request for proposals
Building Strong Communities
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Introduction
Silicon Valley Community Foundation advances innovative philanthropic solutions to the most challenging problems in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. One of these challenges is how we design and build great communities in the midst of projected jobs, housing and population growth in a manner that will improve the quality of life for all residents and the local workforce while enhancing our environment. This challenge is addressed through SVCF’s building strong communities strategy. To better understand our goals and objectives for this strategy, we encourage you to read more at www.siliconvalleycf.org/regional-planning.

Through our focus on regional planning, SVCF seeks to implement a bold vision for the Silicon Valley region. The vision consists of vibrant, healthy and sustainable communities with access to high-quality services, jobs and affordable homes for all residents. This Request for Proposals (RFP) under our building strong communities strategy focuses specifically on designing and building great communities through land use and transportation improvements. By using an RFP approach, SVCF aims to solicit the best thinking of nonprofit service providers, public sector agencies, research institutions and other entities serving San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

Grant Application Deadline
The application process will open beginning June 8, 2015.
Grant applications must be submitted through our online application system, applySVCF, by 5 p.m. on Friday, July 10, 2015.
Problem Statement

Silicon Valley has the highest share of high-wage, high-growth jobs, the largest percentage of venture capitalist investments and some of the highest overall economic growth in the country, as well as the world. This growth, however, has not benefited all. Low- and middle-income workers in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties are being left behind and forced to overcome the increasing cost of housing and transportation. As this dynamic region continues to change and grow, better land use and transportation policies are key to ensuring that our society, economy and natural environment continue to improve for all our residents without impinging upon or degrading future generations’ quality of life.

The key to improving the lives of San Mateo and Santa Clara counties’ residents is to create land use and transportation planning policies that are not only inclusive, transparent and responsive to local needs, but also a part of a larger comprehensive regional strategy that increases access to opportunity for all.

By the year 2040, the Bay Area is projected to grow to a population of 9.3 million people, up from about 7 million in 2010. For a region that is bound by an ocean, a bay and other growth boundaries (both natural and self-enforced), there are a limited number of locations to grow. There are even fewer places to grow sustainably, without overburdening our natural resources or existing infrastructure. The Bay Area’s resulting growth patterns have led to a great disparity in housing and transportation costs among Bay Area residents, and low-income households and people of color are among the most likely to be negatively affected by rising rents and longer commutes.

The challenge that San Mateo and Santa Clara counties face now is how to accommodate sustainable and equitable development, maintain uniqueness and diversity within neighborhoods and the region, and still ensure the counties’ growth plans integrate into a greater Bay Area plan. Equitable development, as defined by PolicyLink, a national research institute, is “an approach to creating healthy, vibrant communities of opportunity. Equitable outcomes come about when smart, intentional strategies are put in place to ensure that low-income communities and communities of color participate in and benefit from decisions that shape their neighborhoods and regions.” In Silicon Valley we should not think of the counties of San Mateo and Santa Clara in isolation, but as a part of the nine-county Bay Area
and an even broader region. We must protect low- and middle-income communities to ensure that all residents have equal access to services, housing, education and employment, while maintaining the diversity that makes our communities unique. Planning alone cannot create positive change in a community. Putting the ideas contained in planning documents into action requires leadership, public engagement, persistence and a unique set of skills.

**Program Goal**

The goal of the grantmaking strategy is to build great communities and ensure they are inclusive of all members of our community. Great communities are places that have protections that ensure existing residents can continue to live in the very neighborhoods they helped create and make vibrant, without fear of being displaced. As this dynamic region changes and grows, land use and transportation policies aimed at achieving this goal are essential to ensure a sustainable society, economy and natural environment. Promoting more transportation options, as well as transit-oriented development that includes affordable housing, is critical. SVCF's building strong communities strategy connects jobs, housing and transportation into action plans that dictate how our region grows and prospers. To successfully align policies within these respective fields, we encourage transformative thinking and action through meaningful resident participation in land use and transportation planning processes. SVCF will invest in nonprofits, research institutions and public agencies that work to advance local land use and transportation planning and implementation processes in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

**SVCF will invest in:**

**Housing**

- Fund research and analysis that informs a regional vision for affordable housing that includes local, regional and state solutions to housing funding shortfalls, local zoning restrictions, displacement pressures and electoral barriers to equitable development.
- Support coalition-building efforts among local nonprofits engaged in public policy development regarding general, specific and other planning processes. This includes efforts that facilitate effective and sustainable partnerships among stakeholders that will ensure the implementation of adopted plans, including measures for the development of new affordable housing.

**Transportation**

- Promote equitable transit-oriented development opportunities such as bus/bus-rapid-transit-oriented development, transit investments in communities that lack reliable public transportation, and transit investments that do not contribute to displacing existing residents.
- Create a cohort of transportation advocates focused in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties to advocate for equitable transportation plans, as well as influence legislation, funding allocation and policy decisions.
- Build community engagement efforts in strategic cities that are implementing innovative transportation measures – such as Bus Rapid Transit or reduced transit ticket incentives – to scale and replicate transportation solutions throughout San Mateo and Santa Clara counties and the Bay Area.
• Support efforts to build visible public demand for reliable, innovative high-quality transportation options, especially local public transit, through public outreach, education and engagement. This includes engaging bus riders to provide a voice for low- and middle-income workers who depend on transit to commute between home, work and services.

Civic Engagement/Public Sector Innovation

• Support innovative technology that creates more access to public data and transparency to public policy development, to influence political decision-making and ensure equitable development decisions.

