

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (DRAFT)

Catalyst Projects for the
Valley Jobs First Coalition

March 1, 2024

The following Catalyst RFP DRAFT is being shared widely for public comment. We welcome any input and feedback from Stakeholders and the community. Please submit comments via email to valleyjobsfirst@centralvalleycf.org by Friday, February 23, 2024. Please note the Catalyst RFP DRAFT is subject to any changes made by the State.

Background and Purpose

The Central San Joaquin Valley Jobs First ([‘Valley Jobs First’](#)) initiative is an inclusive economic development planning process funded by the State of California and involving stakeholders from four “Local Tables”: Madera, Tulare/Kings, Fresno rural, and Fresno DRIVE. The Valley Jobs First 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 Jobs First 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 Jobs First’ Plan.”](#)

In addition to robust regional planning, our partners voiced the need to address and support the unique aspirations and felt needs of our local communities. To support these objectives, the Coalition is issuing a Catalyst Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit proposals from local

organizations and agencies for catalyzing projects that contribute to inclusive economic development. These projects should embody the principles of our Valley Jobs First Coalition: **equity, environmental stewardship, quality job creation, the cultivation of a strong and resilient economy, and data-informed strategies**. The projects can have a local or regional scope; should aim to attract additional state, federal, or philanthropic funding; and support our disinvested and disadvantaged communities.

Regional Table Principles

The following principles have been established by the Regional Table and will be key components within any project proposal:

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

Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation teams, comprised of impartial Local Table members, leaders, and Valley Jobs First regional and local conveners, will evaluate proposals based on the following criteria and provide recommendations to the Regional Table for final approval. The evaluation teams will assess whether the proposed project furthers the following Valley Jobs First goals:

- Apply the Regional Table Principles listed herein.
- Support the Valley Jobs First 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.
- Advance innovative approaches to tackle pressing challenges faced by our local communities.
- Demonstrate potential to attract additional funding from local, state, or federal governments, philanthropy, or private investors, or that align and complement state or federally funded projects.
- Apply relevant data, such as the Baseline Assessment and Community Engagement input, among other data sources, 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 address the felt needs of our disinvested and disadvantaged communities across the four-county region.
- 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 result in important outcomes?

Application Requirements

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

1. Description of your organization's work and mission.
2. Project overview, with objectives, scope, work plan with timeline, and budget.
3. Intended recipients of service or benefits
4. Project sponsor
5. Project team (internal staff and external partners)
6. Community partnerships
7. Alignment with Valley Jobs First principles, vision, and framework.
8. Clear explanation of what grantee will deliver by end of the grant, and clear explanation of what project success looks like and how success will be measured.
9. Ability to complete projects within the expenditure deadline of September 2026, or have phases that are able to be completed within this timeframe.
10. Indicate which geographic area residents will benefit most from your proposed project.
11. Adherence to federal, program specific Justice40 guidelines.
12. Justification for whether your project is “Exploratory,” “Last-mile,” or Ready-to-go,” based on the “Stages of Readiness” definitions provided herein.
13. Potential risks to project’s implementation or delivery of successful outcomes
14. Two references (name and contact information) who have worked closely with your organization on related projects.

The “Application Requirements” are from Catalyst Pre-Development Funding Guidelines and are not subject to change.

Location

Projects must benefit and support the residents of the Central San Joaquin Valley, which includes Madera, Fresno, Kings, and Tulare counties. Projects may have a local or regional scope.

Timeline

Timeline	Activity
February 20 - 23, 2024	Catalyst RFP Public Comment Period
March 1, 2024	Catalyst RFP Opens
March 29, 2024	Catalyst RFP Closes
April 2024	Local Tables evaluate and recommend projects
May 2024	Regional Table approves projects and contracting begins

June 2024	Contracts are executed
June 2024 – September 2026	Projects Administered; Project leads provide updates via meetings and reports on project development.

Submission

Proposals must be received by March 29, 2024 at 4:59 p.m. Pacific Standard Time (PST), via the Google Form linked here, To be linked in English, and here, To be linked in Spanish. Late proposals will not be accepted.

PDF versions of the Google Form are also available on the website to download.

Budget

The total allocation for Catalyst RFP projects is \$6 million. The Regional Table will determine budget allocations for each Local Table.

Conditions

- The Local Conveners 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 Jobs First Coalition.
- All awards will be based upon fund availability. The Local Conveners 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.
- All response packages become the property of the Local Conveners. It is understood and agreed that the proposer claims no proprietary rights to the ideas and written materials contained in or attached to its response package.
- The Local Conveners reserve the right to negotiate modifications to response packages.

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

- Madera Rico Peralta,
Director of Programs
rperalta@uwfm.org
- Fresno (rural) Lizette Diaz,
Project Coordinator
lizdiaz@csufresno.edu
- Kings/Tulare Sam Williford,
WIB Strategic Initiatives Coordinator,

swilliford@tularewib.org

DRIVE (Fresno
urban)

Artie Padilla
DRIVE Initiative Director
artie@centralvalleycf.org

Resources

For more information on the challenges facing each of the Valley Jobs First counties and the region, please visit:

- The Valley Jobs First 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 Jobs First 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 Jobs First’ Plan”. The resource can be accessed here: https://www.valleycerf.org/files/ugd/69d6c8_b7ce4200f727412ba07c679d8286f7c6.pdf
- Valley Jobs First Regional Principles (*to be linked*)
- Community Engagement Reports (*to be linked*)
- Justice40 Guidelines (*to be linked*)

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.

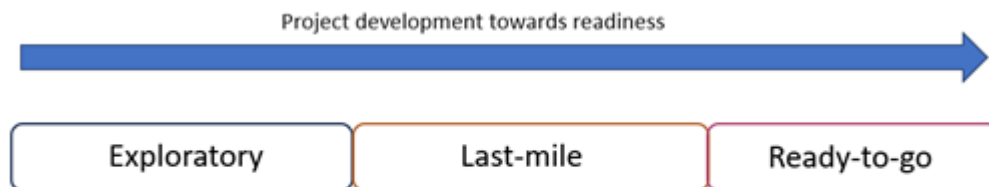
Last-mile projects have completed feasibility assessments and are considered feasible and viable projects to achieve their stated objectives. These projects have undergone initial steps towards development and must clear a few additional hurdles (e.g. site selection, permitting, environmental review)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



Examples of project activities 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.

The 'Stages of Readiness' and 'Examples of Projects' are from Catalyst Pre-Development Funding Guidelines and are not subject to change.

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