



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Catalyst Projects

Valley CERF Coalition

March 8, 2024

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The [Central San Joaquin Valley CERF](#) ('Valley CERF') initiative is an inclusive economic development planning process funded by the State of California's Jobs First program and involves stakeholders from four "Local Tables": Madera, Kings/Tulare, Fresno County, and Fresno DRIVE. The Valley CERF Coalition (Coalition) represents over 130 organizations from diverse stakeholder groups, including Community Based Organizations, Education and Workforce Training, Employers and Businesses, Environmental Justice, Labor & Worker Centered Organizations, Tribal Entities, and Local Governments. The Coalition advances the following vision:

"to foster an inclusive, resilient, and sustainable economy that creates quality jobs and provides equitable economic access to all across the Central San Joaquin Valley."

In 2023, the Coalition launched an intensive, community-driven process to identify regional goals and economic opportunities in alignment with the State of California's 'Jobs First' objectives. [Efforts to date](#) include creating a governance structure to foster equitable participation across the four-county region; establishing four Local Tables to identify and lift local interests; holding monthly meetings of Local Tables; completing local and regional SWOT analyses; holding two 'regional congresses' with all Local Table participants; commissioning ten grassroots organizations to engage community members; working with research partners to complete and publish a data-rich [Baseline Report](#) of existing regional conditions; completing a report of promising economic frameworks and industries; surveying local CBOs and civic organizations for projects that align with the California Jobs First objectives; and convening a Regional Table (comprised of representatives from the four Local Tables) to lead the development of the regional plan during 2024.

Through this engagement, research, and discovery, the Coalition developed the Valley CERF framework to foster a "Community-Led, Climate-Forward Economy" that catalyzes inclusive, regional economic development. For more information on our framework and the 2024 timeline to develop a regional plan, please visit: ["Drafting the Central San Joaquin 'Valley CERF' Plan."](#)



Building a climate-forward economy requires efforts at the local and regional level. Like an accordion, our planning processes must flexibly reach both local and regional needs; honing in on the unique aspirations of local communities and expanding regionally to meet the need for comprehensive regional planning and projects. **In recognition of the need to support both regional and local efforts, the Coalition is issuing this Catalyst Request for Proposals (RFP). Proposed projects can have a local or regional scope; should support our disinvested and disadvantaged communities; and aim to attract additional state, federal, or philanthropic funding.**

REGIONAL TABLE PRINCIPLES

The following principles have been established by the Regional Table and should be integrated into proposed projects:

- Equity
- Environmental Stewardship
- Quality Job Creation
- Strong and Resilient Economy
- Data Informed



EVALUATION CRITERIA

Evaluation teams, comprised of impartial Local and Regional Table members, will evaluate proposals based on the following criteria:

- Extent to which the project advances the Regional Table Principles.
- Support the Valley CERF regional framework to build a “Community-Led, Climate Forward Economy” by advancing one or more priority areas: Responsible Food and Ag Systems, Circular Manufacturing, Climate Solutions, One Water, Broadband, Education and Skill Building; Small Business and Microenterprise for the climate economy; and Community Health.
- Demonstrate the potential to attract additional funding from local, state, or federal governments; philanthropy; or private investors.
- Demonstrate use of relevant data, such as the baseline data provided in the coalition’s [Regional Plan, Part 1](#), to inform the design, implementation, and evaluation of the project.
- Demonstrate strong partnerships and collaborations to maximize project impact.
- Support the unique aspirations and/or meaningfully address the felt needs of our disinvested and disadvantaged communities.
- Show responsible use of funds and reasonable costs through a detailed budget.
- Demonstrate project feasibility and importance. [Is the project feasible given the proposed budget, partners, timeline, and objectives? Will the project increase equity and access to opportunities, foster quality jobs, advance a strong and resilient economy, and/or promote climate-positive solutions?]
- Alignment with State and Federal policies and climate goals such as: [Executive Order N-16-22](#), [Racial Equity Executive Order](#), [Sustainable Groundwater Management Act](#), [Executive Order N-82-20](#), [California Air Resources Board Scoping Plan](#), and [Justice40 guidelines](#). See Resources below for more information.

