SACOG
Sacramento Area Council of Governments
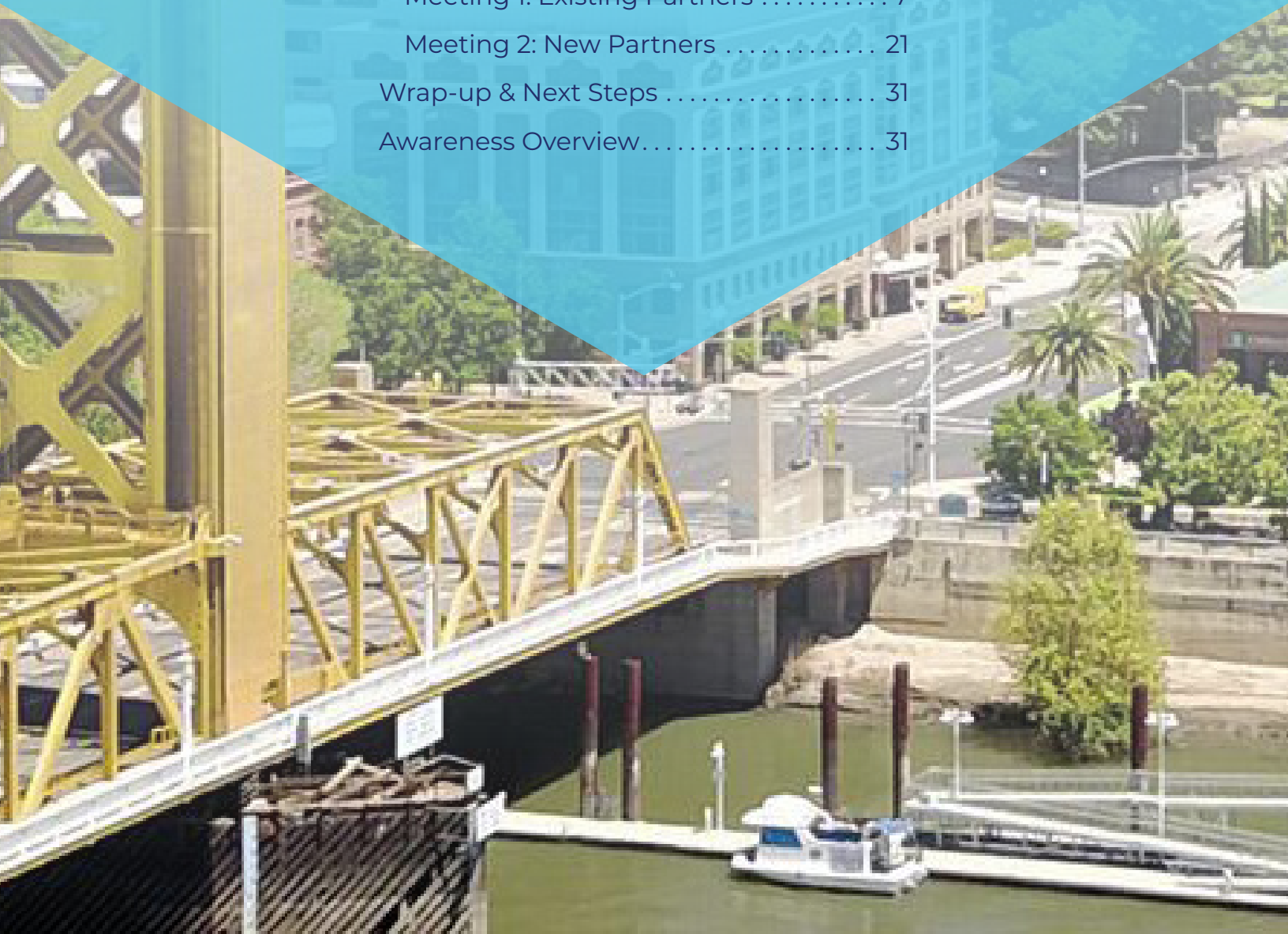
ENGAGE, EMPOWER, IMPLEMENT
(EEI) Program

