

Public Comments

Local Community Benefits Fund: Round 1

Bay Area Air District

*This document contains public comments submitted to the Bay Area Air District
and is provided for transparency and informational purposes.*

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Valero Fine

From David Moser [REDACTED]

Date Thu 10/23/2025 8:29 AM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

[REDACTED]

Hello,

I understand you're taking public comments for suggestions with respect to the massive Valero fine. My first suggestion would be to directly split it amongst the citizens that live in the effected area. However, I understand that's not how the world works and there's close to zero chance you'd do that.

My second suggestion would be to retain control of that money and invest directly into programs that can quantifiably improve the lives of citizens living in the effected areas (more ferry routes, get BART into Solano County, increase routes for SolTrans). In order to maintain transparency and trust you should be able to clearly demonstrate the investment and the ROI. The more layers you add, the more convoluted tracking the money becomes, the less trust you create.

Sincerely,
David

Outlook

Public Comment - Draft Guidelines Local Community Investment Fund Grant Program for Benicia and Richmond

From Bee Coleman [REDACTED]

Date Wed 11/5/2025 12:29 PM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

[REDACTED]

Hello,

I'm submitting comments as a Housing Policy Fellow with the Partnership for the Bay's Future, supporting affordable developers and local homebuyers in North Richmond with the disposition and redevelopment of the Las Deltas public housing.

One of the developers I'm working with is Richmond LAND, West Contra Costa County's first and only Community Land Trust. CLTs are vital tools in the effort to make housing and homeownership permanently affordable to the lowest income populations

I'd like to surface a potential bottleneck for projects relative to the readiness requirements around permitting. The draft guidelines state that applicants should already have obtained relevant permits and approvals at the time of the application. Understanding the intention that the funds support projects that are permit ready, this requirement stands to present a challenge, if not a barrier, for some efforts that have community support, that may have applied for permits but not yet had them approved or may need time to have their permits processed. Given that the application window is from Feb 2026 to May 2026 but the CIO's timeline projects that work would not commence until sometime in 2027, this requirement discounts time between May 2026 and project commencement during which permits could be processed and approved. Could this requirement be modified to allow for projects that have applied for permits by the time they submit their grant application? Or perhaps allow for permits to be submitted within a set time period (60 days) from application?

I would also like to get some clarity on some of the example eligible projects included in Appendix B. A number of examples speak to residential equipment and features that reduce air pollution or improve climate resilience that seem to be reserved to rental housing. Where the Las Deltas project involves local affordable developers rehabilitating former public housing sites that are in disrepair in order to be sold as affordable homes for ownership versus rentals, I'm wondering if things like weatherizing the homes or installing air filtration features and zero NOx appliances in the rehab so they're included when the homes are sold would be eligible, rather than providing rebates or incentives.

If it would help to hop on a call to discuss I'm happy to set up time. Thanks for your efforts to make this process accessible and informed by the community it's intended to serve.

w/love and gratitude,



Bee Coleman

Housing Authority of Contra Costa County

[Partnership for the Bay's Future](#) Fellow | [Coro Northern California](#)

they/them/theirs



LCBF Draft Guidelines Comments for the CEHJ Committee and Air District Board

From Robert Nickeson [REDACTED]

Date Sun 11/9/2025 9:09 PM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>
[REDACTED]

ToAll:

I propose that the draft guidelines for utilization of the Community Benefits Penalty Funds, going to Benicia, be modified to give the broadest interpretation by the Investment Office as to its stated goals of 1) "building economic resilience", 2) "ensuring investments are aligned with community needs", 3) providing "economic support to communities experiencing the transition from fossil fuels", and 4) promoting "community stabilization".

The guidelines do contain language that supports the proposal that funds could be used for purposes best determined by the affected communities, rather than CIO. However, the language should still be revised to make more explicit, particularly in special circumstances like the economic situation Benicia is facing due to the sudden closure of the Valero refinery, the enablement of a broad category for the use of funds, at the discretion of the affected communities. At the same time, application process should also be simplified and streamlined, to expedite the grant process, and mitigate hardship on affected communities like Benicia.

The refinery's closure, due to the loss of associated tax and enterprise funds, is estimated to produce a \$10-11M annual deficit to Benicia's budget - an almost existential economic crisis for the city. And with the closure, most of the more 'typical' application of the penalty funds, as listed in Appendix B of the guidelines - air quality improvement, air pollution monitoring, and ambient emissions reductions projects • have greatly receded as concerns compared to the economic hardship Benicia faces, thus more emphasis can be given to transitional economic support for resilience, albeit in broader and more explicit terms than mentioned in current document.

Benicia city services that provide amenities such as the community pool, gym, and sports fields, as well as library and community center services, are supported within the city budget, and are in jeopardy due to the anticipated shortfalls mentioned. These all are examples of public health benefits, which is a clearly stated benefit objective for the CBPF. But in strict interpretation and implementation of the current guidelines, it could be very difficult, if not impossible, to help support such amenities with deserved funds.

Benicia has been most affected by the Valero violations, and is also the community most dramatically affected economically by the plant closure. It has even been suggested that the magnitude of the fine may have been at least partly responsible for Valera's decision. In my view, to deny the city some relief, and a path to restoring itself, because of a complex and rigid bureaucratic grant process, would be as neglectful as allowing the violations that prompted the fine to go on for 15 plus years. But I'm hopeful the District and the CIO will find its way to be part of a solution to Benicia's problems, rather than turning a blind eye and deaf ear to the community's requests and suggestions to best target the much deserved, needed, and appropriate, support.

Bob Nickeson

Outlook

Valero Grant distribution

From Bodil Fox [REDACTED]

Date Tue 11/11/2025 3:33 PM

To Marcy Hiratzka <mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov>; Vanessa Johnson <vjohnson@baaqmd.gov>

To the Bay Area Air District,

I am writing to you regarding the disbursement of the penalty funds received from the Valero Refinery in Benicia.

As a retired grants manager, I understand your careful process distributing these funds. It requires careful review and a process that agrees with your purpose and allowable expenses.

As a resident of Benicia, I can observe firsthand the issues that caused the penalty, and I appreciate your willingness to bring some of these funds back to our community to support your purposes. The dilemma, however, is that the need of the community is currently different from your purpose. The City is in transition from fossil fuel dependency to a new economy that does not yet exist. As a funder, I suggest that you review whether your grant monies may include supporting the City as it transitions to its new resilient funding structure and not let it slip into disrepair and closures. Also, as the City expects to cut staff, it would be important to allow Comprehensive Fiscal Sponsorship to help with grant management, including paying the fiscal management fee.

My suggestion is to revisit how you support the affected communities to enable them to successfully transition to a new economy. It is a lot like sending your child to college. A little support up front goes a long way.

Sincerely,
Bodil Fox

Outlook

Support Flexible Catalyst Grants & non-profit Capacity Building for Benicia

From Carrie Rehak [REDACTED]

Date Tue 11/11/2025 6:10 PM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

Cc Marcy Hiratzka <mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov>; Vanessa Johnson <vjohnson@baaqmd.gov>

[REDACTED]

Air Pollution Control Officer
BayArea Air Quality Management District
375 Beale Street, Suite 600
San Francisco, CA 94105

Dear Air Pollution Control Officer and Members of the Board,

I am writing as a Benicia resident to support Mayor Steve Young's proposed amendment to the Draft Guidelines and to urge the Board to approve a flexible allocation mechanism that allows direct funding to the City of Benicia from the up to \$60 million potentially available following the planned closure of the Valero refinery.

Benicia faces a significant fiscal shortfall-local reporting estimates roughly \$10.7 million per year in lost revenue-which threatens municipal services and the City's ability to support a just, locally driven transition. Flexible, direct funding would enable timely measures to stabilize essential services, implement worker adjustment programs, provide community health monitoring, remediate affected sites, and invest in clean energy and resilience initiatives that create local jobs while reducing pollution exposure.

While neighboring communities are eligible for some investments, the City of Benicia has borne the brunt of Valero's pollution over decades. The Draft Guidelines and Draft Call for Projects already support a community-centered approach, emphasizing discretionary Catalyst Grants and illustrative examples rather than prescriptive requirements. This provides the Board with both precedent and flexibility to prioritize the city most directly affected.

I also encourage the inclusion of capacity-building support for local non-profits to ensure smaller organizations in Solano County can access and responsibly manage funds intended for community benefit. Technical assistance, fiscal sponsorship support, simplified application processes, and phased or pilot funding will make these funds effective and equitable.

I urge the Board to:

1. Adopt Mayor Young's amendment allowing flexible, direct allocations to the City of Benicia;
2. Prioritize Catalyst Grant flexibility to stabilize municipal services and support locally led transition projects; and
3. Include capacity-building support for Solano County non-profits with transparent, measurable outcomes for jobs, health, and environmental remediation.

Thank you for your consideration and for supporting Benicia's resilient, community driven transition.

Sincerely,
Dr. Carrie Rehak
Benicia, CA

Outlook

Support Flexible Catalyst Grants & non-profit Capacity Building for Benicia

From Lamie Fox [REDACTED]

Date Tue 11/11/2025 3:35 PM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

Cc Marcy Hiratzka <mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov>

[REDACTED]

Air Pollution Control Officer
Bay Area Air Quality Management District
375 Beale Street, Suite 600
San Francisco, CA 94105

Dear Air Pollution Control Officer and Members of the Board,

I'm writing to support Benicia Mayor Steve Young's proposed amendment to the Guidelines and to urge the Board to approve a flexible allocation mechanism that allows direct funding to the City of Benicia from the up to \$60 million potentially available following the planned closure of the Valero refinery.

Steve Young's proposal rightly recognizes the need for rapid, locally controlled resources to implement a just transition: stabilization of City services to prevent cuts to essential programs and maintain public safety and municipal operations, support for worker adjustment programs where appropriate, targeted assistance for Benicia Industrial Park businesses affected by the closure, community health monitoring and services, environmental remediation and site assessment, and investments in clean energy and resilience that create local jobs while reducing pollution exposure.

The City faces a substantial fiscal shortfall from Valero's wind-down-local reporting estimates roughly \$10.7 million per year in lost revenue-which threatens municipal services and the City's ability to support community transition efforts. Direct, flexible funding to the City would enable timely measures to stabilize municipal budgets, preserve essential services, and implement locally driven transition strategies.