The evaluation team will strive to curate a diverse portfolio of projects spanning the four-county region, advancing various regional principles and priority areas, at various project stages and with various budget allocations.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for State Catalyst project funding, the following information must be included in a project application:

1. A description of your organization's work and mission.
2. An overview of your project with clear objectives, scope, and what it aims to deliver.



3. A clear explanation of what project success looks like and how success will be measured.
4. A work plan with a timeline of your project.
5. A completed budget [\[template linked here\]](#) with information on how funds will be utilized for this project.
6. Information on the intended recipients of services or benefits of this project such as geographic location and demographic profile. Explain how they will benefit from this project.
7. Information on the Project Sponsor, an individual within an organization who is the primary driver and supporting the development of the project.
8. Information on the roles and responsibilities of the project team (internal staff and external partners). Letters of Commitment and/or Memorandums of Understanding may be uploaded to demonstrate external partnerships.
9. Justification for whether your project is “Exploratory,” “Last-mile,” or Ready-to-go,” based on the “Stages of Readiness” definitions provided herein.
10. Potential risks to project’s implementation or delivery of successful outcomes.
11. Ability to complete the proposed project within the expenditure deadline of September 2026.
12. Acknowledgement of alignment with state and federal policies, including Justice40 guidelines.
13. At least one letter of recommendation from an organization or partner who has worked closely with your organization on related projects in the last 3-5 years.

Projects **may not** fund new fossil fuel extraction or activities or expand fossil fuel production.

Please note, finalists may be required to submit additional information, such as an [equity impact analysis](#), displacement analysis, and/or community engagement strategy, if applicable.

LOCATION

Projects must benefit and support the residents of the Central San Joaquin region, which includes Madera, Fresno, Kings, and Tulare counties. Projects may have a local (single county) or regional (multi-county) scope.

Projects must select the county or counties where intended recipients of services or benefits reside on the application form.



TIMELINE

Timeline	Activity
February 20 - 23, 2024	Catalyst RFP Public Comment Period
March 8, 2024	Catalyst RFP Opens
March 15, 2024	Virtual Catalyst RFP Applicant Information Session
April 30, 2024	Catalyst RFP Closes
May 2024	Local Tables evaluate and recommend projects
June 2024	Regional Table evaluates and selects projects
July - August 2024	Awards announced and contracting begins
September 2024 – September 2026	Contracts executed; Projects administered; Project Sponsors provide updates via meetings and reports on project development throughout the period of performance.

SUBMISSION

Proposals must be received by **April 30, 2024 at 4:59 p.m. Pacific Standard Time (PST)**.

Please use the “**Catalyst RFP Application Questions**” form to complete Sections 1 and 2. Responses to Section 3 may be submitted on a separate document, **should not exceed 5 pages, and must use Calibri 12-point font**. Please submit your completed proposal to valleycerf@centralvalleycf.org.

BUDGET

The total allocation for Catalyst RFP projects is \$5.5 million. Individual project funding requests should range from \$200,000.00 to \$2,000,000.00, unless a compelling case can be made for smaller or larger funding needs.

A maximum of 10% of the budget may be allocated to administrative costs. See Appendix A for a detailed definition of administrative costs.

Catalyst RFP funds will be made available in September 2024. Funds must be fully expensed by September 30, 2026.

Funding will be provided on a reimbursement basis, with a reimbursement period of 60-90 days. If the reimbursement period creates an undue burden for an organization, please reach out to a Local Convenor listed below and/or the Central Valley Community Foundation.

We reserve the right to negotiate increases or decreases to budgets once all applications have been reviewed.

Applicants must complete the budget [template linked here](#) and provide information on how funds will be utilized for this project.

The evaluation team will curate a geographically diverse portfolio of projects spanning the four-county region, and representing various priority areas [Responsible Food and Ag



Systems, Circular Manufacturing, Climate Solutions, One Water, Broadband, Education and Skill Building; Small Business and Microenterprise for the climate economy; and Community Health].