Focus Group
MEETING 1 & 2 SUMMARY

MAY 23, 2023

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INTRODUCTION

On May 23, 2023, the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) hosted two virtual focus group meetings with representatives from Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in the Sacramento region as part of the Engage, Empower, Implement (EEI) program. Two meetings were held virtually through Zoom, with the first meeting held from 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. and the second held from 3:30 – 4:30 p.m. The focus group meetings served as a way for SACOG and the Project Team to engage key stakeholders in a conversation about the EEI program, build awareness about the EEI program framework, solicit feedback from CBOs on their previous experience with SACOG initiatives, and gather initial ideas for the framework.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW

Engage, Empower, Implement is a new funding program that will establish and fund community-based outreach and engagement projects throughout the six-county SACOG region. CBOs and SACOG member jurisdictions will partner to plan and implement these projects in their local communities with assistance from the EEI process, technical resources, and tools. EEI will incorporate community-led planning and design principles to identify communities' priorities and develop projects that meet their needs. Through this collaborative planning process with member jurisdictions and CBOs, the region will be able to identify and create community-driven and equitable projects ready for federal, state, and local funding opportunities.

PROJECT TEAM

Rosie Ramos

External Relations Group Manager, SACOG

Katie DeMaio

Project Manager/Owner, AIM Consulting

Derek Corea

Project Coordinator, AIM Consulting

Nicole Zhi Ling Porter

Innovative Mobility Program Analyst, SACOG

Judith Taylor

Partner, HR&A Advisors

Tommy Truong

Analyst, HR&A Advisors

Raymundo Cabrera

Senior Analyst, HR&A Advisors

MEETING OVERVIEW & FORM

Virtual Focus Group Meeting 1

TUESDAY, MAY 23
2:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Existing SACOG Partnerships

Virtual Focus Group Meeting 2

TUESDAY, MAY 23
3:30 PM – 4:30 PM

Opportunities for New Partnerships

The two focus group meetings were separated into two groups of CBOs, Existing SACOG Partners and Opportunities for New Partnerships. The first group consisted of CBOs that have historically been involved with SACOG's projects and activities in the past. The second group consisted of smaller CBOs that have not been traditionally included in SACOG's past work and may not have been included in past outreach activities.

The meeting began with a brief welcome and meeting orientation by Katie DeMaio, AIM Consulting. Katie then gave an overview of the meeting agenda and introduced the Project Team.

EEI Mission Overview
To create a pipeline of **equitable, safe and sustainable projects** throughout the six-county SAGOG region that are rooted in community-based planning efforts.

EEI Funds Engagement & Planning Processes
EEI is a new funding program designed to support engagement-focused planning for **community-based organizations** (CBOs).

EEI is Beyond Transportation
EEI is about **community-based solutions**, acknowledging that communities have needs beyond transportation and that many factors impact mobility for people.

$3M committed to the first EEI funding round, with potential for expanded funding in the future.

Meeting agenda and format:

1.

Team
Introductions

2.

EEI Mission
and Overview

3.

Launch of
EEI Program

4.

EEI Framework
Development and
Engagement Plan

5.

Interactive
Discussion Activity

6.

Wrap-up and
Next Steps

After the agenda and introductions, Rosie Ramos with SACOG provided an overview of the EEI program mission and scope of work to fund engagement and planning processes from the community level and reiterated that the available $3 million in funding will be made available after the framework is complete.

Next, Tommy Truong (at the 2:00 p.m. meeting) and Raymundo Cabrera (at the 3:30 p.m. meeting) from HR&A Advisors shared a technical overview of the framework development process, a timeline for its completion, and the need for the EEI framework in general. Before the interactive section of the meetings, the SACOG Project Team members who were present abstained from the remainder of the meeting to ensure quality feedback from the CBO representatives. Project Team members from AIM Consulting and HR&A Advisors continued to facilitate the remainder of the meeting.

INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION FEEDBACK

After the presentation, Katie began the interactive discussion activity, using Mentimeter (online polling software) as an exercise to address research questions focused on evaluating SACOG partnerships.

Meeting 1: Existing SACOG Partners

On the following page is an overview of the feedback received from the first meeting held at 2:00 p.m., organized by question.

