

OC Jobs First Collaborative

May 30, 2025

Ish Herrera

We will begin with a review of the Notice of Funding Opportunity, or NOFO. This is a key part of the work we have been doing for more than two years to align with the State of California's economic priorities and to ensure the equitable distribution of resources across the state, across regions doing this work, and within Orange County. Earlier this month, Maria sent you an email with materials for the second round of Catalyst funding, including the updated NOFO packet. No changes were requested, but we want to give you an opportunity today to hear from Maria, receive updates on the process, and share any feedback or questions you may have.

Maria Linares

Good morning, everyone. This next slide is hyperlinked and will take you to the Notice of Funding Opportunity. We're currently in round two of Catalyst funding. Application materials were released on May 19. A total of \$4.6 million is available, \$3.6 million for job-creating projects and \$1 million for community-enhancing projects. This is slightly more than what was available in round one. As in round one, we will not fund implementation projects. We remain committed to the priorities outlined in Regional Plan Part Two, which the collaborative helped shape.

The updated Jobs First webpage is now more user-friendly and accessible for applicants. We've included definitions for California Jobs First and the Regional Investment Initiative, and outlined pre-development activities. The NOFO section contains the full application packet, including the NOFO itself, the budget narrative, and the budget template. The budget narrative and budget template documents must be completed and uploaded to the grant portal, which I'll show you shortly. In round one, applications were submitted by email. This time, we are using a grant portal to make the process more efficient for applicants and easier for all of you to score. You'll also find the full application timeline on the webpage, along with proposer webinar decks and recordings. We've also included a weekly updated FAQ section, the disinvested communities map, and a list of round one awardees. For job-creating projects, all 10 sectors from round one are still eligible. We've added two new sectors: aerospace and defense, and hydrogen. Projects must show clear benefits to disinvested communities in Orange County. Funding must support business development, economic growth, and the creation of good-paying jobs. Good-paying jobs are defined as full-time, full-year roles with annual earnings of at least \$48,353 and employer-sponsored health care. You can find this definition on page 24 of the NOFO packet. If submitting a workforce development proposal, it must be tied to an economic development project or include a partnership commitment from an employer. OCBC staff will score job-creating applications, as in round one. For community-enhancing projects, the \$1 million in available funding can support work aligned with Regional Plan Part Two, including areas not covered under job creation such as housing, health care access, child care, green technology, and climate adaptation. These applications will be scored by the collaborative. The community-enhancing track is rooted in the

original Community Economic Resilience Fund, which focused on uplifting communities. We continue to honor that mission.

Scoring criteria remain the same: five categories, with 'Project' and 'Equity' each worth 30 points. In the 'Project Impact' section, applicants must clearly describe goals, activities, and expected outcomes, including metrics like how many people will be served and how their lives will improve. They must reference relevant sections of Regional Plan Part Two. In the 'Equity' section, applicants must show how the project benefits disinvested communities or residents. This includes individuals facing employment barriers such as justice-involved individuals, foster youth, single parents, people with disabilities, and others defined in the glossary. Eligibility is based on socioeconomic factors, not just residence. Applicants must also describe how the community was involved in project planning or design. The 'Work Plan' section is worth 20 points and must include pre-development activities, timelines, and specific roles for staff, partners, and consultants. 'Organizational Qualifications' are worth 10 points. Applicants must describe their capacity to implement the project, including relevant experience and past results. The 'Budget and Budget Narrative' section is also worth 10 points. Applicants must submit a detailed budget and a letter of reference. Scoring criteria can be found on pages 12 through 18 of the NOFO packet. All applications must be submitted through the grant portal. A reminder: if you are a voting member of the collaborative, you must submit a signed Conflict of Interest statement with your proposal. The Catalyst application includes three pre-development phases: Concept, Accelerator, and Last Mile. These reflect stages of project readiness. There are no strict funding limits for each, but the categories help with comparison and evaluation. Concept: Early stage, still exploring ideas. Accelerator: Mid-stage, with progress made but more work needed. Last Mile: Nearly implementation-ready, with only a few final steps remaining. All activities must be expensed by September 30, 2026. This deadline is set by the state and has not changed. The selection process remains the same. All applications will be shared with the collaborative. The collaborative will review and score all community-enhancing applications and vote to fund projects until the \$1 million is exhausted. OCBC will score job-creating applications and present recommendations to the collaborative. After deliberation, OCBC will finalize the funding decisions. OCBC will also host an optional virtual briefing for community-enhancing project reviewers, similar to what we did in person for round one. This will provide additional guidance on scoring. Our goal is to launch the voting poll by July 18 during the next collaborative meeting. We also have a meeting scheduled for July 11. Awardees will be notified by July 25, though dates may shift based on feedback or internal processes. Applications are due by June 20, 2025, at 5 p.m. Pacific Time and must be submitted through the grant portal. Now, here's a quick look at the portal. Applicants must create an account and choose between job-creating or community-enhancing options. The portal includes required sections: fiscal agent details, project name, development phase, project description, impact, equity, work plan, organizational qualifications, and budget documents. Hyperlinks are included throughout to provide easy access to supporting materials. Applicants must also upload a one-page project summary covering project impact, beneficiaries, work plan, and funding request. We hosted two webinars this week, one for job-creating applicants and one for community-enhancing applicants. These are now available on the website along with the presentation decks. Finally, we're again offering free grant writing mentorship for up to five hours.

