Power Building and Engagement (Pb+E) Program Update and Project Selection

The Community Action Resource and Empowerment (CARE) Power-building and Engagement (Pb+E) Program engages diverse community groups from across the Bay Area to strengthen community capacity and engagement and foster partnerships and networks that broaden and deepen support for regional housing and transportation goals. Pb+E grant awards provide direct project implementation funding, training opportunities, peer learning, expert coaching, technical assistance and connection to tools and informational materials.

The Pb+E program's design was informed by a 15-member Community Advisory Working Group (CAWG) formed in April 2025 through an open "call for applications" process. The CAWG represented significant diversity across the Bay Area: geographic distribution, issue areas, and organizational types (small grassroot community-based organizations (CBOs), larger nonprofits, and emerging community groups). The CAWG informed the Pb+E program categories, eligibility requirements, scoring criteria, and outreach strategies.

Call for Projects Process and Outreach: The call for projects was launched on September 2, 2025, with the application deadline on October 9, 2025. Recommendations from the CAWG incorporated into the call for projects process included an extended outreach timeline providing six to eight weeks for outreach and application development, information sessions, tools including templates and examples, a 16-page "frequently asked question" resource, and a comprehensive glossary with clear definitions noting that technical language can create barriers for community organizations. Optional applicant technical assistance support and office hours were offered. A total of 141 technical assistance appointments were conducted with a time maximum of three hour-long sessions per applicant. Outreach during the call for projects included a combination of email notifications reaching over 10,000 recipients (MTC distribution lists, elected officials, local jurisdictions and agency staff, MTC listservs for community outreach, County Transportation Agency community distribution list), social media campaign, meeting announcements, two information sessions (438 total registered), and informational interviews with CAWG members. Based on CAWG input, outreach approaches prioritized include: Cross-Sector Networks (county-specific community-based organization networks and coalitions), Direct Community Connections (disability advocacy groups and ADA services offices, youth-serving organizations and school districts, immigrant and refugee service

providers, faith-based organization networks), Government Partnerships (newsletter inclusion, listservs, planning department community engagement lists), and Innovative Approaches (peer-to-peer outreach through existing grantees, foundation and intermediary organization networks). MTC received 143 applications, with a total dollar amount requested of $18.94 million.

Evaluation: Eligible applications were screened for meeting the program threshold requirements (completed application, a community-based organization working with and/or serve residents in Equity Priority Communities (EPCs), demonstrated transportation/housing/climate experience, financial capacity, advances REAP 2 program goals, community engagement approach, project feasibility). Applications that meet all threshold requirements were scored by grant category criteria (capacity building impact, partnership development, community project, project need and community benefit, implementation approach, budget and cost effectiveness). Points were also awarded based on innovative strategies, meaningful involvement, and new or emerging community-based organizations. The scoring panel, consisted of a diverse mix of internal MTC staff and external agency staff from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Bay Conservation and Development Commission, and the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority who lead and/or deliver similar regional/local programs. The panel was supported by the consultant technical assistance team that assigned reviews to ensure no conflict of interest. Each of the applications was scored by at least two reviewers. Training and a detailed scoring rubric were provided to standardize the evaluation, increase consistency and fairness, and enhance the objectivity of the evaluation. A final review was conducted to address the balance of funding recommendations across program categories, geographic distribution, issue area, and awardee pool type/size of organization.