1. **QUESTION 1:** *Evaluate your previous relationship with SACOG. How was your experience?* *(19 responses total)*
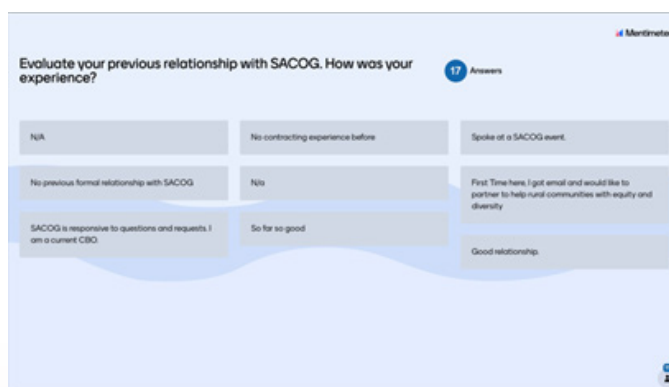
Comments

- SACOG is responsive to questions and requests

- Spoke at a SACOG event

- So far so good

- Good relationship

- No contracting experience

- First time here, I got emailed and would like to partner to help rural communities with equity and diversity

- Able to get more 1:1 support and get my questions answered

- Our partnership is relatively new (since the fall of 2022), but it has been great so far. SACOG staff have been very responsive, open to ideas, flexible, and understanding

- Poor. Blueprint in the 80s

- I feel like we have a good relationship with them

- Good two-way communication about shared goods/priorities

- We have not completed the funding, but it is ok so far

- Small amount for the amount of outreach that is required

- We have one SACOG project we are working on. So far, SACOG personnel have been very nice and accessible

- We just began our formal relationship through a project, and the communication has been great

- Not bad, but not very flexible

2.

QUESTION 2: **What populations are typically overlooked by federal, state, or local funding in your community?** *(40 responses total)*
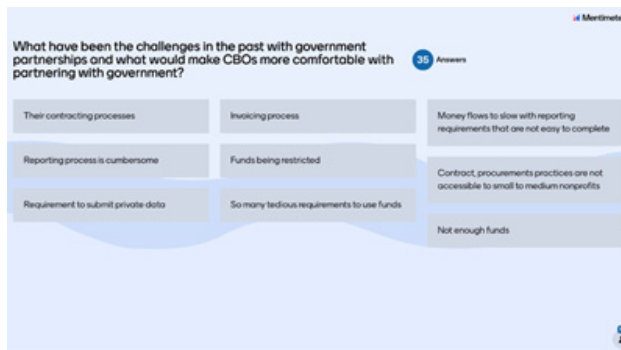

Comments

- Farm and ranch land
- Ethnically diverse
- The unhoused
- Small Businesses
- Young Leaders
- Seniors
- Minorities
- Latinos
- Faith-based communities
- Ukrainians
- LGBTQ

- Women
- Homeless
- Refugees
- The disabled
- Lower socioeconomic
- Undeveloped areas
- Non-traditionally educated.
- Immigrants

- People of color
- Undocumented
- Returning citizens
- For-profit small business
- Native, veteran, women, and other minorities
- For-profit small businesses

3.

QUESTION 3: **What have been the challenges in the past with government partnerships and what would make CBOs more comfortable with partnering with the government?** *(35 responses total)*
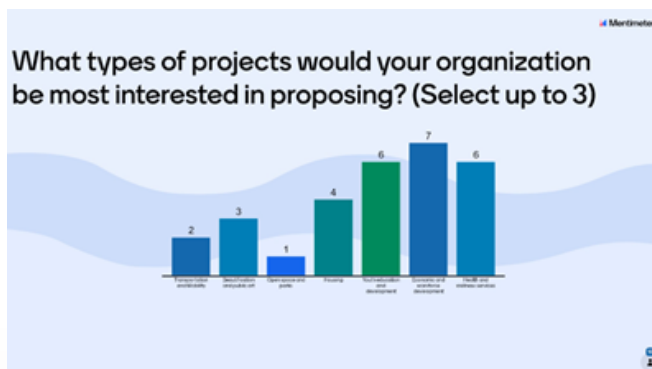

Comments

- Their contracting processes

- The reporting process is cumbersome

- Request to submit private data

- Invoicing process

- Funds being restricted.

