

For purposes of transparency and accountability, all awarded grants shall be posted on the District's website, and include the name of the applicant Grantee, the purpose of the grant, and the amount of funding. Applications and their supporting documents shall be considered public documents; individual review sheets shall not include reviewer names or other identifying information.

CBOs receiving grant-writing technical assistance services are considered clients, and their applications, supporting documents, confidential correspondence, proprietary information,

prioritized rankings and any other materials deemed client-related by the ED are confidential. However, names of CBOs who have received technical assistance will be public information, and anonymous data regarding the services provided may be aggregated to provide data regarding the viability and efficiency of the program.

Insurance Requirements. Insurance, bonding, and other requirements to protect the District from potential liability shall be set forth as appropriate for each grant award in the funding agreement.

Policy Change Log:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Action</b>
01/11/2016	Board adopted the initial policy.
07/15/2020	Board adopted the amended policy.
10/07/2021	Board adopted the amended policy.
07/20/2023	The Executive Director updated the policy to reflect the District's name change from Guadalupe-Coyote RCD to North Santa Clara RCD.