The Draft Guidelines and Draft Call for Projects already contemplate both a Local Community Investment Fund and a Call for Projects covering Benicia and neighboring communities (Rodeo to Pittsburgh). While neighboring communities should be eligible for some investments based on PM2.5 exposure calculations, the Guidelines themselves-most notably the Catalyst Grants category (\$10-40 million) and the prefatory language in staff materials-support a flexible, community centered approach. The draft Guidelines explicitly state that listed project examples are illustrative and not exhaustive, and Board precedent and the stated Fund goals (reducing pollution impacts, improving

public health, and building economic resilience for a just transition) support directing substantial, discretionary funds to the city most directly affected.

Regarding grants to non profits, there is a known phenomenon called the Solano County “doughnut hole.” Solano County 501(c)(3)s have historically received funding at levels only a small fraction of other Bay Area non profits. As former Director of Arts Benicia, a regional non profit arts center based in Benicia, I know first hand about this funding disparity. We are the poorest and most diverse of the nine Bay Area counties, yet we receive the smallest share of grant funding. A recent United Way study shows that although Solano County currently makes up nearly 6% of the Bay Area’s population, it receives less than 1% of nonprofit funding. This imbalance hinders local organizations like Arts Benicia from serving the community effectively. As a result, most of our non profits lack the capacity to manage grants at the scale becoming available.

Therefore I urge the District to include capacity-building grants or grant components—technical assistance, fiscal sponsorship support, phased funding, simplified application processes, and smaller pilot awards—to ensure local non-profits can access and responsibly manage funds intended for community benefit.

For these reasons I urge the Board to:

- Adopt Mayor Young’s amendment allowing flexible, direct allocations to the City of Benicia within the up to \$60 million fund;
- Prioritize Catalyst Grant eligibility and flexibility so the City can both stabilize municipal services and fund locally driven transition projects; and
- Include capacity-building support for Solano County non-profits and require transparent, community-led planning with measurable outcomes for jobs, health protection, and environmental remediation.

Thank you for acting swiftly and equitably to support Benicia through this transition.

Sincerely,
Larnie Fox
[projects](#)

Outlook

Reasons for **flexible** Local Community Benefits Fund support for Benicia's budget

From Stephen Golub [REDACTED]

Date Tue 11/11/2025 6:56 PM

To **BAAQMD** Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>; Marcy Hiratzka <mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov>; Vanessa Johnson <vjohnson@baaqmd.gov>

[REDACTED]

If you could forward this memo to the members of the Community Equity, Health, and Justice Committee, I would greatly appreciate it.

To: Bay Area Air District Community Equity, Health, and Justice Committee; Air District Community Investments Office (CIO)

From: Stephen Golub* [REDACTED]

Date: November 11, 2025

Re: Reasons for flexible Local Community Benefits Fund support for Benicia's budget

With great appreciation for the Air District's and its CIO's important work, I write to respectfully request that the Community Equity, Health, and Justice Committee consider and recommend to the Air District Board of Directors an amendment to the Draft Guidelines for the Local Community Benefits Fund (LCBF) that will allow flexible financial support for Benicia in grappling with the economic and environmental aftermaths of the imminent Valero refinery closure there. I believe that Benicia Mayor Steve Young is making a proposal along those lines at the Committee's November 12 meeting.

I more specifically hope that, given how the closure confronts Benicia with a unique and potentially ruinous budgetary challenge, the Committee will recommend use of a substantial part of the Air District's 2024 Valero fine for general Benicia budget support, free of the Draft Guidelines' co-applicant, measurement and other restrictions that could interfere with the city's effective use of the funding. I offer this suggestion based on my extensive experience, as summarized below,* working on social justice, environmental justice, human rights and grassroots democracy across the globe for leading foundations, governmental funders and other grant-makers, as well as my background teaching at Berkeley Law and publishing widely on these topics

I'm mindful of the top LCBF goal articulated in the Draft Guidelines and other Air District statements: "Reduce air pollution or mitigate air pollution impacts, improve public health outcomes and build economic resilience for a just transition." A city broadly burdened by ongoing air quality and public health harms, and facing a potentially ruinous budget crunch stemming from the closure of the refinery responsible for such harms, merits budgetary support in order to manage that financial shortfall. It further merits interpretation of relevant rules so as to make such support feasible.

This request's basis is manifold:

1. Benicia's unique budgetary burden. The refinery closure - only five months away, if not sooner - imposes at least a [\\$10.7 million annual cut in Benicia revenues](#). That constitutes a substantial chunk of its [\\$58.6 million General Fund annual expenditures](#). Benicia is unique among Air District cities in facing such a daunting financial cliff due to the transition away from petrochemicals. While the city is more prosperous than most of surrounding Solano County (itself the least wealthy Bay Area county), this predominantly working class/middle class community has a [per capita income](#) substantially lower than [most of the Bay Area](#).

2. Benicia's environmental burdens. Thanks to the Air District's current, vigorous leadership and staff, Valero was finally fined for its Benicia refinery's over 15 years of undisclosed toxic emissions, hundreds of times the regulatory limits. (In fact, those emissions were just the tip of the environmental iceberg in view of the refinery's other repeated, serious violations threatening public health and safety.)

It would be ironic if that very punishment for the environmental burdens Valero imposed on Benicia could not be employed to ease the City's resulting, crushing financial burden as it seeks a just transition to economic resilience - including but not limited to protection of its air and public health.

3. Benicia's public health burdens. Drawing on state statistics, a 2018 Solano County report highlighting ["Health Outcomes Data for Benicia"](#) indicates that the city's cancer rates substantially exceed those of California and Solano in several respects, including breast cancer incidence nearly double that of the state. The refinery's at least partial responsibility for this phenomenon is suggested by a plethora of peer-reviewed studies indicating that [leukemia](#) and other [cancer](#) rates are significantly elevated in numerous refinery-adjacent communities elsewhere.

4. Benicia's fights for environmental justice, public health and public safety resonate beyond its borders. The city has done its share to protect both itself and other communities against dangerous, potentially lethal threats to our collective well-being. Most notably, it won a 2012-16 fight against Valero's exhaustive attempt to bring "crude by rail" to Benicia. The plan involved [the transport of two 50-car trains per day carrying 70,000 barrels of crude oil](#) from Canada and North Dakota through Bay Area communities and to Benicia. Valero had sought this despite both a [2013 Quebec disaster](#) in which an oil train's derailment and explosion took 47 lives and many other such derailments in North America, resulting in massive spills and fires.

Particularly in view of the complications that remediation efforts and other developments could entail for air quality and public health, the city's recent passage of its Industrial Safety Ordinance - and resulting establishment of an Industrial Safety Citizen Oversight Commission - further advances the well-being of both Benicia and its neighbors.

5. Additional transition expenses. The aforementioned \$10.7 million estimated annual budgetary shortfall likely errs on the low side, given the range of unanticipated and only partly anticipated expenditures the City may well incur due to remediation oversight, air and ground monitoring, sustainable use development and other costs incurred in the transition, even if some such costs are covered by other sources.

Please also bear in mind Valero's dubious local and national track records with environmental, health and safety compliance, as this holds implications for the need to rigorously oversee its remediation and related efforts. For instance, the arguably petrochemical industry-friendly [Texas Attorney General sued Valero in 2019](#), asserting that, despite earlier federal EPA and state enforcement actions, "defendants' poor operational, maintenance, and design practices continue to cause emissions events and unauthorized emissions of air contaminants from [a Valero Texas] Refinery into the environment."

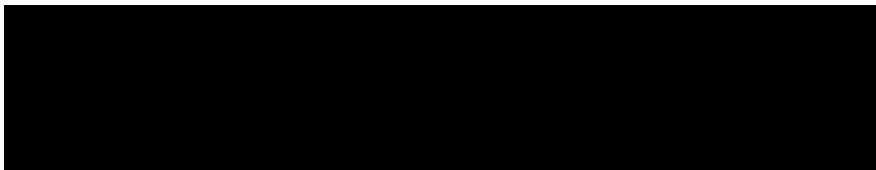
Against this backdrop, I would argue for LCBF budget support of \$9 million per year for five years for Benicia. In terms of the post-Valero shortfall and the city's financial transition extending well beyond that period, this would still leave Benicia responsible for substantial budget cuts, assorted sacrifices and other adjustments over the coming decade.

6. The broader implications for the Bay Area, California and the country. Benicia's fate could well resonate beyond this one city and even the Bay Area. Particularly in view of the national context, many communities seeking or pursuing shifts away from influence by and dependence on polluting industries will seek examples of whether current transitions, such as Benicia's, sink or swim. With relatively modest Air District funding, available precisely because of the harms the city has suffered, Benicia could become a beacon for enhanced air quality, improved public health, just transitions and economic resilience. Without such support, the city could deteriorate to become a warning sign against other communities seeking sustainability and economic independence.

Thank you for considering these points, which I offer with full recognition of other Air District communities' own health, environmental and economic challenges and without seeking to blame the refinery's many good employees for decisions made in its San Antonio headquarters.

I hope that you will take these matters into account in your recommending to the Board flexible LCBF budget support for Benicia under its unique financial circumstances. Such a decision will benefit not just Benicia, but the Bay Area and potentially other cities seeking just transitions elsewhere.

*Stephen Golub has headed or conducted global reviews of Ford and Open Society Foundation programs featuring social, environmental and economic justice; equity and human right priorities; indigenous and other minority people's rights; and related topics. He has similarly led and conducted research and consultancies on such matters for several UN bodies, including the Office of the Secretary-General; the Danish, UK and US aid agencies; and several policy institutes such as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. This has in turn involved research about and working with numerous grassroots groups and networks doing rights-oriented work, including currently as an advisor for the largest such global network. A Harvard Law School graduate, he has taught about these topics at Berkeley Law, the Central European University School of Public Policy and other academic institutions, as well as edited several volumes and published widely on them.



Outlook

Benicia and Air District adoption of Draft Guidelines/Call for Projects

From Dana Green [REDACTED]

Date Tue 11/11/2025 5:29 PM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

Cc [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Hello:

We respectfully request that the Bay Area Air District Community Equity, Health, and Justice Committee board seriously consider revising current Draft Guidelines in order to allow Benita access to funds from the Valero lawsuit on undisclosed toxic emissions.. We request a change to the Draft guidelines so that Benicia can receive a share of \$45 million. Thank you for consideration and for your service.

Dana and Jim Green

[REDACTED]

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves.

Maria Rilke

Outlook

Draft Guidelines

From E Eileen Nolan [REDACTED]

Date Wed 11/12/2025 7:46 AM

To BMQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

Cc mhiratzks@baaqmd.gov <mhiratzks@baaqmd.gov>

[REDACTED]

I am asking that you consider strongly giving the majority of the funds from the fines imposed by the Air District board to Valero.