Elva Rubalcaba

Is this round for implementation or not?

Maria Linares

It's catalyst funding, so it's not implementation funding. The implementation funding is through the state.

Ana Urzua

Are people who applied the first time eligible?

Maria Linares

Yes, whether they received funds in round one or not, they can definitely apply again.

Linda DiMario

For the first round of awards, is there a general range of job commitments or job creation expectations you can share with us from the funded projects? For the job-creating projects, aside from addressing economic equity and disinvested communities, was there a typical range of jobs tied to the awarded projects? For example, were they generally creating between 5 and 15 jobs, or 15 to 30?

Jesse Ben-Ron

Linda, I'd start by noting that workforce projects are different from traditional business growth projects. On the workforce side, most projected over 100 individuals trained, with some nearing 200, though that moves closer to implementation. For example, with the CIELO childcare project, which leaned more toward a business model, they reached about 50 in-home childcare providers. That type of project often involves one or two individuals per business. Workforce projects are typically easier to quantify, as they focus on how many people are being trained for in-demand jobs. For the seven job-creating projects, those higher numbers stood out.

Linda DiMario

That's what I was trying to clarify, specifically, for the first round we submitted, I was trying to connect the dots between the expectations and the actual number of jobs projected from those projects.

Jesse Ben-Ron

I'd also say it's somewhat relative. For example, if five projects in the first round proposed training 200 people, this round might see proposals aiming to train 400 or just 50. I'll look back and share more concrete numbers, but it's important to understand that what held true in the first round may not apply to the second. Your competition is the current pool of applicants.

Ish Herrera

We have a question in the chat from Alberto. Are the responses in the one-page summary the same as the answers provided in the application form, or should they be shorter versions?

Maria Linares

Yes, the one-page summary should be a shorter version of your full responses. It helps us relay key information to the collaborative. While they will read every application, having a clear summary makes the review process easier since they're going through many submissions.

Ish Herrera

We do have a question from Ana in the chat. What is the breakdown this time around for job creating versus community enhancing?

Maria Linares

Ana, the total for round two is 4.6 million, which is more than what we provided for round one. Job creating is 3.6 million, and then community enhancing projects is 1 million.

Ana Urzua

Thank you, Maria. Will there be one more round after this, or is this the last one?

Maria Linares

The goal is for there to be three.

Chantha Kong

I just wanted to ask a very short question. So in order to apply, all the applicant have to create an account on the website, or is there any other option that they can apply?

Maria Linares

It is only through the grant web portal. Just like last time, the only option was through the Jobs First email, this is actually easier for the applicant so their application packet doesn't get lost in the email or ends up in the spam folder.

Maria Linares

Now, moving on to round three funding. I was just asked about this, so here's what we know so far: we expect to have \$1 million available, and that will be the final round. Once awarded, all funds will be exhausted. We're aiming to release it in July, with a deadline of August 1. We don't have many details yet since we're still focused on round two, but Jesse, feel free to add anything if I missed it.

Jesse Ben-Ron

We want to get the funds out quickly, not recklessly, but efficiently because recipients will only have a year to carry out their proposed work. Any delays reduce the time they have to make progress on their projects.

Ish Herrera

I'm going to pass the floor to Dr. Walrod, who's going to provide a brief presentation and answer any questions or comments related to the activation plans.

Dr. Wallace Walrod

Just a quick update: as a reminder, we submitted the first plan focused on tourism and outdoor recreation to the state by the January 31 deadline, and many of you reviewed it. We have four more submissions due by June 30: healthcare, childcare, med tech, and semiconductors. We're still finalizing a couple of them, but you can expect to receive drafts by mid to late next week. We're aiming for a

June 13 deadline to receive your comments so we have time to incorporate feedback before submitting to the state.

