

# OC Jobs First Collaborative

August 9, 2024

## **Ish Herrera**

We will move into item 4 which is an action item to approve the sector investment coordinators. As part of the funding that Orange County received to execute the catalyst for element of this program, which is meant to help identify and support projects that are identified by you all that aren't implementation ready. These are projects that need extra support to get to implementation level so that they can be ready for resourcing and funding and build out. There's eligible sources of finance that can only be considered for these projects. There are positions that are meant to support the development of these projects, as they are considered by this group. I want to turn it over to Jesse to give an explanation. We will be looking for a motion and a second so that we are able to proceed with contracts with all nine of these positions to serve as coordinators.

## **Jesse Ben-Ron**

At this point, we're ready to select our sector investment coordinators. We received nine high-quality applications over a month ago, and while there are similarities, the candidates have diverse talents. It's challenging to choose just five coordinators since we don't yet know the specific projects or activities the community will need. OCBC suggested, and we've received state approval, to retain all nine consultants on an hourly basis. This approach allows us to utilize the best-suited consultant for each task as needs arise. Instead of limiting ourselves to five, we can now build a bench of consultants and assign tasks based on the community's evolving needs. This plan deviates from the original guidelines, which capped the number of consultants at five to prevent hiring unqualified individuals. However, since we're using qualified consultants, we've received clearance to proceed with this flexible approach. We need the collaborative's approval to move forward with contracting all nine consultants and assigning tasks as needed. I'll now open the floor for questions and discussion.

## **Toni Symonds**

So, if we found that there were projects or there was a part of implementing the plan that we didn't necessarily get covered by these nine by approving these nine, are we closing the door, or is there a way for us to keep the door open, to bringing in other consultants? Because now you're using a pool. As I said, I'm not criticizing any, anyone that's there, but there are certain things that maybe aren't there?

## **Jesse Ben-Ron**

Yes Tony, that's a great question. We didn't get clearance from the state as far as expanding it further than the applicants. I'm not sure my sense is right, so I'm speculating here, but there's no deadline on how to spend those funds for the sector investment coordinator. I don't see why there would be a cut off. I think that the window would be open. I can confirm with the state. I just don't see in anything that I've read why that would be the case.

## **Toni Symonds**

I would feel most comfortable to get into this is to try to find a way to keep that open. As I said, I'm not suggesting these aren't qualified, but depending on certain areas that there, there might not. I mean, you can't be an expert on everything.

**Jesse Ben-Ron**

Yes, I think that was always the trouble with these roles, considering the breadth of the scope of work. But great point, I will confirm, but I never read anything that limits us to these nine.

**Garry Brown**

Have you had a chance to talk to all of the nine consultants to see if they're in agreement with this? As you know, the pie is getting cut up in nine pieces rather than five.

**Jesse Ben-Ron**

No, I think we wanted to start with this if consultants don't want to proceed with it, you know, I think it's more of the collaborative decision that the consultants. Gary, it doesn't mean that it was never going to be an even split. We just really have to know what the community wants and if there's an overwhelming amount in one section, then that consultant will just kind of get the bulk of the work. So, it's true, there's potential for more sharing, but we just don't quite know. We don't know what the community wants and what their needs are, that's the long answer.

**Garry Brown**

If it helps, I'll make the motion to approve the contracting with nine consultants on an hourly basis.

**Linda DiMario**

I'd like to continue the conversation if we could.

**Ish Herrera**

So just acknowledging there's a motion we have questions in the chat. I'm going to proceed to those in a second here. So Jasmine was first, Jesse, what is the timeline for selection, and then the follow up to that is also, with this approach, more different people or organizations would have applied. Is it possible to open up the RFP to build up the bench? The timeline selection would happen today, right?

**Jesse Ben-Ron**

We likely won't make project selections until October at the earliest, but more likely November, December, or even January. We need to review the Regional Plan Part Two, which is due to the state by the end of this month. The sector investment coordinators can begin working once contracted in September and October to build a portfolio of projects for the group to consider. Additionally, the group needs to develop a catalyst scoring rubric or decision-making framework before deciding which projects to fund. The coordinators will start building the project portfolio and assessing needs once contracted. Whether it's five or nine, it's the regional convener's responsibility. In this case, OCBC manages them. But of course, you know they would be reporting to this whole group. Whether we choose to meet every other month when it comes to catalyst or quarterly, and then give OCBC direction and them direction. This collaborative will not be managing them day to day. It is in the contract that it's the regional convener's responsibility to manage the sector investment coordinators.