As a very small city, Benicia had less ability to deal with the impacts both of the years of pollution caused by Valero and the adjustments that Benicia will face when Valero closes.

Benicia already suffers much higher cancer rates than neighboring cities. As a city, the impacts of the closure of Valero will take years adjustment. Receiving up to \$10 million a year for 5 years will allow the city the time to develop new and cleaner industries. It will also allow the city to participate and monitor in any clean up that will undoubtedly be needed.

Thank you for your attention

Eileen Nolan
[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

Benicia Needs Your Help in Becoming Healthy

From Janet Leventhal [REDACTED]

Date Wed 11/12/2025 10:15 PM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

Cc syoung@ci.benicia.ca.us <syoung@ci.benicia.ca.us>; Kari Birdseye-Council <kbirdseye@ci.benicia.ca.us>; TScott@ci.benicia.ca.us <TScott@ci.benicia.ca.us>

[REDACTED]

To the Air District and Community Investments Board Members,

I am a retired Kaiser Vallejo physician and Benicia resident for 35 years. During my time at Vallejo I saw a lot of the consequences of our local pollution: asthma, chronic lung disease and cancers. My son's soccer team was all on inhalers. The 60 million fine is meant to remediate the many years of pollution hidden from our town. We need a simple way to access that funding.

With Vallero leaving, we will have a lot of that pollution left behind. Since Vallero was a big part of our tax base, the city will have Vallero legacy problems to deal with but none of their tax base to run the city. I attended the BAAD meeting on November 12 and heard what seems like a complicated proposal for accessing the 60 million in funds. We are a small town with very few employees. I do not think that we have the city employees to write grant proposals that larger cities might have.

Please accept Mayor Young's proposal. With funds that support our employees we can develop the programs to remediate the pollution and support our health. Without the funds to support our city structure, our residents will continue to live with the legacy of Vallero's pollution. We need your support to make Benicia a healthy place to live.

Sincerely,

Janet Leventhal MD
[REDACTED]

Outlook

Nonprofit Capacity-Building Funds for Solano County

From Lamie Fox [REDACTED]

Date Wed 11/12/2025 11:50 AM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Air Pollution Control Officer
Bay Area Air Quality Management District
375 Beale Street, Suite 600
San Francisco, CA 94105

Dear Air Pollution Control Officer and Members of the Board,

I write to urge the Air District to set aside dedicated funding within the Local Community Investment Fund-either as a grant category or required grant component-for nonprofit capacity building in Solano County, and specifically for Benicia area organizations. I wrote about this previously as part of a longer email, but I want to especially raise awareness about this particular issue.

There is a known phenomenon called the Solano County "doughnut hole." Solano County 501(c)(3)s have historically received foundation and philanthropic funding at levels only a small fraction of other Bay Area counties. As former Director of Arts Benicia, a regional nonprofit arts center based in Benicia, I know first-hand about this funding disparity. We are the poorest and most diverse of the nine Bay Area counties, yet we receive the smallest share of grant funding. One study from the 2010s showed San Francisco received roughly \$1,200 per capita in foundation grant support while Solano County received about \$3 per capita; more recent regional analyses continue to show Solano trailing other Bay Area counties on philanthropic dollars per capita.

As a result, most of our nonprofits lack the administrative, financial, and programmatic capacity to manage grants at the scale now becoming available through the Local Community Investment Fund and Catalyst Grants. Without targeted capacity building, large awards risk being inaccessible to the very community based organizations best positioned to deliver locally trusted services and to ensure equitable outcomes.

I therefore request the Board to include one or more of the following in the Guidelines and Call for Projects:

- A dedicated capacity building set aside (e.g., 5-10% of funds or a minimum allotment) targeted to Solano County nonprofits;

- Grant components that fund technical assistance, fiscal sponsorship, and back-office support to enable small nonprofits to manage larger awards;
- Phased funding options and smaller pilot grants to build track record and administrative systems before large disbursements;
- Simplified application tracks and reduced match requirements for historically underfunded Solano County organizations; and
- Requirements or incentives for larger grantees to partner with and subgrant to local nonprofits, including mandated capacity-building partnerships.

These measures would increase equity, expand the pool of qualified local implementers, and improve the likelihood that funds achieve measurable community benefits. They would also respond directly to the Solano County funding gap and help ensure that local nonprofit institutions can partner with the City of Benicia to implement workforce supports, business assistance for Benicia Industrial Park firms, community health monitoring, environmental remediation, and other transition priorities.

Thank you for considering this targeted approach to ensure that regional investments reach and are effective for the communities most affected.

Sincerely,

Larnie Fox
[projects](#)

Outlook

Benicia's future

From JOHN BARRETT [REDACTED]

Date Thu 11/13/2025 11:42 AM

To Marcy Hiratzka <mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov>; Vanessa Johnson <vjohnson@baaqmd.gov>

Dear BAAQMD,

Please help Benicia survive the devastating loss of revenue from Valero's departure. As you know, we have unknowingly been poisoned (way above the legal limits) for the last 15 years. Now we're being abandoned. Shouldn't Benicia be the primary beneficiary for the settlement you received on our behalf? I watched the October 29 webinar with the Air District's Community Investments Office, and was alarmed at the presenters seeming disinterest in our specific plight. Since Valero is leaving us, doesn't that cover "...solutions that reduce or mitigate air pollution"? So clearly "...build economic resilience for a just transition." is where Benicia needs the help. We got a one-two punch from Valero - can you please help this small town recover with some dignity

Thank you,
John Barrett
[REDACTED]

Path To Clean Air (PTCA) Community Steering Committee's (CSC) Public Comment on the Community Benefits Fund (CBF)

Introduction

- Our Community Steering Committee (CSC) comprises local community members who live, work, and study in Richmond, North Richmond, and San Pablo. We envision a future with clean, healthy air. Through the California Assembly Bill (AB) 617 mandate to address environmental injustice and reduce emissions, we developed the Path To Clean Air (PTCA) plan to implement our vision for the Richmond, North Richmond, and San Pablo area. To address environmental injustice, our PTCA plan recommended that our community should benefit directly from air polluter penalties with the creation of a Community Benefits Fund program. Our CSC has created a Community Benefits Standing Committee (CBSC) as a mechanism for active participation in the creation and implementation of the program.
- The Bay Area Air District's Board of Directors approved the creation of a Community Investment Office (CIO) to manage community benefit funds, and its respective officer, Emi Wang, has drafted grant fund guidelines. In our role as community advocates, residents, leaders, and Community Steering Committee members, we are submitting public comments on the draft guidelines to ensure a community-centered approach that empowers existing local community organizations and institutions to further environmental justice work and address air pollution impacts.

Feedback on the CBF Goals and Strategies

JUST TRANSITION

- The CSC commends the Community Investment Office (CIO) on elevating the importance of a *just transition* for the Richmond/North Richmond/San Pablo area.
- The CSC urges the CIO to further mainstream the following *just transition principles*, per the PTCA Implementation Plan:
 1. Safeguard Community Health and Environment Across Generations
 2. Transition Workers to Clean, Green, Just Jobs
 3. Invest in Communities Impacted by Extraction
 4. Strengthen Enforcement, Refinery Safety, and Government Accountability
 5. Fund Just and Community-Led Clean Energy and Resilient Infrastructure
 6. Align Deep Democracy and Community-Driven Governance with Living Systems
 7. Prioritize Reparations, Toxic Cleanup, and Ecosystem Restoration
 8. Advance Transportation Justice and Build Walkable, Bikeable, Transit-Rich Communities

9. Uplift Culture, Ceremony, Intersectionality, and Leadership From Frontline Communities

- *The Application Process:* The CSC recommends that applicants be asked to make the case for how their project advances one or more of the Just Transition principles.

HOLISTIC RESILIENCE

- The CSC encourages the CIO to broaden the goal of economic resilience in the Richmond/North Richmond/San Pablo area to building *holistic resilience*, encompassing climate and environmental resilience as well as social and cultural resilience.
- The CSC similarly encourages the CIO to broaden the focus on “economic recovery and development” plans to support not only “healthy communities and economic resilience” but also *climate resilience and environmental justice*.

PROVEN, SYSTEMIC STRATEGIES

- The CSC is concerned about the CIO’s focus on innovative projects. Innovation should no doubt be rewarded where relevant, but *strategies known to be effective (e.g., proven by evidence or experience) should be prioritized*. Frontline communities and their organizations know what works and should not be forced to recreate the wheel.
- The CSC agrees with the CIO’s focus on integrated projects, and believes that greater clarity on what this means would be helpful. Projects should *collaborate with multiple sectors to work systemically*, as relevant, *to address multiple, linked needs or issues*.
- The CSC agrees with the CIO’s focus on results, but recommends amending the language – “projects must demonstrably provide positive impacts on health and/or wellbeing” by adding “*or contribute to positive impacts*” in order to accommodate social and cultural resilience projects, including critical education and awareness raising, that may not fit neatly into public health or economic resilience strategies.

Centering the Most Impacted in the CBF

ORGANIZATIONAL ELIGIBILITY AND READINESS

- The CSC believes that CBF funds should *prioritize granting funds* – across all three grant categories– to *community-based organizations (CBOs)*, environmental justice (EJ) coalitions, non-profit organizations, and BIPOC-led (Black Indigenous People of Color) organizations, as well as educational or public institutions that directly serve frontline communities. The CIO should *empower these groups to be Lead Applicants on Catalyst and Opportunity grants by progressively building their capacity* to take on the administrative and financial responsibilities therein. Otherwise, many of these groups may only be competitive for the Seed grant category.
- The CSC is *concerned about the management capacity requirements*, in particular, the focus on demonstrating a track record of delivering complex projects of similar size and scope. The CSC *recommends flexibility on this requirement for Seed grants* to create opportunities for CBO growth.

- While the CSC agrees that a Lead Applicant should *demonstrate their financial capacity* to manage the grant by providing an organizational budget and recent financial statements, we feel that this is *an onerous requirement for Co-Applicants*.
- The CSC urges the CIO to *eliminate the permits and approvals requirement*. Calling out the need to already have permits lined up is unreasonable and prohibitive if an organization has limited funds or bandwidth.