Ish Herrera

I'll now turn it over to our colleague from Charitable Ventures, Natalie Nguyen, for an update on the contracting status for round one Catalyst awardees.

Natalie Nguyen

The donut chart on this slide shows how funds are distributed. For example, the County of Orange received \$750,000, which represents the largest share. The full chart is also included in the agenda packet for easier viewing. Here, you'll see the funding breakdown: approximately 27% went to community-enhancing projects, and 72% to job-creating projects. Charitable Ventures is responsible for executing and managing contracts with awardees, reviewing invoices, processing payments, and providing ongoing support throughout the subcontract term. For any questions about contracts or finances, please email us at subcontracts@charitableventures.org.

Jesse Ben-Ron

Quick question, what's the current status? How many applicants have contracts in front of them right now, or is that still in progress?

Natalie Nguyen

It has either already been sent or is being sent today by our operations team. You should receive it by today, this weekend, or Monday at the latest. Of the 14 projects, 13 are currently in our operations inbox.

Jesse Ben-Ron:

It's really just a matter of the applicants signing when they're ready. Ideally, if they act quickly, we could have everything finalized by next week, knock on wood. Possibly by Monday if people move on it?

Natalie Nguyen

Exactly. That's the most relevant update for the collaborative at this point.

Continuing with the update on current status and upcoming milestones, award announcements were made on April 11. Of the 14 awarded proposals, all 14 are eligible for funding and have been contacted to complete the contracting process. I do want to clarify one item from the third bullet point on this slide: all contracts have been sent out for execution, except for one. We have not yet received the required documentation from that awardee. So 13 out of 14 contracts are currently in motion, which is great progress. Contract effective dates are either May 1 or June 1, depending on when the awardees submitted their required documents. This means that projects are eligible to begin work now. As for upcoming milestones, awardees can begin billing as early as the effective date listed in their contract. Even though we're now in late May, those with a May 1 effective date may backdate billing and begin work accordingly. We're also offering an advance payment option. Awardees may request up to 25% of their total award to support early-stage activities. The funds are flexible in use. To request advance payment, awardees only need to submit two items: a brief statement outlining the request and a

timeline of how they plan to use the funds. Turnaround time is one to two weeks for approval and an additional two to three weeks to issue the payment.

Now, on to themes and challenges: This was our first time facilitating this process, and we noticed delays from the state in approving proposals and releasing funding. For round two, awardees will not need to submit a separate scope of work. Instead, the work plan and budget from their proposal will be used. If changes are needed, for scope of work or work plans, OCBC will process change requests. For budgets, Charitable Ventures will process any budget modifications over 10%. Anything under 10% does not require notification.

Ish Herrera

If you have questions about your contract status, please reach out directly to Natalie for more information. Before we adjourn, if there's anything you'd like the rest of the collaborative to be aware of, now is the time to share.

Ana Urzua:

We are graduating this year's cohort of introductory cooperative participants. There are about 10 businesses forming worker cooperatives. The graduation event is coming up soon, and I believe a few seats are still available. I'll follow up with an email.

Melanie Schlotterbeck:

I wanted to share that through the Coastal Corridor Alliance, we're in a public comment period for three plans related to the Randall Preserve, formerly Banning Ranch. The plans include: A resource management plan for plants and wildlife, a public access plan for trails, signage, and programming, a coastal resilience strategy to address sea level rise and flooding, we're planning for 100 years out, with a projected 4.9-foot sea level rise, comments are due by July 14. You can find more information at randallpreserve.org. We also have two remaining public meetings: Monday night at the Norma Hertzog Community Center in Costa Mesa and Saturday, June 21 at the Newport Beach Community Center.

Ish Herrera:

Thank you, Melanie. If you haven't already, please drop your email in the chat so folks can reach out for more details. Unless there are any final comments, we'll go ahead and adjourn.

Our next collaborative meeting will take place virtually on Friday, July 18 at 9:00 a.m. You should have already received a calendar invite for that. In addition, we'll host an optional virtual selection briefing on Friday, July 11 at 9:00 a.m. for those interested in the Catalyst Round Two community-enhancing project selection process. This session will be similar to the one held in Round One and will walk through the evaluation criteria and process. If you're planning to serve as a reviewer again, we encourage you to attend. As always, feel free to reach out to Jesse or Maria with any questions related to the Catalyst process or anything collaborative-related. Have a great weekend, stay safe, and we look forward to seeing you soon.