**Linda DiMario**

We understand the importance of maintaining relationships with the nine consultants. However, as a former consultant, I'm curious about the "hourly rate" approach. Some consultants may need to staff up or build capacity, and they may not have standing resources ready to go without project funding. Is staff planning to work through catalyst projects, assign tasks, and then agree on a contract fee based on a set number of hours? Or is there another framework being considered?

**Jesse Ben-Ron**

The hourly basis is being used to honor the budgets submitted by the consultants. However, there won't be any minimum hours guaranteed until we better understand how this process will work. Since this is unprecedented with no baseline to follow, assignments will be based solely on the emerging needs.

**Linda DiMario**

The organizations would bill?

**Jesse Ben-Ron**

I don't see anything in the language that the answer is no but let me confirm with the state. There was no timeline saying you had to pick the sector investment coordinators by a certain point. So let me go and confirm that. I never read that would be the case, so I'm optimistic, but let me confirm.

**Ish Herrera**

Thank you, Jesse. I don't see any further questions in the in the chat. We do have a motion from Gary. Tony Symonds seconds. Let's go ahead and take a vote here. Those in favor of approving these positions today, signal by offering your thumbs up emoji.

**Adriana Brindis (Translator)**

Apolonio, would like to vote in favor.

**Ish Herrera**

Few abstentions there. We have overwhelming support for approving this item. We will move into item number five, which is a discussion for Regional Plan Part II. As you know, the planning phase is what the second part of the plan is wrapping up on August 30, the state is expecting the Regional Plan Part II to be completed by then. Today, the state has given clear guidelines on what they want in the plan, which consisted of the priority industry sectors and strategies. Dr. Wallace Walrod is here today to give a quick breakdown of the current draft.

**Dr. Wallace Walrod**

Due to delays in finalizing strategies, the team has a limited window for review and feedback. Kudos to the research team for their exceptional work. The key contributors include California Competes, California Forward, Coast Community College District, and others. We should focus on trimming content as we're slightly over the state's page length guidelines. The document starts with the theory of change, followed by the finalized top-line strategies and adheres to state guidelines. The consultants incorporated all the required elements and provided a condensed version of the regional plan's

snapshot and SWOT analysis. We have about a week for review and feedback, so let's discuss and make any necessary updates.

**Toni Symonds**

I am wondering if we could schedule office hours where we might be able to talk one on one with Dr. Walrod.

**Dr. Wallace Walrod**

We could get a time that all the consultants could join that so that they can hear the feedback on the sections that they worked on and make any changes that need to be made.

**Ish Herrera**

Please review the document and send any feedback that you have by 5pm on August the 15th, which, if I'm not mistaken, is next Thursday so Dr. Walrod and the rest of the research team can get you an updated version in time for our August 23 meeting, so that it can be approved and submitted to the state by the August 30 deadline.

**Brian McNamara**

Brian McNamara, consultant here with ESRI I want to share some more information about the project intake process and kind of the analysis we'll be doing behind the scenes, and then transparency we'll be providing as well.

**Dorian Miller**

I am excited to demo the third component that Brian was talking about, which is going to be part of our business analyst tools, which we would be using, in this case, to evaluate potential projects, potential sites, demographic variables.

**Jesse Ben-Ron**

I just want to quickly jump in and say we should see what ESRI comes back with. On our state calls, they've focused on physical projects, and this tool may mainly apply to those. Service-based projects might not be covered by this feasibility analysis. So, let's wait and see what ESRI provides, but keep in mind the state will only fund physical projects that can be completed within their timeline.

**Dorian Miller**

We have access to a lot of environmental variables too—there are thousands available. While we focused more on demographics, those layers are accessible as well. Brian demonstrated how we can visualize additional contextual layers, like Justice40 census tracts, or even pull in data from the EPA to show proximity to areas with environmental impacts. So yes, it's definitely something we can measure and incorporate.

**Ish Herrera**

Next, we'll move to Agenda Item number seven, which is a discussion on the Regional Investment Initiative scoring rubric. The focus here is to prepare this collaborative and the region for the implementation funding phase, aligning with the state's guidance on the scoring rubric. We also want to

start gathering potential project summaries for the collaborative to consider. This discussion will help establish criteria for what gets funded during the state's implementation funding phase.