- So many tedious requirements to use funds

- Money flows too slowly with reporting requirements that are not easy to complete

- Contract and procurement practices are not accessible to small to medium nonprofits

- Not enough funds

- Government agency staff turnover, transition, or hire moratorium makes the program slow, drawn out, or delayed

- Capacity to secure funding, staff time, and matching funds

- Strict funding priorities. Reimbursement process

- Upfront money

- Better Accessibility. More flexible. Make it easy to complete applications and address requirements

- Invoicing, payment taking long, too little staff funding, the project start date should not be bumped out after we started the project

- Available Grant Funding for Art, Culture, and Promoting Equity. Not being Non-Profits, I feel like for-Profits (businesses) are left behind

- Better Accessibility. More flexible. Make it easy to complete applications and address requirements

- Invoicing, payment taking long, too little staff funding, the project start date should not be bumped out after we started the project

- A small amount for outreach is required

4. *QUESTION 4:* **What types of projects would your organization be most interested in proposing?** *(10 responses total)*

What types of projects would your organization be most interested in proposing? (Select up to 3)

Comments

- 1 vote for Transportation and Mobility

- 1 vote for Beautification and Public Art

- 3 votes for Open Space and Parks

- 3 votes for Housing

- 2 votes for Economic and Workforce development

- 2 votes for Health and Wellness

- Other comments: all are ok, more traditional culture, youth, beautification, transportation, Día de los Muertos, Cinco de Mayo, Hispanic Heritage

5.

QUESTION 5: **What barriers do you have to receiving future funding with SACOG or other federal, state, or local funding?**
(35 responses total)

Comments — in order of most responses

- Alignment of priorities of funding

- Cashflow and Reimbursement

- Funding administrative requirements

- Awareness of funding opportunities

- Amount of funding

- Other comments – Amount of administrative cash flow, cash flow, marketing, administrative, notification of funding, amount of funding, administrative fees, being able to receive 75% upfront or all upfront

6.

QUESTION 6: **What are the barriers to delivering for current community-based projects in your industry/community?**
(21 responses total)

Comments

- Amount of time you allow for participation. Underserved requires more trust building
- Staffing for the project. CBO staffing changed
- Finding good times to meet in communities
- Access to free or low-cost locations for events
- Community engagement takes a lot of time and can hit delays that are not anticipated
- The outreach is always ongoing. We are CBOs who have a meaningful relationship with the community. Effective and meaningful relationships and trust are not built in a specified period
- Grassroots input is not encouraged from a 9-5 schedule
- Education material, for example, educational brochures about the blueprint, missing middle housing, etc
- Adequate compensation for great employees
- For example, transportation is a barrier and workshops about unmet transportation needs are often in person and at difficult times and locations

- Consistency! When a grant ends and there is no more funding, certain projects must end which affects the consistency of service
- Lack of Internet service
- CBO has less staffing so small grant dollars are not the emphasis of a staff already strapped with other duties
- Poor people are not easily available to give input
- Providing food/snacks/incentives to help with participation
- Childcare needs
- Focus Group for community members
- Grant timelines are sometimes too short to engage meaningfully with leaders and equip them to ripple the effect of engagement
- Staffing in our organization and volunteer leaders' on-boarding take a long time

7.

QUESTION 7: **What insurance requirements have been hard to meet in the past? Why?** *(11 responses total)*

Comments

- None. We have sufficient insurance

- Small orgs don't carry enough liability insurance

- Cost and amount of aggregate coverage requirement

- Multi-million-dollar general liability coverage expectation on small to medium orgs

- State requirements up front so we can obtain them promptly

- I'm not the person to answer. But I know the speed of time for it to be turned in was way too fast for us

- Being able to pay for staffing

- Multiple ways to collect information from the community. Allow for time for true community engagement

8.

QUESTION 8: **What has worked in the past to make the reimbursement process and invoicing easier?** *(18 responses total)*

Comments

- Funds upfront

- Clarify the process early and often.

- E-deposits and easy invoicing

- Clear training and examples of invoice/deliverables

- The staffer that could get us paid fast. Lack of consistency for payment. It's about who you know

- Template for invoicing

- Provide reimbursement forms for the exact info they are a requirement.

- Access to support from the billing department

- Having a point person at the funding agency for quick clarifying questions

- Having field staff and billing staff both aware of the invoice process so they can work together

- Allowable process for a learning culture without punitive actions by funders

- Flexible spending categories

- When we were working for with other foundations they have had a very flexible invoicing in categories of expenses form that we were able to adjust as the project needed. Flexible but accountable

- Disallowing receipts, by overzealous accounting staff... some reject a $2.00 receipt that requires staff time to resolve

- Flexible invoicing deadlines. Quarterly might work well for some and monthly may be better for others

- Stable start dates

9.