CONDITIONS

- We reserve the right to reject any and all proposals received or to negotiate separately with any applicant, in any manner necessary, to serve the best interest of the Valley CERF Coalition.
- All awards will be based upon fund availability. We reserve the right to terminate or modify any part of this procurement process at any time and for any reason; to award one contract or multiple contracts; to negotiate changes; to make no awards; and to issue new and/or revised policies and clarifications at any time.
- We reserve the right to negotiate modifications to response packages.
- Finalists may be required to submit additional information, such as an [equity impact analysis](#), displacement analysis, and/or community engagement strategy, if applicable.

For any questions, please reach out to the Local Conveners for your respective Local Table:

Madera	Rico Peralta, Director of Programs rperalta@uwfm.org
Kings/Tulare	Sam Williford, WIB Strategic Initiatives Coordinator, swilliford@tularewib.org
Fresno (rural)	Lizette Diaz, Project Coordinator lizdiaz@csufresno.edu
DRIVE (Fresno urban)	Artie Padilla DRIVE Initiative Director artie@centralvalleycf.org
Regional	Angela Castellanos Program Manager Valleycerf@centralvalleycf.org

RESOURCES

Provided below is information on the resources mentioned throughout the Catalyst RFP.



- The **Valley CERF Regional Plan Part 1** presents baseline data on our region, including the factors affecting the region’s economic, environmental, and health conditions. The Plan identifies key stakeholders and community assets, and includes analysis of existing and predicted workforce trends. The report can be access here:
https://www.valleycerf.org/_files/ugd/69d6c8_872dcac4f0f9403d9e057df0667b2380.pdf
- The **California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)** developed an interactive map identifying disadvantaged communities in the four-county region. The website can be accessed here:
<https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/sb535>.
- The Valley CERF Coalition developed the following framework based on an intensive community engagement process throughout 2023. Eight priority areas were identified and are detailed in the “**Drafting the Central San Joaquin ‘Valley CERF’ Plan**”. The resource can be accessed here:
https://www.valleycerf.org/_files/ugd/387008_2390d151b1774de6a96e973f6b4cec61.pdf
- The **National Equity Atlas** is a robust data and research tool that can be used to develop strategies to build an equitable economy. The National Equity Atlas works to equip community leaders and policymakers with actionable data and research they can use to advance equitable growth. The resource can be accessed here:
<https://www.policylink.org/our-work/economy/national-equity-atlas>

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE AND FEDERAL POLICIES

One goal of the Catalyst program is to prepare projects to attract future State and Federal funding. In your application, you will be asked whether your project generally aligns with the policies below, if applicable.

- The **Justice40 Guidelines** require 40% of the overall benefits of certain Federal investments – including investments in clean energy and energy efficiency; clean transit; affordable and sustainable housing; training and workforce development; the remediation and reduction of legacy pollution; and the development of clean water infrastructure – to flow to disadvantaged communities (DACs). By prioritizing these communities in federal funding allocations for infrastructure, clean energy, and other initiatives, the initiative aims to advance environmental justice and promote inclusive economic growth nationwide. For more information on the Justice40 Guidelines, see here:
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/environmentaljustice/justice40/>
- The **Executive Order (EO) N-16-22**, Racial Equity Executive Order focuses on equity and inclusion across state agencies. It aims to integrate equity considerations into policy-making, planning, and resource allocation processes. The EO directs agencies to develop and implement equity plans, promote diversity



and inclusion within their organizations, and engage with communities to address disparities effectively. It emphasizes accountability and transparency in advancing equity goals, requiring agencies to report regularly on their progress. EO N-16-22, Racial Equity Executive Order can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/9.13.22-EO-N-16-22-Equity.pdf>