COMMUNITY APPROPRIATE

- The CSC urges the CIO to thoughtfully *promote the opportunity with priority eligible CBOs* (see above) with as much lead time as possible to enable them to prepare quality applications. This should involve targeted outreach, multilingual information sessions, and accessible materials. A Community Interest Board or an online collaboration page (e.g., Mosaic) might be a useful way to generate and iterate on project ideas and germinate relevant partnerships.
- The CSC recommends complementing the focus on quantitative metrics with *qualitative methods*, such as “most transformative change” interviews and outcome harvesting. Moreover, the CSC urges the CIO to invest in *network-building, mutual learning, and capacity-sharing opportunities* for grantees to support reflection and share lessons as well as capture stories and best practices that can drive continuous improvement over the life of the projects and unleash ongoing collaborations after CBF grants have concluded.

EQUITY FOCUSED

- The CSC encourages the CIO to seek out applicants that go beyond “the community scale” to focus on the *understanding, opportunities, and leadership of the most vulnerable and impacted* community members to reduce inequitable access to information, inequitable exposure and inequitable health outcomes.
- The CSC recommends incorporating a focus on local workforce development, i.e., the building of *green economy skills for Richmond/San Pablo residents* (including not only current fossil fuel workers (some of whom do not reside in the region) but also BIPOC, immigrant, underemployed, unemployed, formerly incarcerated, youth, and disabled community members) and small businesses.
- The CSC also urges the CIO to offer *timely technical assistance to under-resourced CBOs* wishing to apply. This could include: office hours and application workshops; provision of sample templates for budgets, workplans, and evaluation metrics; translation and accessibility support services; and responsive communications channels for questions and troubleshooting.
- The CSC encourages the CIO to *add training and capacity strengthening activities to the eligible costs*. This will enable CBO staff and/or community members to increase capacity for both the delivery of project objectives and long-term effectiveness. The CSC also recommends *amending the grant payment process from a quarterly reimbursement basis to a biannual, budget-based funding model*. Quarterly reimbursement-based funding requires grantees to spend excessive time managing invoices and receipts, a distraction from programming. Similarly, in an effort to help smaller CBOs cover

overhead and other costs critical to programmatic delivery, the CSC *recommends increasing the maximum indirect cost rate from 12% to 15%*, which is more common among other government grant guidelines.

THE ROLE OF THE CSC

- The CSC advocates for at least one of its members to be *guaranteed a spot on the Community Review Panel*. Additional CSC members may apply and the CSC encourages the CIO to consider them equally. CSC participation in the application review panel will ensure that community voices shape funding priorities and influence grantee selection.
- Based on diverse engagements with the San Pablo / Richmond community since the establishment of the CSC, we offer the following *prioritization of grant categories*:

Prioritization	Project Category	Example Projects
1	Public Health Programs, including Residential Ventilation and Air Filtration	Asthma prevention, wellness clinics, and pollution exposure reduction; HVAC upgrades, community air filters, and clean air centers.
2	Urban Greening	Tree planting, shade infrastructure, community gardens, community-based restoration and land back initiatives.
3	Public, Active, and Shared Transportation	Clean mobility, bike/pedestrian safety, and transit access improvements.
4	Place-Making Projects	Cultural hubs, resilience centers, community education, awareness-raising, empowerment, and art- or design-based interventions.
5	Planning and Development, including Research and Innovation	Community-led planning, feasibility, and design studies; community air monitoring, local data systems, and pilot technologies.

Appendix: Just Transition Principles

Just Transition Principles

Just Transition is not a policy. It's a community-led movement to protect our people, heal our lands, and transform the systems that no longer serve us. These principles are meant to guide and sustain the Richmond-North Richmond-San Pablo Path to Clean Air (PTCA) Community Steering Committee's (CSC) strategy for managing a phase-down of the fossil fuel industry and centering the well being of front line communities and workers. The following principles were developed by the Just Transition Standing Committee and adopted by the CSC. Throughout these principles, the term "we" refers to the CSC as a collective body.

1. Safeguard Community Health and Environment Across Generations

We seek to protect the health of **frontline communities** and workers by addressing the cumulative impacts of pollution, enforcing safety standards, and investing in systems of care that prioritize the most exposed and vulnerable.

We prioritize restoring the health of land, air, water, and all living beings, recognizing that community well-being depends on ecosystems, from soil microbes to songbirds.

2. Transition Workers to Clean, Green, Just Jobs

We demand that workers leaving the fossil fuel industry, and local residents of all ages and backgrounds, can access family-sustaining, **clean energy**, and **regenerative economy** jobs.

We firmly reject all forms of exploitation of workers, communities, and ecosystems.

3. Invest in Communities Impacted by Extraction

We demand direct investment into the communities most harmed by fossil fuel pollution, toxic industries, and disinvestment. Our communities deserve sustained investment to build vibrant, equitable, and sustainable local economies.

We support community-led development rooted in local ownership, **cooperative models**, and ecological sustainability, and actions that ensure future generations inherit a community in which everyone can live well and thrive.

4. Strengthen Enforcement, Refinery Safety, and Government Accountability

We expect regulatory agencies, including the **Bay Area Air District**, and the municipal governments of Richmond, San Pablo, and Contra Costa County, to be fully accountable and transparent with local residents regarding the protection of community safety and health. We demand that polluting industries strictly comply with all rules and regulations set by local governments and agencies.

We seek fair taxes and increased penalties on industries that harm our communities, and demand strong enforcement of protections that uphold environmental, labor, and public health standards.

5. Fund Just and Community-Led **Clean Energy and Resilient Infrastructure**

We support *"polluters pay" principles*, including upfront taxes and fines to fund community-owned resources, resilient local infrastructure, and projects that repair historical harm.

We demand revenue be equitably directed to our frontline and impacted communities to support *energy democracy*, regenerative local production, and resilience.

6. Align *Deep Democracy* and Community-Driven Governance with Living Systems

We guide our Just Transition using principles rooted in *deep democracy* and *bottom-up organizing*, where decision-making is led by those most impacted in local communities and stakeholders, not corporations or government.¹

We seek to re-localize governance, ensuring that community health, well-being, and *intergenerational justice* are at the center of every decision.

7. Prioritize Reparations, Toxic Cleanup, and Ecosystem Restoration

We prioritize repairing the harms caused by pollution and extraction through explicit *reparations*, which include toxic cleanup, land and water restoration, and community healing.

We respect and honor *Tribal sovereignty*, lift up *Land Back* efforts, and support the restoration of cultural practices and stories harmed or erased by systems of oppression.

8. Advance Transportation Justice and Build Walkable, Bikeable, Transit-Rich Communities

We seek to build a community with accessible, affordable, and safe public mass transit, bikeable streets, and walkable neighborhoods.

We understand transportation as a public good and demand systems that prioritize community health, reduce pollution, and serve the needs of our youth, elders, and people of all abilities.

9. Uplift Culture, Ceremony, Intersectionality, and Leadership From Frontline Communities

We move beyond policy to nurture healing, joy, and cultural transformation in our communities.

We nurture our cultures and spirits through song, ceremony, storytelling, and play, resisting the forces of consumerism and empire.

We embrace *intersectionality*, complexity, and diversity, and affirm the leadership of queer, trans, disabled, immigrant, BIPOC, women, youth, elders, and all frontline leaders as central to our vision of a regenerative future.

Appendix

Definitions

Bay Area Air District (Air District): The regional air pollution control agency with jurisdiction over the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, Santa Clara, San Mateo, and the southern portions of Solano and Sonoma counties. The Air District oversees policies and adopts regulations for the control of air pollution from stationary sources, adopts clean air plans, offers incentives for emission reductions from mobile sources, enforces air quality rules, and collects, monitors, and models air quality data.²

Bottom-up Organizing: Bottom-up organizing centers on those most affected by an issue, particularly the voices that are often overlooked. It empowers community members at the grassroots level to lead and shape decision-making, in contrast to decisions being imposed from the top down.³

Clean Energy: Energy produced from renewable, non-polluting sources that does not contribute to environmental degradation and exploitation.⁴

Cooperative Models: Organizational structures where businesses are owned and operated by their members, who then share responsibilities and profits.⁵

Deep Democracy: A governance model emphasizing inclusivity and respect for all voices, especially marginalized groups, in decision-making processes.⁶

Energy Democracy: advocating for community control over energy resources and systems, promoting equitable access, sustainable energy, and local jobs.⁷

Frontline Communities: Frontline communities are those that experience “first and worst” the consequences of climate change. These are communities of color and low-income, whose neighborhoods often lack basic infrastructure to support them, and who will be increasingly vulnerable as our climate deteriorates.⁸

Intergenerational Justice: The value that decisions made today should take into account their long-term effects on future generations.⁹

Intersectionality: A framework that considers how different aspects of a person's identity (such as race, gender, class, and sexuality) overlap and intersect, creating unique forms of oppression or privilege.¹⁰

Land Back: A movement that advocates for the return of land to Indigenous peoples, acknowledging the importance of tribal sovereignty and reparative justice.¹¹

Polluters Pay Principles: The concept that companies or entities responsible for environmental pollution should be financially liable for the damage they cause and fund the cleanup.¹²

Regenerative Economy: Creating economic systems that not only minimize harm but also actively restore and enhance ecological and social well-being.¹³

Reparations: Compensation or restitution made for past injustices, particularly in the context of social, racial, and environmental harms.¹⁴

Tribal Sovereignty: The inherent authority of Indigenous tribes to govern themselves, make decisions, and manage their own affairs without external interference from governments.¹⁵

Endnotes

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Outlook

Comment on Valero fine application guidelines

From Richard Fleming [REDACTED]

Date Fri 11/14/2025 8:54 AM

To Marcy Hiratzka <mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov>; Vanessa Johnson <vjohnson@baaqmd.gov>

Hi Ms. Hiratzka and Ms. Johnson,

I am writing you with my comment about the application guidelines for disbursement of funds from the Valero fine. Please forward my comment to SAAD Board members who are involved in finalizing the guidelines.

I am a 32-year resident of Benicia and a retired internist. I am also an adjunct faculty member at Toure College of Osteopathic Medicine. I attended the Wednesday, November 12, committee meeting via zoom, and I greatly appreciate the time and attention that everyone at the Air District is investing in making sure the process for distributing funds from the Valero fine is appropriate and effective.

I strongly support Mayor Steve Young's amendment to the application process and want to offer a few points to explain why:

1. The city of Benicia's request for funding to help defray the budget shortfall caused by Valero's closing and to serve as a bridge to the future falls squarely under the criteria that SAAD developed for applying for funds. Specifically, funds designated to the city government would help with community stabilization, advance economic diversification that supports the transition away from fossil fuels, and aid economic recovery and development planning that prioritizes healthy communities and economic resilience.