QUESTION 9: **What networks should SACOG promote EEI through to make sure fund opportunities are widely received?**
*(18 responses total)*

Comments

- Rosie
- Emails
- Enews
- Community meetings
- Word of mouth
- Impact foundry
- LinkedIn
- Just happened to see the announcement on another CBO's Facebook page
- Local foundations - newsletter - social media
- Emails, Grants.ca.gov

- Announcements from previous year recipients
- Directly from philanthropic organizations. Non-profit education venter. Invest in health/health education council
- Equity staff
- Go to the CBOs you want to have a relationship with
- Friends and Friends in Facebook Messenger
- Community meetings

10.

QUESTION 10: **What is the shortest reasonable timeframe for application development?** *(17 responses total)*
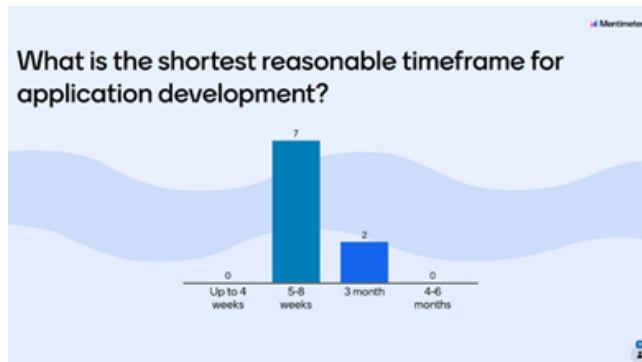
Comments

- 7 votes for 5-8 weeks
- 2 votes for 3 months

Other comments

- o 4 weeks
- o It depends on the complexity of the application. The SACOG Blueprint application was not that complicated, so a shorter time is OK
- o We are a small nonprofit where the board and EDs are all volunteer- one paid staff!We need more time
- o Have different time frames for new grantees and returning
- o A few weeks are is a comfortable time frame
- o 5-8 weeks
- o It depends, most BIPOC lead ores in Sacramento don't have the staff
- o Pulling costs together can take time

11.

QUESTION 11: **What types of technical assistance or materials would be helpful in the application process?** *(10 responses total)*

Comments

- The pre-grant workshops were very helpful. Continue this

- The complete application is as pdf so we are not surprised with every question and are not prepared

- An opportunity to run the concept for the application by an agency representative

- Workshops to ask clarification questions. Helps to know if the project is a good fit

- Depending on the complexity of the work to be accomplished, knowing what other organizations are expressing interest in may be partners

- Access to live support

- Technical assistance staff is available for small organizations

- Simple Pre-App, then invite to apply knowing it's a good fit

- The grant applications kept changing. This was irritating and confusing

- It depends on the complexity of the application. The SACOG Blueprint application was not that complicated, so a shorter time is OK

- We are a small nonprofit where the board and EDs are all volunteer- one paid staff -

  We need more time

- Have different time frames for new grantees and returning filling out applications

- A video walk through of the application system/process. Pre-grant workshops, videos

12.

QUESTION 12: **How can SACOG best support CBOs in making relationships with local jurisdictions?** *(14 responses total)*
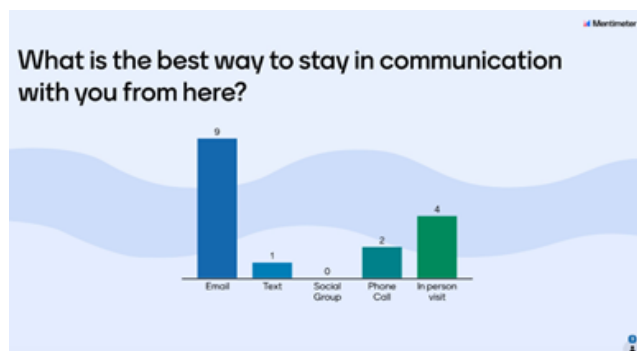

Comments

- Simplifying the language! For instance, with the philanthropic clarification that was needed

- Annual conference

- Help CBOs with community data that supports our efforts in meeting community needs

- In-person meeting with a clear purpose of theme.

