request for proposals

Building Strong Communities
Introduction

The affordable housing crisis is not confined to Silicon Valley; it is a Bay Area-wide crisis. As such, the solutions that will help meet the needs of low-income residents must have both local and regional impacts. Silicon Valley is one of the most productive economies in the world, but the jobs-housing imbalance drives up an already high cost of living and pushes people who cannot afford homes into outlying areas many miles from their jobs. In fact, less than half (41 percent) of first-time homebuyers in Santa Clara County and just 27 percent in San Mateo County could afford to purchase a median priced home in 2015.

Renters are in a more dire situation: As home prices have increased, so have Silicon Valley’s rental rates (up 27 percent for apartments and 25 percent for single-family homes). Strong communities are vibrant and diverse, with a range of housing and employment options. But the shortage of affordable housing leads to exceptionally long commutes, more pollution and more people who lack a real connection to the communities where they work or live. Traffic congestion has worsened in Silicon Valley, with the average commuter losing 67 hours and $1,422 in income per year to traffic problems. Because of our affordable housing and transportation woes, Silicon Valley is also one of the most economically inequitable regions in the country.

Silicon Valley Community Foundation advances innovative philanthropic solutions to the most challenging problems in Silicon Valley. One of these challenges is how we design and build great communities to respond to projected job, housing and population growth in a manner that will improve the quality of life for all residents and the local workforce while enhancing our natural environment. This challenge is addressed through SVCF’s building strong communities grantmaking strategy.

To better understand our goals and objectives for this strategy, we encourage you to read SVCF’s impact report on the topic at www.siliconvalleycf.org/regional-planning.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) under our building strong communities strategy focuses specifically on planning and building great communities through transportation, land use and housing solutions. 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 March 13, 2017.

Grant applications must be submitted through our online application system, apply.siliconvalleycf.org, by 5 p.m. on Friday, April 7, 2017. A link to the application system will be live on siliconvalleycf.org/regional-planning from March 13 through April 7.

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. The elimination of Redevelopment Agencies in 2012 continues to have a lasting impact due to the loss of $1 billion a year for affordable housing funding in California. This reduction in affordable housing funding, coupled with the generation of 121,600 new jobs in the Bay Area in 2015, has made the average of 9,600 new housing units produced a year since 2010 seem like a paltry number. From 2012 to 2014, only 193 housing permits were issued for every 1,000 new residents in the Bay Area. This pressure on the region’s housing market, coupled with the potential impacts of new leadership at the national level in 2017, will require us to find innovative ways to be more self-sufficient at the local, regional and state-wide levels.

As this dynamic region continues to change and grow, better land use and housing 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 residents in the region is to create land use and housing 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.

Planning processes are crucial, because they will help dictate the physical
development of our cities. Plans need to encourage greater availability of affordable housing, multi-modal transportation systems that provide better access to jobs and services, and green spaces and parks.

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 the region faces 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 building strong communities 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 to 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. 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

- Research and analysis that informs a regional vision for affordable housing that includes local, regional and state solutions to housing funding shortfalls, local zoning ordinances, displacement pressures and electoral barriers to equitable development. Some examples include:
  - Research on how jurisdictions, regionally or in cities such as San Jose and Mountain View, can leverage impact fees for additional affordable housing funding.
  - Research on gentrification and its impact on residential displacement, especially in collaboration with civic engagement in the communities being affected by displacement.

- Coalition-building efforts among local nonprofits engaged in public policy development, especially housing and land use planning. This includes efforts that facilitate effective and sustainable partnerships among stakeholders that will ensure the implementation of adopted plans and policies, including measures for the development of new affordable housing. Some examples include:
  - Supporting community-based organizations to participate in creating or updating long-range plans such as Specific Plans, Housing Elements, General Plans, etc.
  - Providing assistance and protections for low-income renters, through policy advocacy, to protect vulnerable communities across the region.

Transportation

- Promoting safe, reliable and affordable public transit opportunities. Some examples include:
  - Creating a cohort of transportation advocates focused in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties or throughout the Bay Area to advocate for equitable transportation plans, as well as influence funding allocation and policy decisions.
  - Building community engagement efforts in strategic cities that are implementing innovative transportation measures – such as reduced transit ticket incentives, or better transit information – to scale and replicate transportation solutions throughout San Mateo and Santa Clara counties and the Bay Area.

Key Dates

March 13, 2017: Application process opens
Week of March 27, 2017: RFP Applicant information session (register at siliconvalleycf.org/calendar)
April 7, 2017, 5 p.m.: Proposal submission deadline
Late June 2017: Announcement of grant awards
Civic Engagement/Public Sector Innovation

- Support innovative technology that creates more access to public data and more transparency around public policy development, to influence political decisionmaking and ensure equitable development decisions. Some examples include:
  - Making affordable housing opportunities accessible online to low-income renters in search of quality housing throughout the Bay Area.
  - Encouraging more transit trips by improving transportation information, transit mapping, or payment systems.
  - Strategic interventions to improve government processes and equitable development.

- Support projects that provide technical assistance to strengthen nonprofit organizations' 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. Some examples include:
  - Legal strategies that protect low-income renters from unfairly being evicted from homes.
  - Developing research that helps organizations determine what policies will encourage the development of quality affordable housing or ensure that existing residents of vulnerable neighborhoods can remain in their communities.

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 siliconvalleycf.org/regional-planning
   • Impact report on Building Strong Communities.
   • This RFP – Building Strong Communities

2. **Participate in the information session.** This is recommended for new applicants interested in responding to this RFP. Because all grant applications must be submitted online, this session provides an overview of SVCF’s online application system, apply.siliconvalleycf.org. Additionally, information sessions provide an opportunity for applicants to review in more depth the RFP’s content and ask questions. To register for this 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 online application system, apply.siliconvalleycf.org, beginning March 13, 2017. Applications must be submitted by 5 p.m. Friday, April 7, 2017.
Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Proposals for grants should include a narrative that responds to the questions found at apply.siliconvalleycf.org. 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, including steps to be taken to achieve desired outcomes.
• Achievable timeline 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 2017, we expect to award approximately 15 to 20 grants. The average grant amount awarded in the 2016 grantmaking cycle was approximately $65,000. 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 and future applicants as well as members of the community at large.

Review and Selection Process

An advisory committee with area expertise for this strategy will help staff review all proposals recommended for funding to SVCF's board of directors. In addition, 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 June 2017.

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 participate in evaluations.

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 advances innovative philanthropic solutions to challenging problems. As the largest community foundation in the world, we engage donors and corporations from Silicon Valley, across the country and around the globe to make our region and world better for all. Our passion for helping people and organizations achieve their philanthropic dreams has created a global philanthropic enterprise committed to the belief that possibilities start here. 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 siliconvalleycf.org/publications.

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