**Jesse Ben-Ron**

OCBC staff is just working to move things forward from the last meeting, especially around timelines for the Regional Investment Initiative. These projects need to be ready to go, and the catalyst funding is intended for those who need capacity building or pre-development activities. There will also be funding for ready-to-go projects focused on equity, economic development, and environmental sustainability. The state is expected to release the final SFP next month, and applications will be due within two months, with decisions likely by November or early December. This document is based on the current framework from the state, and while it could change, we don't want to wait and scramble later. The rubric is designed to simplify the scoring process, ensuring projects meet state requirements and go above and beyond where possible. The sections focus on equity, climate, job quality, and regional resilience, as well as community engagement and service to disinvested communities. We've also included a supplemental section to award bonus points for stronger projects. Finally, projects will be evaluated on their capacity to implement, financial sustainability, and alignment with the budget. There's no action required today—this is just a draft to get your feedback and ensure we're prepared when the state releases its final guidelines. Happy to answer any questions

**Ish Herrera**

You're getting some kudos in the chat for being proactive in putting together the rubric. However, there are also questions, particularly from Nate Greensides, about conflict-of-interest policies. When will we address those? I understand the rubric creation can happen separately, but I wanted to ask if it might impact the rubric.

**Jesse Ben-Ron**

We're working on conflict of interest forms with Charitable Ventures, as they're the fiscal agent. The state provided their own guidelines, and there's nothing in the state's baseline that would prevent anyone from working on the rubric. Anyone can recuse themselves if they feel there's a conflict of interest. As discussed in the last meeting, those involved in the process are also eligible for projects, which was encouraged from the start. Applicants won't vote on their own projects, but beyond that, there's no restriction preventing anyone from helping develop the rubric. With the size of this group, it's unlikely that anyone could manipulate the scoring in their favor.

**Toni Symonds**

I'm wondering what the appropriate venue is for providing feedback. If I understand correctly, this is about whether the collaborative will support implementation projects, not catalyst projects. One point is ensuring high-value items have enough points to make an impact. If it's only about implementation, then project viability should be a major criterion, ensuring we recommend projects that are both aligned with our values and competitive. This is great work, and I'd just like to know the best place to discuss this further

**Jesse Ben-Ron**

Tony, we can definitely set up office hours for in-person feedback, and I'll also make any changes to the document in red, along with some context on who provided the feedback. Aside from office hours, feedback can be submitted electronically. I'm open to any other platforms or methods people prefer for participation. Let me know if these options work for you, or if you'd suggest another way to collect input. You all have a copy now, and I'll follow up with it again. Whether electronically or through conversation, I'm happy to engage. We'll track comments in red before final approval.

Just quickly, as a follow-up to what was discussed in person about doing a project sweep, this won't preclude anyone from participating when the actual RFP goes out. This is just to give the group a sense of the projects. I've drafted something we're ready to share, and I wanted to check if anyone has any final comments or suggestions before we send it out. It's a brief summary request (500 words max, but can be less) to get a feel for the number, size, and funding requests for potential projects. We aim to do this sweep in August, as suggested. Let me know if there are any questions or feedback before we finalize it for distribution. I'd like to have a project portfolio ready for the next meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

### **Luis Sarmiento**

Thank you! Just to follow up on my suggestion, I appreciate this. I was thinking it might be easier for folks if we used a Google form, something simple to fill out with these same questions. The idea is to quickly survey or scan what projects are out there. Maybe others can chime in on what works best for them.

### **Jesse Ben-Ron**

Following up from the in-person meeting, there were comments about adding more specificity to the outcomes section of the theory of change. If you look at Regional Plan Part II, that's the missing piece. I've drafted key outcomes for this work, but I didn't include specific numbers, as I'm not the expert in those areas—you all are. There are placeholders for short-term outcomes (1-2 years) and longer-term outcomes. The short-term focuses on implementation-ready projects, while the longer-term includes catalyst efforts. I'd like to finalize this by the August 23 meeting, so we can approve it along with the Regional Plan Part II. We need a portfolio of projects, even if we don't submit all of them. I've also left some question marks where input is needed—things like how much funding we should aim to secure, capacity-building efforts, and workforce training goals. I'll likely reach out to some of you directly for your expertise on numbers, but feel free to provide input here on whether we're hitting the right outcomes. Let me know if we're missing anything, and if you have recommendations on reasonable targets, I'd appreciate it. Let's focus on outcomes, but I'm happy to take any suggestions on numbers as well.

### **Ish Herrera**

Item nine, approval of Regional Plan Part One, has been tabled and will be revisited on August 23 along with Part II. Thanks to everyone for their time and valuable feedback today. Special thanks to the Esri team, and to Maria and Jesse for their preparation and leadership. Materials will be sent out soon.