- The relationships are developed over time. Under-served populations are really sensitive to superficial relationships

- Available demographic information for target areas

- Simplifying out applications

- A video walk thru of the application system/process. Yes - pre-grant workshops - please video - sometimes I watch the videos a couple of times

- I liked that our SACOG did a meet and greet with the beneficiary of our work

- At the end of the project, we can see the statistics collected

- I liked that our SACOG did a meet and greet with the beneficiary of our work

- Meet and Greet

- At the end of the project, we can see the statistics collected

13.

QUESTION 13: **What is the best way to stay in communication with you from here?** *(9 responses total)*

Comments

- 11 votes for email
- 1 vote for text
- 2 votes for a phone call
- 5 votes for in-person

### 14.

QUESTION 14: **Open Discussion**

- Will you summarize and send the PowerPoint to the entire group?
- We also often do not have the time to meet all the administrative requirements even after the close date, such as giving presentations and organizing complex site visits.
- Help us get the data we need to show how and why we exist.
- Can you please send us the questions in advance? I'd like to think about these for longer. I will also share this with my team.
- Will the polling be available for future input so I can send it to staff and co-workers?

Meeting #2: Opportunities for New Partners

Below is an overview of the feedback received from the second meeting held at 3:30 p.m., organized by question.

1. QUESTION 1: **How did you find out about SACOG?**
(7 responses total)
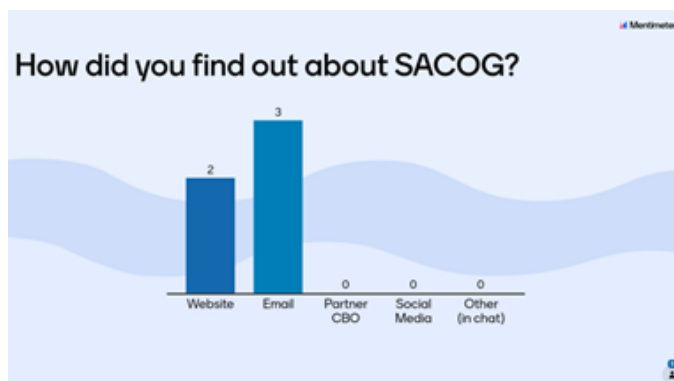
Comments

· 2 votes for a website

· 3 votes for email

Other comments

o Have also heard about SACOG from local CAO from the counties but was never sure exactly what they did, people forward emails around.

2.

QUESTION 2: **What populations are typically overlooked by federal, state, or local funding in your community?** *(8 responses total)*

Comments

- Seniors
- 20–40-year-old
- Farm workers
- Homeless seniors
- Small cities
- Low income
- Low level of mental health
- Unhoused

3.   *QUESTION 3:* **What have been the challenges in the past with government partnerships and what would make CBOs more comfortable with partnering with the government?**
*(12 responses total)*

Comments

- Grant applications require a high level of staff investment
- The learning curve to transition from nonprofit grant apps to gov grant apps
- Long and complicated grant applications
- Administrative costs- Reporting requirements- Cost of reporting- Insurance requirements- Requirement documentation
- Less complicated grant applications. Up front dollars

- Needing to hire a grant writer/specialist due to the complexity
- Bureaucracy tough to manager
- Capacity to secure funding, staffing, and matching funds
- Easy grant applications
- 20–40-year-old

4. *QUESTION 2:* **What types of projects would your organization be most interested in proposing?** *(6 responses total)*
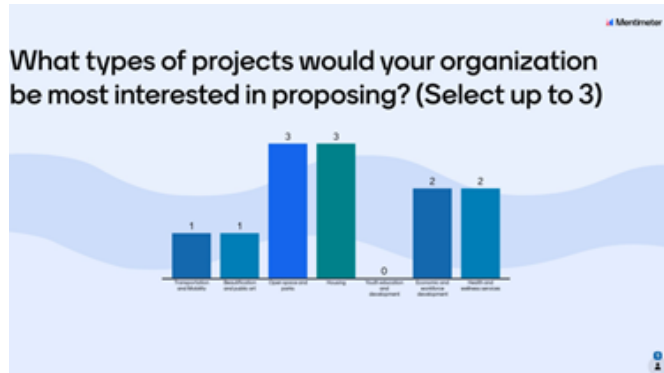
Comments

- 1 vote for transportation and mobility
- 1 vote for beautification and public art
- 3 votes for space ad parks
- 3 votes for housing
- 2 votes for economic and workforce development
- 2 votes for health and wellness services

5. *QUESTION 5:* **What barriers do you have to receiving future funding from SACOG or other federal, state, or local funding?** *(5 responses total)*

Comments
in order of most responses

- Alignment of priorities of funding
- Cashflow and Reimbursement
- Funding administrative requirements
- Awareness of funding opportunities
- Amount of funding

6.