2. It cannot be emphasized enough that Benicia residents have borne significant non-financial costs from Valero's operations over the past 25 years, and over the preceding years that prior operators ran the refinery. Our rates of breast cancer, lung cancer, and prostate cancer are higher than the average rates experienced by both Solano County and California as a whole. This fits with data from multiple medical studies which confirms that refinery towns experience higher than expected cancer incidence. And it needs to be noted that our increased cancer risks will not end when Valero closes. The medical impact of years of exposure to toxic emissions in our air will continue for years to come, long after the emissions themselves are gone. This is because the carcinogenic effects of our current and past exposures can take time to manifest in an actual cancer.

3. Our city government's shortfall, if not addressed, will lead to significant problems in public health for our community. Our park system, city recreational facilities, city services including fire and police, and other services vital to a healthy community will suffer. Our ability to transition away from fossil fuels will be severely impacted. It is not our city government's fault that there

will be a budget shortfall. The problem stems entirely from Valero's closure. It is very appropriate that the Valero fine be used in part to address this shortfall.

4. The Benicia city government, like every city government, already works in partnership with many other organizations and groups, which could generally fit the definition of "Co-Applicants." The main problem with the current application process is the amount of documentation required. It would be extremely challenging for our city government and the other groups it works with day-in and day-out to meet the current documentation and monitoring requirements required by the current guidelines. It is very appropriate for BAAD to not hand the city of Benicia a check and not expect a careful and reasonable accounting of how the money was used specifically to meet the goals for the grant. I'm sure the city government would provide a good and careful accounting to confirm the fine money was being used appropriately and wisely.

Thank you very much for your work and efforts to support clean air for our communities.

Richard Fleming, M.D.

Public comment letter on draft CIO grant guidelines

From Niyi Omotoso [REDACTED]

Date Sun 11/16/2025 8:01 AM

To **BAAQMD** Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

Cc [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Good morning Community Investments Office staff,

As a community member, public health professional and physician, I'm excited about the work ahead. These upcoming investments present a great opportunity to model for the Bay Area and region at-large, how as we work together as a community with Air District to start addressing the environmental, health and social justice needs for the most impacted frontline communities here in Richmond. Being very aware that we cannot separate the interconnectedness of those 3 issues, I emphasize the need for funding distribution and project selection process reflect these issues in an all-inclusive manner.

Three areas I implore CIO to explicitly address include:

- Community engagement - CIO needs to tap into existing community leaders at this early juncture to increase awareness of CIO work and welcome community participation in the planning process. Concern that many grassroots community groups and organizations are still unaware of the CIO and this ongoing public comment period. Existing Air District communication methods are not effective in reaching our communities, and CIO must engage with community leaders to learn how to do so. This is critical to ensure community organizations already doing this work benefit from the funding programs.
- Minimizing bureaucracy - I support CIO's goal of funding smaller community organizations, and we need to go further to ensure most of the larger funding categories applicable and easily accessible. CIO should prioritize providing technical support not limited to office hours and workshops on grant application, fund deliverables and reporting, making sure community organizations do not bear undue burden that detracts from focus on the actual impactful work.
- Holistic focus on funding priorities should explicitly include ongoing educational and resilience building projects being carried out by our local community-based organizations and educational institutions to raise community literacy around air quality improvement, community empowerment in climate justice, and pathways to active civic work

Looking forward to being actively engaged with this work as a community member in ways that our community benefits and is an active partner throughout the phases. Greatly appreciated.

Omoniye Omotoso, MD, FAAP, MPH

Pediatrician, Public Health professional & Co-Lead AB617 Richmond-North Richmond-San Pablo
Community Steering Committee

Comments on the Bay Air District's Local Community Benefits Fund Grant Guidelines and the City of Benicia

From Bob Sachs [REDACTED]

Date Mon 11/17/2025 4:46 PM

To mhiratzkha@baaqmd.gov <mhiratzkha@baaqmd.gov>; Vanessa Johnson <vjohnson@baaqmd.gov>; BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

Cc syoung@ci.benicia.ca.us <syoung@ci.benicia.ca.us>; Terry Scott <tscott@ci.benicia.ca.us>; Mario Giuliani <MGiuliani@ci.benicia.ca.us>

[REDACTED]

My name is Bob Sachs and I have lived in Benicia for 20+ years. I was on Zoom for the meeting on November 12th during the latest presentation of grant guidelines for the \$60M benefit funds followed by comments by Mayor Young of Benicia and many others. I spent most of my career consulting with and working inside organizations on leadership and organizational issues. I am offering several comments based on my experience. I would appreciate you sharing these comments with all of the BAAQMD members.

I am impressed by the focus of the BAAQMD to seek "integrated projects that would holistically meet community needs" This collaborative approach has the potential to solve difficult problems, When successful they can deliver high impact, innovative solutions. I am also aware of how difficult it is to deliver on this promise. I have published and taught extensively on issues of collaboration, especially on working across organizational boundaries. Engaging in integrated work requires time for the groups who work together to envision and agree to a shared purpose. They then need to identify the relevant expertise each offers and the respective roles they will play. This usually requires them to work through some conflicts to agree on how resources will be allocated to support the work. Because issues will surface as the effort moves forward a process for managing and governing the work also needs to be defined. Collaborative work that fails to build this foundation will flounder, fail to achieve the desired results or end in failure. The proposal guidelines do not allow for this process to develop. They are written more for internal, pre-defined, end to end projects, with all players and roles determined, budgets allocated and key milestones identified. I recommend that the guidelines either be revised to reflect what is required to successfully deliver "integrated projects" or that the project request be simplified to be more consistent with the guidelines as written.

I would also suggest that Mayor Young's request for exception from the guidelines is appropriate given the high impact of Valero's departure on the Benicia budget. This budget loss will impact city services AND it will impact the city's ability to respond to the grant request to access the dollars intended to help Benicia get through this difficult period. If the grant guidelines are not modified in the way suggested, Benicia cannot be expected to reasonably apply and participate in an integrated project.

My last leadership role while still working was as National Vice President of Learning and Leadership Development at Kaiser Permanente. The book I co-authored (From Competition to Collaboration) was 34

focused on leaders working across the health ecosystem to improve the health of communities. In retirement I continue to focus on that ecosystem including as a board member and former chair, now secretary of the not for profit We Care Services for Children and a commissioner on the Community Services Commission in Benicia. As a result, I have a broad view of what it takes to create and maintain a healthy community. Some of the conversation on 11/12 covered how broadly the BAAD's grant should be applied to support healthy communities. A framework known as the Well-Being Portfolio from the Rippel Foundation has been very helpful in my work and thinking. It is used by many cities and groups to assess the health of their area and to make improvements. The portfolio includes investments in humane housing, a thriving natural world (including clean air, water, and soil), reliable transportation and services like homelessness support, environmental cleanup, unemployment and food assistance services and finally efforts to strengthen belonging and civic muscle. I bring this up because many of the speakers at the recent meeting expressed concern that the departure of Valero threatens the health of Benicia. I agree with that assessment. Valera's exit impacts the Benicia budget directly through the taxes it pays and through revenues lost by businesses in the Benicia community that also pay taxes to the city. Valero has also been made grants to many of the not for profits that provide services that are included in the Vital Conditions. So, while there is no question that Valera's departure will have a negative impact on the investments and services that make Benicia a thriving and healthy place to live, members of the committee and, I believe an attorney associated with the group, spent part of the time discussing the mission of the BAAD and how broadly the term health should be interpreted in providing grants. It is an important question. I believe that too narrow an interpretation of mission would under utilize the dollars from the settlement. Can the money that has been received be spent for projects that meet the most narrow definition of the BAAD's purpose? Perhaps more importantly, even if the money can, is that the highest and best use of those dollars or would that narrow application deprive the impacted communities of significant benefit. I don't believe the mission should be used as a threshold or limit. It is a factor to be considered, and perhaps not the most important factor. I suggest that in evaluating proposals the group look at these dimensions on a 2x2 matrix. (You could also decide to weight them, in which case I would weight impact higher than mission):

Consistency with BAAD mission (1-10)

Impact on the health of the community (1-10)

I appreciate you taking the time to read my note and I would welcome any comments or questions. Again, I ask that you please share this with other members of the BAAQMD board.

Respectfully,
Robert H. Sachs, PhD

Outlook

Feedback on the Draft Guidelines for the Local Community Benefits Fund for Benicia

From Allison Nagel [REDACTED]

Date Tue 11/18/2025 11:06 AM

To **BAAQMD** Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

[REDACTED]

BAAD Community Investments Office team,

We would like to comment on the 12% limit on indirect costs for the Draft Local Community Investment Fund guidelines. While we appreciate that the air district is allowing some indirect costs, that amount is below what most nonprofits identify as their overhead expense needed to operate a program.

This is why the federal government increased its de minimus rate in 2004 from 10% to 15% on modified total direct costs. However, you will note that organizations that work with nonprofits have determined that even this amount is low. The MacArthur Foundation found through researching healthy nonprofits that their minimum indirect cost rate was 29%.

We would ask that the air district consider a higher rate for indirect costs to more closely align with the true cost of offering programming. If the air district does not increase the allowable limit, we would like to see if the guidelines could include an option of negotiating an indirect rate above that limit based on a documented, audited general and administrative rate for an organization.

Thank you for your consideration,
The team at Sustainable Solano

Allison Nagel

Co-Executive Director

Sustainable Solano

[REDACTED]
She/Her

Nurturing Initiatives for the Good of the Whole

[REDACTED]

Outlook

Comments on Bay Area Air District Community Equity, Health and Justice Committee proposed guidelines for use of Valero settlement funds

From Richard Slizeski [REDACTED]

Date Tue 11/18/2025 12:44 PM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

Cc Marcy Hiratzka <mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov>; Vanessa Johnson <vjohnson@baaqmd.gov>

Dear Air District Community Investments Office,

I am a resident of Benicia, California and am submitting comments on the Bay Area District Community Equity, Health and Justice Committee draft guidelines as applicable to the distribution of Valero's \$82 million fine/settlement.

During the November 12, 2025 public meeting Benicia Mayor Steve Young proposed \$50 million be provided to Benicia over a 5 year period, with half of that money to be allocated directly to the City to partially make up for the anticipated \$11-12 million annual budgetary shortfall resulting from Valero's decision to close its refinery next spring. I fully support Mayor Young's proposal, and, if anything think \$10 million of the Valero settlement funds should be allocated to the City of Benicia annually for the next five years to cover the budget deficit.