• Strategic interventions to encourage good government and equitable development (i.e. instituting development fees, providing renter protections for residents, creating or updating long-range plans such as Housing Elements or General Plan updates, etc).

• Support projects that provide technical assistance to strengthen nonprofits and public agencies’ capacity to engage effectively in planning and community engagement processes. In particular, inclusion of low-income communities, communities of color, immigrant neighborhoods and young people is critical. This technical assistance could include scenario modeling, consulting, mediation, facilitation, legal counseling and other professional assistance needed to inform the planning process and ensure implementation of the resulting plans.

Proposal Eligibility Criteria

• San Mateo and/or Santa Clara county-serving organizations. Organizations headquartered outside the two-county region must demonstrate significant service to the area.

• Organizations with a 501(c)(3) designation, those that have a fiscal sponsor with a 501(c)(3) designation, public agencies, collaborations of nonprofit and public agencies, or other entities that have a designated charitable purpose.

• Organizations that do not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, citizenship status, creed, religion, religious affiliation, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, veteran status or any other protected status under applicable law. If an organization only serves a specific population, e.g., women or specific ethnic populations, SVCF will consider the proposal on a case-by-case basis.

• Organizations with religious affiliations will be considered for funding only if the project for which they seek support attempts to address the needs of the wider community without regard to religious beliefs.

Project Proposal Characteristics

We are receptive to concrete, practical and impactful project proposals that:

• Include both well-tested models that can be scaled up or expanded regionally while maintaining local relevance, and new pilots that, if successful, can be grown and replicated.

• Benefit from collaborative work and bring public and private partners together with nonprofit organizations.
• Demonstrate knowledge of the planning field and trends in jobs, housing and transportation as they relate to designing and building great communities.
• Identify the target population and provide justification for that focus.
• Provide clear benchmarks for measuring progress.

**Application Process**

1) Review reference materials. These may be found at [http://www.siliconvalleycf.org/regional-planning](http://www.siliconvalleycf.org/regional-planning).
   - Research paper on Regional Planning Strategy: Building Sustainable Land Use and Transportation Plans to Secure the Future of Silicon Valley and its Residents
   - This RFP for Building Strong Communities

2) Participate in the information session. This is highly encouraged for those interested in responding to this RFP. Because all grant applications are submitted online, this session provides an overview of SVCF’s online application system, **applySVCF**. Additionally, the information session will provide an opportunity for applicants to review in more depth the RFP’s content and ask questions. To register for the session please visit our website’s calendar.

3) More specific questions about program concepts, content, eligibility and evaluation can be addressed through phone calls and in-person meetings with the program officer, as time permits. Submit grant application, including required attachments, through our new online application system, **applySVCF, beginning June 8, 2015**. Applications must be submitted by 5 p.m. (PST) Friday, July 10, 2015.

**Proposal Evaluation Criteria**

Proposals for grants should include a narrative that responds to the questions found on **applySVCF**. Grant proposals will be evaluated, on a competitive basis, using the following criteria:
• Innovative and effective strategy with potential for systems change.
• Clarity of project description and project activities regarding steps to be taken to achieve desired outcomes.
• Achievable timeline (12 months) that corresponds to the key activities.
• Meaningful benchmarks and indicators of success.
• Organizational capacity to implement project – including staffing, leadership, operational and fiscal management.
• Established track record in specific program content area or potential to achieve needed content expertise.
• Ability to leverage financial, human and technical resources leading to greater impact.
• Ability to contribute content area knowledge to the field.

**Total Awards**

In 2015, we expect to award approximately 15 to 20 grants. The average grant amount awarded in the 2014 grantmaking cycle was $50,000. Budget requests will be closely analyzed, and applicants should include a budget narrative that makes clear the necessity of the project’s specific line-items.
Please note that project proposal narratives may be posted publicly on our website to reflect our value of transparency and encourage learning among grantees, future applicants and the community at large.

**Review and Selection Process**

An advisory committee with issue expertise for this strategy will help staff to review all proposals recommended for funding to SVCF’s board of directors. Applicants may receive a site visit, telephone call and/or other type of communication from SVCF staff as part of the proposal review process.

*Applicants will be informed of grant decisions in late September 2015.*

**Evaluation, Monitoring and Grantee Learning Activities**

• Grantees will be expected to meet SVCF’s requirements for a final financial and narrative report, as well as a presentation to SVCF staff and donors if requested.

• In an effort to further the overall program goals of this RFP, inform future RFPs related to this topic and contribute to larger field-building objectives, grantees will be asked to participate in periodic meetings to share information on project activities and best practices as well as submit research-based evaluations annually.

Thank you very much for your interest in responding to this RFP and in making our region a better place. We look forward to reviewing your proposal.
About Silicon Valley Community Foundation

Silicon Valley Community Foundation makes all forms of philanthropy more powerful. We serve as a catalyst and leader for innovative solutions to our region’s most challenging problems, and through our donors we award more money to charities than any other community foundation in the United States. SVCF has $6.5 billion in assets under management. As Silicon Valley’s center of philanthropy, we provide thousands of individuals, families and corporations with simple and effective ways to give locally and around the world.

Find out more at www.siliconvalleycf.org.

More Information

If you have questions, please contact us at grants@siliconvalleycf.org or call 650.450.5557

To get all the latest grantmaking information, follow us on Facebook and subscribe to our community e-newsletter at www.siliconvalleycf.org/enewsletters.

RFP published May 2015
Proposals accepted June 8, 2015 through July 10, 2015