QUESTION 6: **What are the barriers to delivery for current community-based projects in your industry?** *(8 responses total)*
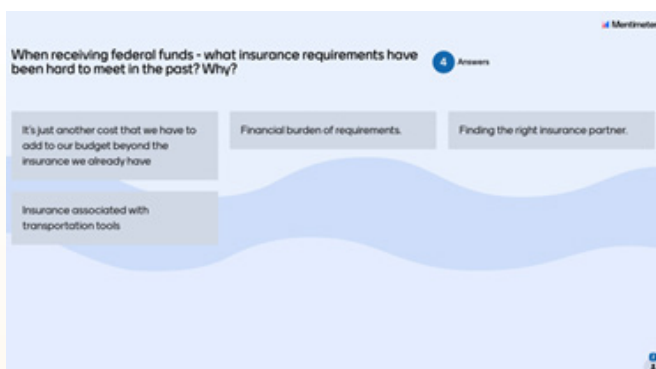

Comments

- Client involvement
- The partnership is difficult to develop, and entities often have difficult resources and capacity to deliver
- Not applicable - we carry enough
- Professional accounting services. Staff turnover. Communications with gov. staff
- Technology
- Not applicable for us
- Local government involvement
- The financial burden of insurance requirements

7.

QUESTION 7: **When receiving federal funds – what insurance requirements have been hard to meet in the past? Why?**
(4 responses total)

Comments

- It's just another cost that we have to add to our budget beyond the insurance we already have
- Insurance associated with transportation tools
- The financial burden of requirements
- Finding the right insurance partner

8.

QUESTION 8: **What networks should SACOG promote EEI through to make sure fund opportunities are widely received?**
*(12 responses total)*

Comments

- Grant database platforms. Website. Email blasts. Social media. Community workshops. Alliance organizations such as Sierra Nevada Alliance and alliance environmental leadership

- Placer Collaborative network

- Impact Foundry

- SACOG Direct Outreach

- Local Partners and consultants

- Grant station

- City government community development

- Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter

- Email blast

- Sacramento regional foundation learning community Facebook group

- Community foundations

9. **QUESTION 9:** *What is the shortest reasonable timeframe for application development?* *(6 responses total)*

What is the shortest reasonable timeframe for application development?
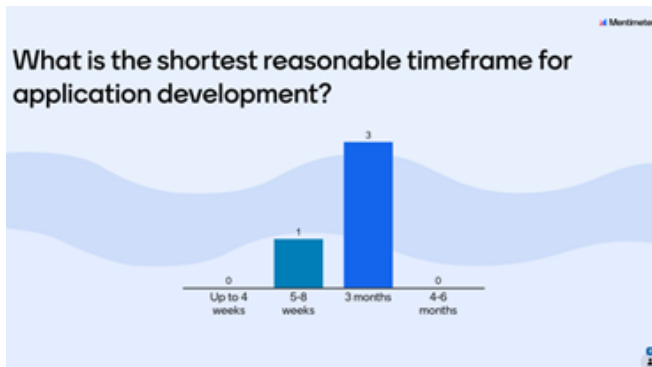
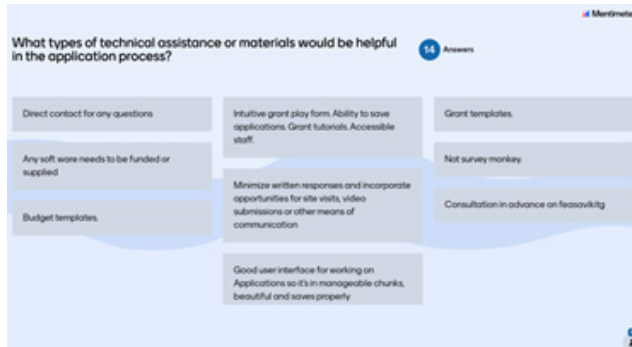**Comments** in order of most responses