Last year Benicia proposed a city ordinance to monitor Valero's emissions and fine them when those emissions exceeded acceptable limits. In response, Valero notified the City it would close the refinery if the ordinance was enacted. Shortly after the Benicia City Council voted to enact the ordinance Valero announced it would be closing the refinery by no later than April 2026. As a result, the City of Benicia is being financially punished for acting to improve local air quality.

California Health and Safety Code

Outlook

Comment for the Draft Guidelines for the Local Communities Benefits Fund (LCBF)

From Pat Toth-Smith [REDACTED]

Date Wed 11/19/2025 2:01 PM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

@ 1 attachment (48 KB)

Dear Community Investments Board Members,.pdf;

November 19, 2025

Dear Community Investments Board Members,

As a Benicia resident, I'm requesting a wider approach to the Grant application process for the Local Communities Benefits Fund (LCBF). Benicia residents have been exposed to over 15 years of Valeros' toxic chronic air leaks of undisclosed chemicals, a hundred times the regulatory limits. Being a parent of a Benicia cross-country team student-runner I've witnessed my daughter suffer Asthma and then chronic nose bleeds until she went off to college in Santa Cruz Ca.

Benicia and Solano County has an average Asthma rate of 13.4%, compared to the 9% Ca.statewide rate *from the CDPH graph sheet for 2012-2022. We also have higher Lung, Breast, and Prostate Cancer rates than the state of California and as a Hospice Nurse who helped Benicians be more comfortable for the last stage of their lives, I witnessed the effects of toxic chemicals on our bodies.

With Valero starting the process of "Winding Down" its Benicia operations in April, this process could lead to more toxics being released into our atmosphere. Valero being the second refinery to occupy this space; buried accumulated oil, previous chemical spills and other toxic pieces of equipment etc. will need to be removed besides the functioning equipment.

For these reasons, I'm requesting that the board consider Supervisor John Gioia's Amendment to provide the city of Benicia, \$5 million per year for 5 years, to offset the expenses of Valero's closure process.

It's critical that we have more robust Air Monitoring, including an Optical Tent Air Monitoring System over the refinery and asphalt sites to quickly identify new leaks and repair them in real time. The new Benicia ISO commission is working on a comprehensive air monitoring system which should include this, and will also have an increased emergency notification system. Another needed safety resource is the continued funding of the Benicia Fire Department with their special skills, as the potential risk of oil fires remain. With the recent Martinez fire which

was put out in a timely manner, we were minimally impacted. But it could be very different if a fire happened at the clean up sites here.

The ISO was slated to be funded through the city, by the industrial industries, in which Valero should be considered to be one until the clean up is completed. But here in Benicia do not know how long Valero will be involved in providing funding.

Our Health and Safety in Benicia is still at a considerable risk, and I hope the Board evaluates all the input from our community, when they set up the final grant application guidelines. And please consider the Amendment to the grant process.

Thank you, Pat Toth-Smith Benicia resident email: [REDACTED]

The letter is also available in the attachments

Comments re Local Community Benefits Fund Draft Guidelines and Request for Flexible Approach

From Betty Lucas [REDACTED]

Date Thu 11/20/2025 2:57 PM

To **BAAQMD** Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

To: Bay Area Air District,

Benicia has lived in the shadow of refinery operations since the late 1960s. first Humble Oil, then Exxon, and since 2000, Valero. For decades, the refinery has produced gasoline, diesel, jet fuel, and asphalt, and it has served as a major employer, a significant property-tax contributor, and a substantial source of revenue for Benicia's general fund. Yet these benefits have come at a steep cost. Over the past 25 years, shelter-in-place warnings, flaring incidents, and children relying on inhalers have become far too common for Benicians. Air quality violations have been persistent and severe, and cancer rates in our community now exceed both state and county averages.

In 2024, thanks to your investigation and enforcement actions, Valero was fined \$82 million for knowingly polluting Benicia's air for more than 14 years. I am writing regarding the approximately \$60 million in community-directed grants now under consideration, funds that prioritize Benicia as the community most deeply and directly harmed.

In 2025, Valero announced that it intends to cease operations by April 2026, citing operational costs and California's regulatory environment. With only a year to prepare, our community, after more than six decades of economic dependence on refinery operations, is facing an unprecedented transition. Untethering Benicia from this long-standing reliance will be complex and will require significant support over multiple years.

For a small city like Benicia, uniquely affected and the only community in the region facing a refinery shutdown, waiting another year or more before receiving even a fraction of these funds is simply not feasible.

I understand the structure of your grant programs, but one size does not fit all. We do not have a large staff or a dedicated team of grant writers to navigate complex application and reporting requirements. In fact, our current budget planning involves considering reductions to staff and essential services in anticipation of Valero's departure. Ironically, these are the very employees who would be responsible for applying for and managing grants.

Mayor Steve Young has submitted a reasonable and practical compensation and investment proposal tailored to Benicia's extraordinary circumstances. I urge you to approve it. Precedent exists for flexible arrangements, Community Benefit Agreements, environmental justice settlements, and health-impact compensation funds created in the wake of refinery contamination. We are not asking for a blank check; we are asking for a negotiated, community-specific funding plan that will allow Benicia to undertake a fair, healthy, and sustainable transition.

We have one chance to get this right. With your partnership, Benicia can move toward a future with clean air, a resilient economy, and restored public health. Without timely and appropriate support, we risk falling into crisis precisely because of harms we have endured for generations.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to protecting public health.

Betty Lucas

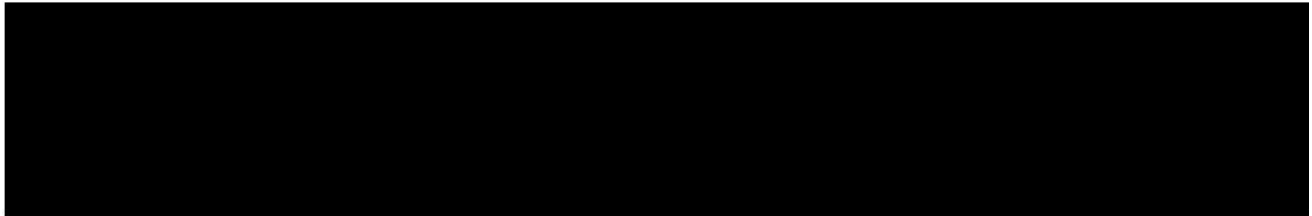

Outlook

Benicia funds

From Catherine Chaney [REDACTED]

Date Thu 11/20/2025 3:20 AM

To **BMQMD** Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>



I as an over 45 year resident of Benicia would **like** to see these funds at least some of them used for replacement of HVAC systems that have been desperately trying to filter the air they must breathe. Now I do realize that we as residents are at the very bottom of said list. I also realize this is a lame attempt for me a small human to have any input or insight. But here I go. How about all schools first as our children are our future. Then any buildings that service children. Then every home and business supplied as a minimum hepa filters . Now onto the bay(you won't even touch this one) the 9 th st park beach is toxic maybe a notice admitting it would be wise. So as an old granny who's grandchildren breath this air I do have a say in their future. As one now has asthma her lifelong breathing issues are in my opinion a direct result of living her first 7 years in Benicia. These kids should be track for any long term health issues they get. That won't happen either. So yes maybe hepa filters for all.
Oh and Valero was flaring again. Thank You..... Catherine Chaney



Outlook

Valero Benicia grants public comment

From CONSTANCEBEUTEL [REDACTED]

Date Fri 11/21/2025 6:07 PM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

Dear Air District Staff and Members,

My name is Constance M. Beutel, EdD. I live at [REDACTED] I am a member of the Benicia Good Neighbor Steering Committee, Air Watch/ Refinery Air Watch, and the California Environmental Justice Coalition. I have lived in Benicia for 36 years.

My reflections on the grant process echo community comments that the suggested protocols are too onerous, presenting more hurdles to Benicia with already limited staff and will be further limited as Valero shuts down eliminating nearly 30% of our City's revenue.

Please don't make Benicia a double victim of the Air District. first for not identifying Valero's 15 year toxic pollution for which the refinery was fined and second for not having the ability to fund the staff needed to manage a significant catalyst grant because of Valera's closure.

I would remind the Air District that it took more than 20 years before Benicia, a refinery town, was able to have an Air District monitoring station of its own.

Please take a moment to look at this short presentation made about Benicia Health.



Air Quality and Benicia's Health: Constance Beutel presented the following in Benicia, CA
[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/...)

The Air District can do better and support our mayor's request for a modest apportionment of funds to allow a fiscal transition adjustment to the refinery's closure.

Thank you,

Constance Beutel

Comments on Local Community Benefits Fund Draft Guidelines

From David Lindsay [REDACTED]

Date Fri 11/21/2025 12:00 PM

To BMQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

[REDACTED]

To: SAAD Community Investment Office,

The draft guidelines for distributing the funds from Valera's fine are too cumbersome and will cause delays and inefficiencies. Mayor Steve Young has submitted a reasonable and practical compensation and investment proposal tailored to Benicia's extraordinary circumstances. I urge you to approve it. Precedent exists for flexible arrangements, Community Benefit Agreements, environmental justice settlements, and health-impact compensation funds created in the wake of refinery contamination. We are not asking for a blank check; we are asking for a negotiated, community-specific funding plan that will allow Benicia to undertake a fair, healthy, and sustainable transition.

David Lindsay

Benicia resident and Board member of Benicia Community Air Monitoring Program

Outlook

RE: To the Members of the Local Community Benefits Fund Board

From [REDACTED]

Date Sun 11/23/2025 9:40 AM

To Vanessa Johnson <vjohnson@baaqmd.gov>; Marcy Hiratzka <mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov>; BAAQMD
Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

Cc [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dear Board Members,

As a resident of Benicia, I appreciate your leadership and welcome the opportunity to provide input on the community-directed grants currently under consideration.

You are already familiar with the incidents that resulted in the \$82 million fine imposed on Valero, so I will not revisit that history. What matters now is that Benicia has long borne the burden of air pollution and its public health impacts.

The Local Community Benefits Fund (LCBF) was established to *reduce air pollution, improve public health outcomes, and build economic resilience for a just transition*. Mayor Steve Young has submitted a practical proposal for compensation and investment that reflects Benicia's unique circumstances. I strongly urge the Board to work with our mayor and city manager to adopt a fair, community-specific funding plan. Such a plan will enable Benicia to pursue an equitable, healthy, and sustainable transition in the wake of this economic upheaval.