- The **Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)** requires local agencies to form groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) for high and medium priority basins. GSAs develop and implement groundwater sustainability plans (GSPs) to avoid undesirable results and mitigate overdraft within 20 years. For more information on SGMA, see here:
<https://water.ca.gov/programs/groundwater-management/sgma-groundwater-management>
- **Executive Order N-82-20**, mandates select State Agencies and Departments to establish the California Biodiversity Collaborative and bring together diverse stakeholders to develop and implement a plan that combats the climate and biodiversity crises across California. The EO established the goal of the State to conserve at least 30 percent of California’s land and coastal waters by 2030. For more information on EO N-82-20, see here:
<https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/10.07.2020-EO-N-82-20-.pdf>
- The **California Air Resources Board (CARB) Scoping Plan** outlines California’s comprehensive strategy to mitigate climate change and achieve greenhouse gas reduction targets. It provides a roadmap for transitioning to a sustainable, low-carbon economy while prioritizing environmental justice and equity. The plan covers various sectors, including transportation, energy, industry, agriculture, and waste management, detailing specific measures and policies to reduce emissions across these areas. Additionally, it emphasizes collaboration with stakeholders, local communities, and other governmental entities to ensure effective implementation and equitable outcomes. For more information on the CARB Scoping Plan, see here:
<https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/our-work/programs/ab-32-climate-change-scoping-plan/2022-scoping-plan-documents>

STAGES OF PROJECT READINESS:

Exploratory projects are in the early stages of development. They may be an idea or a back-of-the-envelope plan and may need dedicated funding to study and develop into potential projects and conduct feasibility assessments.

Last-mile projects have completed feasibility assessments and are considered feasible and viable projects to achieve their stated objectives. These projects have undergone initial steps towards development and must clear a few additional hurdles (e.g. site

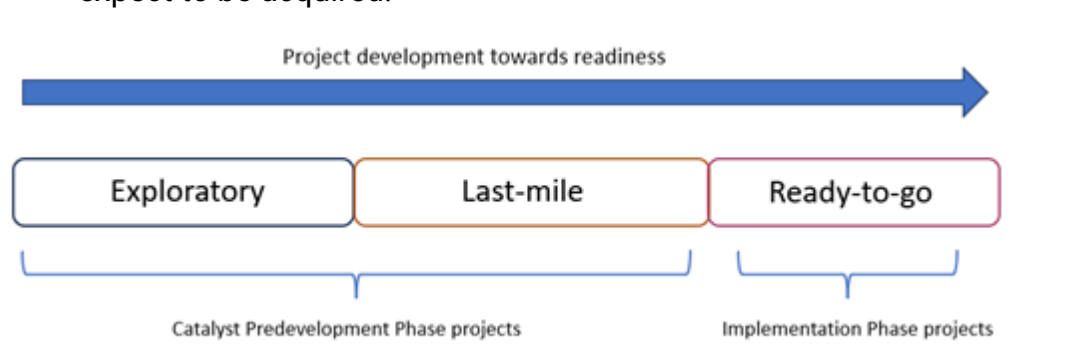


selection, permitting, environmental review) before being considered ready-to-go. Last-mile projects should have:

- Completed feasibility study if applicable.
- Some necessary plans or studies completed such as but not limited to: needs assessment, business plan, environmental assessment, site plan, preliminary engineering report, management plan, community outreach and engagement plan, or other plan or study necessary for the success of the project.
- Potential funding sources identified.

Ready-to-go projects have completed *all necessary and possible steps* to be ready for implementation upon receiving funding. To be considered ready-to-go, projects should have:

- Completed necessary plans or studies such as but not limited to: needs assessment, business plan, feasibility study, environmental assessment, site plan, preliminary engineering report, management plan, community outreach and engagement plan, or other plan or study necessary for the success of the project. The required plans or studies will depend in part on whether the project is a capital (construction) project or not.
- Additional funding sources secured or soon-to-be secured, if applicable
- Construction projects must include the following:
 - Proof of site control
 - Preliminary permitting and approvals: list of required permits, approvals, etc. to build the project and timeline of when they have been acquired or expect to be acquired.



PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Project activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Feasibility studies; market analysis; environmental assessments, surveys, and remediation; site acquisition; site and development plans; project designs; permitting; establishing a regional tax increment financing district (TIF); drafting and negotiating Community Benefits Agreements and Community Workforce Agreements; establishing public-private partnerships, Community Development Corporations and Community Development Financial Institutions; revolving loan funds; joint powers authorities; financial planning (e.g., preliminary budget and



construction financing); with the goal of establishing long-term funding opportunities for implementation of Planning Phase regional strategies;

- Basic environmental infrastructure pre-development, construction, and development of long-term operations and maintenance plans for infrastructure such as: clean water supply systems; wastewater systems; waste disposal systems; pollution control services;
- Support costs for building and sustaining the capacity of project leads and partners, such as: investments in partner and local staff development; funding new and/or critical positions; acquiring or utilizing tools and resources to increase partner capacity for project planning and implementation; organizational capacity activities such as access to financial services or legal review; developing new pilot or demonstration projects and programs; participation and/or partnership with existing workforce programs; providing or securing technical assistance for partners.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Administrative Costs

Under the Catalyst RFP, there is an administrative cost limit of 10%. The following functions and activities constitute the costs of administration subject to the administrative cost limitation:

1. The costs of administration can be both personnel and non-personnel and both direct and indirect.
2. The costs of administration are the costs associated with performing the following functions:



- a. Performing the following overall general administrative functions and coordination of those functions:
 - i. Accounting, budgeting, financial and cash management functions.
 - ii. Procurement and purchasing functions.
 - iii. Property management functions.
 - iv. Personnel management functions.
 - v. Project management functions.
 - vi. Payroll functions.
 - vii. Coordinating the resolution of findings arising from audits, reviews, investigations, and incident reports.
 - viii. Audit functions.
 - ix. General legal services functions.
 - x. Developing systems and procedures, including information systems, required for these administrative functions.
 - xi. Fiscal agent responsibilities.
 - b. Performing oversight and monitoring responsibilities related to administrative functions.
 - c. Costs of goods and services required for administrative functions of the program, including goods and services such as rental or purchase of equipment, utilities, office supplies, postage, and rental and maintenance of office space.
 - d. Travel costs incurred for official business in carrying out administrative activities or the overall management of the grant.
 - e. Costs of information systems related to administrative functions (for example, personnel, procurement, purchasing, property management, accounting and payroll systems) including the purchase, systems development and operating costs of such systems.
3. Awards to subrecipients or contractors that are solely for the performance of administrative functions are classified as administrative costs:
- a. Personnel and related non-personnel costs of staff that perform both administrative functions specified in item 2 of this section and programmatic services, or activities must be allocated as administrative or program costs to the benefitting cost objectives/categories based on documented distributions of actual time worked or other equitable cost allocation methods.
4. Costs of the following information systems including the purchase, systems development, and operational costs (for example, data entry) are charged to the program category:
- a. Employment statistics information



Where possible, the awardee must make efforts to streamline services to reduce administrative costs by minimizing duplication and effectively using information technology to improve services.

Appendix B: Allowable Costs and Cost Items

In general, to be an allowable charge, a cost must meet the following criteria:

- Be necessary and reasonable for the performance of the award;
- Be allocable to the award;
- Conform to any limitations or exclusions set forth in the award;
- Be consistent with policies and procedures that apply uniformly to allowable uses of general funds;
- Be accorded consistent treatment;
- Be determined in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles; and
- Be adequately documented.

Appendix C: Disallowable Costs

The following costs are ineligible uses of grant funds:

- Exceeding 10% of Administrative cost.
- Lobbying or advocacy work, such as direct lobbying for the passage of specific bills or local propositions.
- Expenses not related to the Catalyst RFP Program efforts.
- Commission fees.
- Ongoing operational costs beyond the grant term.
- Using funds for mitigation activities that are already mandated by local or state governing bodies or agencies.
- Expenses for publicity not directly related to project efforts.
- Bonus payments of any kind.
- The purchase of alcohol.
- Payments on existing debt or debt servicing fees.
- Damage judgments arising from the acquisition, construction, or equipping of a facility, whether determined by judicial process, arbitration, negotiation, or otherwise.
- Services, materials, or equipment obtained under any other state program.
- Stewardship of legal defense funds.