- · 1 vote for 5-8 weeks
- · 3 votes for 3 months

Other comments

- o Please don't set an application deadline on or around a holiday
- o We need to build consensus to write the grant components and that takes time

10. *QUESTION 10:* **What type of technical assistance or materials would be helpful in the application process?** *(14 responses total)*

Comments

- Direct contact for any questions
- Any software needs to be funded or supplied

- Budget templates
- Intuitive grant platform. Ability to save applications. Grant tutorials. Accessible staff
- Minimize written responses and incorporate opportunities for site visits. Video submissions or other means of communication
- The good user interface for working on applications so it's in manageable chunks, beautiful, and saves properly

- Grant templates
- Not surveymonkey
- Consultation in advance on the feasibility
- Clearly defines word and character count
- Pool on prospective partners or resources
- When it's appropriate to cut and paste agency information
- The Sacramento County tot grant platform is great and easy to us
- CBO tours to share what folks are doing

11.

QUESTION 11: **How can SACOG best support CBOs in making relationships with local jurisdictions?** *(7 responses total)*

Comments

- Provide unrestricted funding to CBOs.

- Bring community members together. Creating a platform for communication

- Monthly newsletters

- By being advocates for the work we do even when there are NIMBY issues that may cause local gov to back out

- Idea sharing / social events

- Events that bring both groups together to build personal relationships

- Providing funding and support to meet the often high grant administrative requirements

12.

QUESTION 12: **What's the best way to stay in communication with you from here?** *(7 responses total)*

What is the best way to stay in communication with you from here?

Comments

- 4 votes for email
- 2 votes for a phone call
- 1 vote for in person

13.

QUESTION 13: **Open Discussion**

- SACOG does so many awesome projects, but they do have a more urban mindset and are not very in touch with the rural conditions and culture.

- Not sure why we don't have a relationship with SACOG. Our priorities are as follows.
  1) Transportation issue to make up for growth
  2) We want more bike routes
  3) Protecting open spaces for recreation and equity of space

- Can you list who is active and how to become active in SACOG on the website?

- Our local and community governments need to communicate better. SACOG can be a great mediator.

- The best way to communicate with CBOs in rural areas is to get larger organizations to communicate using their existing digital infrastructure.

- The community foundations and Business Groups are great at disseminating info.

- The administrative report and documentation can be difficult when dealing with a high number of low-income / vulnerable populations.

- I like the introductory letter of intent to make sure that CBOs know they are on the right track and that they can meet the minimum requirements, including staff time. This can save organizations time and money.

- Can people compensate applicants? Sometimes funders ask for 100 or so submissions but only fund 1 or 2 grants. Is it about the funder, or is it about providing the services?

WRAP-UP & NEXT STEPS

After the close of the polling, Katie thanked everyone for sharing their experience and recommendations. Katie also requested participants keep a lookout for future focus group meetings. The meeting schedule is listed on the following page.

Event/Location	Date & Time	Target Audience
Virtual Focus Group Meeting 3	**Tuesday, June 13** 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Geography
Virtual Focus Group Meeting 4	**Tuesday, June 20** 10:00 am – 11:30 am	Transportation and Environmental Justice
Virtual Focus Group Meeting 5	**Friday, June 23** 10:00 am – 11:00 am	Racial and Social Justice
Virtual Focus Group Meeting 6	**Wednesday, June 28** 10:00 am – 11:00 am	Housing and Community/Economic Development
Virtual Focus Group Meeting 7	**TBD**	Metrics

AWARENESS OVERVIEW

The Project Team identified over 125 key CBO stakeholders within the six-county SACOG region. The CBOs represented El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba, along with the 22 member cities within the counties.

Stakeholders' representatives were invited by the Project Team via email to register for the Zoom meetings on the week of May 8 and again the week of May 15. All guests who registered on Zoom were sent meeting reminders on May 22 and again on the morning of the meeting. All direct awareness urged key CBOs to share meeting information and registration with their network. A meeting announcement was also made by the Project Team on social media at the April CBO round table about the upcoming focus group meetings.

The Six-County SACOG Region