Our community has already paid the price of Valero's pollution in the form of cancer and other illnesses. Without intervention, residents will now face the financial consequences of the refinery's closure. The resulting loss of revenue threatens essential city services that safeguard health and well-being.

I respectfully ask the Board to consider the mayor's amendment to the LCBF guidelines, allowing flexible financial support tailored to Benicia's needs. With the refinery's imminent closure, our city faces a period of serious economic instability that requires proactive planning and equitable support.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to ensuring a just transition for communities like ours.

Sincerely,

Jack Kolk Benicia Resident

Outlook

Comments on Local Community Benefits Fund Draft Guidelines and Request for Flexible Approach for Benicia

From Maggie Kolk [REDACTED]

Date Sat 11/22/2025 9:47 AM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

Cc Marcy Hiratzka <mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov>; Vanessa Johnson <vjohnson@baaqmd.gov>

Dear Board members and associates,

It is with deep appreciation for your expertise and leadership that I submit my input, as a Benicia resident and long-time community advocate, regarding the community-directed grants currently under your consideration. As a Board, you are well aware of the incidents that led to the \$82 million fine imposed on Valero; therefore, I will not revisit that history here.

Instead, I write to urge the Air Board to consider an amendment to the guidelines for the Local Community Benefits Fund (LCBF) that allows for flexible financial support tailored to Benicia's unique circumstances. With the imminent closure of the Valero refinery, our city faces a new phase of potentially devastating economic instability that demands proactive planning and equitable support.

The LCBF's stated goals are to:

"Reduce air pollution or mitigate air pollution impacts, improve public health outcomes, and build economic resilience for a just transition."

The closure of Valero clearly advances the first goal of reducing air pollution especially with the adoption and implementation of the Benicia Industrial Safety and Health Ordinance to protect our community during the cleanup and restoration of the Valero site. The remaining goals-improving public health outcomes and building economic resilience-cannot be achieved without financial support from outside Benicia.

The refinery's closure will result in at least a \$10.7 million annual reduction in city revenue, a significant portion of our nearly \$59 million general fund expenditures (2025). Benicia, while a vibrant middle-class community, has a lower per capita income than most Bay Area cities, with many retirees living on fixed incomes. Residents are drawn here not only for its beauty and services but also for its relative affordability. The economic shock of Valero's departure will reverberate across every aspect of our community.

Public Health Impact

Benicia residents currently benefit from a wide range of public health services funded by the city budget and staffed by dedicated employees. These include:

- **Recreation programs** through the Community Services Recreation Division, offering activities that support health and well-being for all ages and abilities. <http://www.ci.benicia.ca.us/P.CS>

- **The Benicia Public Library**, a vital resource for residents of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds, providing access to information, solace, and enrichment both in person and virtually. <https://benicialibrary.org>
- **Parks and open spaces**, which promote mental and physical health through active and passive recreation opportunities, freely accessible to all. <https://www.ci.benicia.ca.us/parks>

In addition, the city funds safety-net nonprofit organizations through community grants administered by the Community Services Commission (and formerly the Human Services Board). These grants support residents facing food insecurity, homelessness, illness, or other public health and safety challenges. I have served as a volunteer member of both entities for the past decade, and I have seen firsthand the critical role these grants play in protecting our most vulnerable neighbors.

Benicia has already borne the public health costs of Valera's pollution in the form of cancer and other illnesses. Now, without intervention, our residents will bear the financial costs of the refinery's closure. The loss of revenue threatens the very services that safeguard community health and well-being.

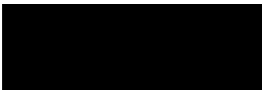
A Call for Partnership

Mayor Steve Young has submitted a reasonable and practical proposal for compensation and investment tailored to Benicia's circumstances. I strongly urge the Board to collaborate with our mayor and city manager to adopt a fair, community-specific funding plan. Such a plan will allow Benicia to pursue an equitable, healthy, and sustainable transition in the wake of this economic upheaval.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and for your continued commitment to protecting public health.

Sincerely,

Maggie Kolk



==

Outlook

Use of \$60 million in Valero fines

From Rami Muth [REDACTED]

Date Sat 11/22/2025 8:42 PM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

To: Bay Area Air District

Re: Comments on Draft Guidelines for use of '\$60 million in Valero fines

We are 40 year residents of Benicia and homeowners who resides near [REDACTED] he - Valero Refinery. We strongly urge you to follow the proposal drafted by our mayor, Steve Young. The proposal of providing \$25 million over five years to Benicia will have a profound impact in supporting our community in addressing the loss of revenue raised by Valero.

Our family has deeply felt the health ramifications of Valero's presence and we will now additionally be impacted by this loss of revenue to our community.

We sincerely believe this is a fair and just proposal and hope you will give it your utmost consideration.

Sincerely,

Rami and David Muth
[REDACTED]

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

Comments regarding draft guidelines for the local community benefits fund: IN FAVOR OF A FLEXIBLE APPROACH

From [REDACTED]

Date Sun 11/23/2025 5:07 PM

To communityinvestment@baaqmd.gov <communityinvestment@baaqmd.gov>; Marcy Hiratzka <mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov>; Vanessa Johnson <vjohnson@baaqmd.gov>

Please forward comments to the Air District Board of Directors.

Hello, my name is Andre Stewart. My family and I moved from Chicagoland (I was born and raised on the South Side of Chicago) to Benicia in 1998. We came to Northern California so I could take a leadership role at an insurance company based in Napa. I sought a community that would embrace our multi-racial family and allow us to thrive.

I have always liked living in Benicia because the town has an abundance of friendly people who care about the community. I must admit I was genuinely concerned about the refinery being so close to our home, but I was assured, via the various Boards and Committees I served on, that the refinery is a good neighbor. My heart was broken when I heard about the \$80+ million fine. It appears we have been put at significant risk. Since the day I heard about the fine, I have wondered how many of my neighbors and family will endure the health consequences of the misconduct that caused the fine.

Currently, I have a great deal of confidence in the adherence to fiscal and social fiduciary responsibility of our City Council, Mayor, and City Manager. I ask that you please allow them the flexibility to honor your reporting request and to enable the City of Benicia to maintain financial stability. The departure of the oil refinery will have an immediate economic impact. However, by allowing us access to funds and the total or partial flexibility to use an adequate amount of the funds available, we appear to leave with minimal human impact and help our citizens. I realize many see Benicia as an affluent city. However, like many cities, we have a sizable number of citizens who need assistance. More than 40% of the city's population is either over 65 or under 18. With your consideration, we can help keep this a great, friendly town.

Thank you. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions.

Re: Comments on the Draft Guidelines for the Local Community Benefits Fund

From Diane Dooley [REDACTED]

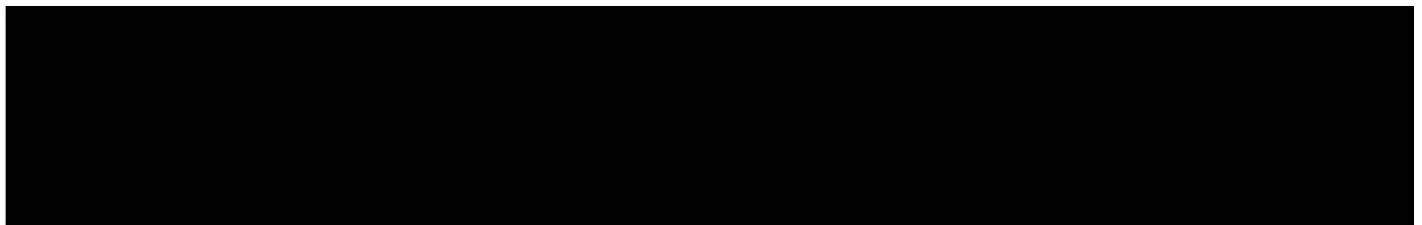
Date Sun 11/23/2025 5:04 PM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>; Marcy Hiratzka <mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov>; Vanessa Johnson <vjohnson@baaqmd.gov>

Cc [REDACTED]

@J 1 attachment (2 MB)

Comments on Air District RFP. Dooley.docx;



Hi,

I recently sent you my comments on the Draft Guidelines for the Catalyst grant. If possible, please send these comments on to the Air District Board members. I've attached a copy of my comments to this email.

Thank you.

Diane Dooley MD

On Sun, Nov 23, 2025 at 3:23 PM Diane Dooley [REDACTED] wrote:
November 23, 2025

Dear Bay Area Air District,

As a resident of Benicia for the past 44 years, a pediatrician serving low-income families, and past Benicia School Board member, I am very concerned about the immediate and long-term impact of Valero's air pollution violations, especially to Benicia's children and vulnerable populations. I appreciate the innovative efforts the Air District and California Air Resources Board is making to address these harms with the Catalyst Grant. However, I strongly urge the Air District to adopt the following revisions to strengthen your Call for Projects and make it more likely that Benicia can benefit from the Catalyst grant award.

Provide Support to the City of Benicia and Benicia Unified School to Apply for the Grant

The Bay Area Air District's draft RFP does not presently describe a feasible grant process for the City of Benicia and Benicia Unified School District to apply for this grant.

due to the harm caused by Valero's toxic emissions as well as declining school enrollment

Both our City and School District are struggling with dramatic revenue decreases

and attendance. The City anticipates a reduction of up to 10% of Benicia's revenue because of the loss of tax revenues associated with the planned closure of Valero. The School District has ongoing financial challenges as well, largely due to the revenue losses associated with persistently declining school attendance. When the closure of Valero occurs, and if property taxes significantly decline as anticipated, core budget cuts will need to take place, many of them undermining the goals of the present draft call for projects.

The City of Benicia and Benicia Unified School District are fundamentally the strongest applicants for this grant; their services and programs impact everyone in Benicia and many of their responsibilities overlap with the goals of the Air Resource Board's grant. However, the School Board Trustees and City Council are responsible for ensuring the long and short-term fiscal health and solvency of their institutions in this difficult time. With the present limited funding and staff of these institutions, it's very unlikely that either institution will commit precious resources to develop a grant application without initial support from the Air Resources Board.

I strongly suggest that as soon as possible the Air Quality Management District designate that the City of Benicia and Benicia Unified School District are designated recipients of the Catalyst Grant if they develop a viable grant application. The Air Quality District should follow this commitment with short term financial support for these partners to work with a non-profit public health organization skilled in developing a meaningful and cohesive grant proposal. You should also provide bridge funding to continue critically important services that support the described goals of the Air District Board, such as maintaining parks and roads, supporting the City's paramedic services as well as the School District's asthma and mental health services. Early designation of the City and School District as Catalyst Grant recipients with temporary financial support will allow adequate time to explore the needs of the involved partners and avoid the dilemma of asking a strained City and School District to fund this partnership with empty coffers.

Address Immediate Harms

I encourage the Air District to revise the grant specifications to encourage applicants to prioritize addressing the immediate harm that is already occurring in our most vulnerable populations. An example of this is the absenteeism rates reported by Benicia School District. Even though each California school districts' rates of absenteeism directly impacts their revenue, most school districts have very limited funding and personnel to address this issue. With short term funding, the District could identify and develop a tracking and support system for absenteeism as well as a sustainable referral network of services for children, youth and families with asthma or mental health concerns, both of which are correlated with air pollution. The fact that a large number of children and family members will no longer be eligible for the MediCal program in 2026 generates additional need for local schools to develop necessary partnerships that will improve the health of vulnerable children.

Support and Clarify Policies Regarding Long Term Solutions

I strongly support the Local Community Benefits Fund's intent to encourage projects that reduce or mitigate air pollution and build economic resilience for our community. However, the Call for Projects needs clarification regarding whether Benicia can use the Air Resources Board funding to enhance partnership projects or if the grant requires that the funding be used only for Air Resources Board projects.

In my experience, the most effective projects involve long term, collaborative planning and support. As an example, grant partners could propose capital projects such as improving air quality by building a pedestrian bridge over the freeway to connect the Middle School and High School, the development of an electric bus shuttle system, a bike path through the lower income areas of Benicia or citywide repaving of streets in poor condition. All of these projects would significantly reduce emissions, however they would also require

partnerships with other agencies, such as the Solano Transportation Authority. Oftentimes these partners work together to plan and fund impactful projects, however your RFP does not mention that option. Please consider more collaborative, longer term options in your description of the proposed projects. Funding and planning of effective mitigation capital projects take a long time line to complete and might not meet the 5-year deadline of the Air District's RFP.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your draft RFP. I hope that you will consider clarifying some of these complex and substantial issues in your follow up draft of the proposed guidelines and truly admire your efforts to address the ongoing and past harms that have impacted our community.

Sincerely,

Diane Dooley MD

Fellow, American Academy of Pediatrics

Chairperson, Solano Transportation Authority Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Past School Board Trustee, Benicia Unified School District

Outlook

Comments on the Draft Guidelines for the Local Community Benefits Fund: in favor of a flexible approach.

From Jacqueline Crawford [REDACTED]

Date Sun 11/23/2025 5:24 PM

To Marcy Hiratzka <mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov>; syoung@ci.benicia.ca.us <syoung@ci.benicia.ca.us>

[REDACTED]

I have been a Benicia resident for 30 years. I back Mayor Steve Young's proposal to the Air District. He is requesting that \$25 million from the \$60million should go for budget support over the next 5 years. This would help Benicia's city government services survive the imminent loss of Valero revenues of about \$10million per year.

Please forward this email to the Air District Board of Directors.

Thank you,

Jacqueline Crawford

Outlook

LBCF comment from Benicia citizen

From Daniel Smith [REDACTED]

Date Mon 11/24/2025 9:12 AM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>; Vanessa Johnson <vjohnson@baaqmd.gov>; Marcy Hiratzka <mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov>

Cc syoung@ci.benicia.ca.us <syoung@ci.benicia.ca.us>; Terry Scott <tscott@ci.benicia.ca.us>

[REDACTED]

Dear BAAQMD Board members,

Benicia had been a refinery town for a quarter century when Diana and I moved here in '87, and has been ever since. I am a former BAAQMD staff and parks commissioner and city councilman here.

The town I love has had to survive the health impacts (elevated cancer and asthma rates) that came with the prosperity of the plant, small bits of the latter which we shared over the 60+ years through taxes and relatively modest community support. It could be argued that the refinery helped the old town keep going after the Army left in the early '60s.

Now we have the remarkable *deja vu* of the refinery planning to exit a similarly contaminated site and hugely impacting its city and its contracting and labor pools. The Greater Bay Area has benefitted too from the refinery's presence, but like the health effects, will be less impacted by the announced dosure.

This history is one reason why the most just use of the LBCF is to help Benicia transition physically, medically and economically from the refinery's legacy. I fully support the proposals by Supervisor Gioia and Mayor Young for unrestricted funding in excess of \$25 million to fulfill the district's duty and help modulate the transition.

Please forward these comments to the district board of directors.

Sincerely,

Daniel Smith

[REDACTED]

Outlook

allocation of Valero fine funds

From george grunwald [REDACTED]

Date Mon 11/24/2025 11:09 AM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>; Marcy Hiratzka <mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov>; Vanessa Johnson <vjohnson@baaqmd.gov>

Cc syoung@ci.benicia.ca.us <syoung@ci.benicia.ca.us>; tscott@ci.benicia.ca.us <tscott@ci.benicia.ca.us>; m.giulani@ci.benicia.ca.us <m.giulani@ci.benicia.ca.us>; [REDACTED]

Please forward the following letter to the Air District Board of Directors.

I'm a Benicia resident. I support Mayor Young's proposal that Benicia receive approximately \$60 million of the \$83 million dollar fine imposed upon Valero.

Benicia would benefit from getting this money, so will you.

Here's why: with Valero leaving, Benicia is losing a major portion of its tax base. Even with the money the Mayor is requesting, the City will have to cut into flesh and bone. Without this money, the City will have to make even deeper, potentially life threatening, cuts.

The City would almost certainly have to look at closing a fire station. For me this cut would be personal. Benicia Fire came to our home several times while my late wife was experiencing medical emergencies. The EMTs' responded immediately. I would no sooner hang up on 911, inform my wife, walk to the curb, and the truck would be turning the corner to our house. These were life saving moments. One ER doctor said that my wife had been no more than 20 minutes from death. Benicia Fire gave us at least two or three more years together.

Maybe Benicia could save the Fire Station. Maybe we can just cut back on fire prevention by not hiring the goats to clear out hillsides.

Not a good idea. About fifteen years ago, before the City began renting the goats, I had neighbors whose birds were asphyxiated by smoke from a grass fire.

My 16 year old granddaughter loves her cockatiels. What if they die from smoke inhalation because of budget cuts?

If people die because EMTs can't get to them in time, that would be quite a story for a local investigative reporter. And imagine a TV segment of an eight year old girl sobbing because her budgies choked on smoke, followed by a segment of a reporter chasing you down to explain yourself.

Well, maybe fire prevention could be saved. Maybe the cuts can come elsewhere. Where? We're already looking at closing the library one day a week. Maybe close it two, or even three days a week. Maybe we can cut hours at the senior center, or the city pool. Maybe Public Works can take a hit.

There is no fat in the City budget. We will have to cut, and when we cut it will be flesh and bone. So I encourage you to allot the money to Benicia, so the cuts won't be any deeper. It'll be good for Benicia. It'll be good for you.

George Grunwald

Input on CBF Guidelines and Plan for Success

From Jeffrey Kilbreth [REDACTED]

Date Mon 11/24/2025 3:42 PM

To **BAAQMD** Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

Cc [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

It is clear that a lot of work has gone into planning an application process in support of our goals. And broadly speaking, much of the described process is sensible and prudent. But an application process alone is not sufficient to guarantee success. Here are some reactions to the slide decks and draft guidelines document for your consideration:

1. **Important missing uses of CBF monies.** While the intent is to be somewhat open to projects not called out explicitly, it would be better if all of the most important and "in scope" uses or "benefits" are included in the examples described. In other words, have one complete, concise list of eligible projects that potential applicants and stakeholders can review. Two things stand out as simply missing. (There may be others - glad to think more about this, but let's start with these two)

- o One is that a refinery community that is undergoing a permanent closure of its refinery is in a very different situation than a community living with an ongoing major source of pollution. If I am up to date, the Air District is not comfortable yet with this distinction and is saying that CBF monies would still need to be spent on exposure mitigation or pollution reduction. This is nuts. I'm from Richmond, but what Benecia needs right now, most of all, is help dealing with a giant hole in its General Fund due to the loss of property tax revenues. (I assume that it is possible to know if a refinery shutdown is permanent or just a prelude to selling it to a new operator). There is no way that bureaucratic rigidity here makes any sense. I think it will be a PR disaster for BAAQMD.
- o The second missing piece is the need to collect better health data from the community, and in particular from the schools. The Cal EnviroScore data on asthma rates is created by using hospital ER admissions. This is a terribly inadequate way of measuring this Number One public health problem. Roughly 75% of the census tracts in our AB 617 Richmond, North Richmond, San Pablo area are scored in the 90th percentile for asthma but ER admissions is all we have for data. Collecting data on inhaler use in all of the schools (say in 4th and 10th grades at a minimum) would give us a lot more to work with. It would help us have better trend analysis and allow us to better target public health interventions. Right now, for example, we have no idea whether Chevron's 2019 move to processing higher sulfur crude has had any direct impact on inhaler use. The emissions inventories for Chevron show major increases in 2021 compared to 2019 in sulfuric acid, nickel, hydrochloric acid, arsenic, formaldehyde, acrolein, cadmium, naphthalene and hydrogen sulfide. It is one thing to model the impact of changes to the crude slate. It is quite

another to have this data alongside showing the changes in inhaler use in the 2021-2025 timeframe.

2. **The issue of preparing for a Just Transition.** I'm a bit of an outsider on this question, but I'll say this anyway. The main three things associated with this issue are a) the loss of high-paying blue collar jobs, b) the loss of major property tax revenue streams (and sometimes other tax streams) for poor, industrial municipalities with already inadequate general fund budgets, and c) site mitigation and additional infrastructure costs required to support new and different uses. As an example, Chevron occupies roughly 13% of the city of Richmond and is far and away the largest tax payer. What's the plan? What Benicia is going through now is a mini-version of what Richmond will likely go through sometime down the road - maybe in 20-30 years. But who owns this problem? I think it is a state responsibility. It really isn't a municipal or even county responsibility. The refineries support the state's economy and the state should figure this out. The state should build up a fund that can be activated to deal with refinery closures. I don't think Richmond's \$35 million CBF or Benicia's \$40 mil are going to put much of a dent in this problem and certainly not if most of Richmond's money needs to go to exposure mitigation and better health data collection and Benicia needs to help its GF. So I would rather see BAAQMD and SCAQMD and CARB become serious advocates in Sacramento for both planning for a Just Transition and putting money aside starting asap to be able to actually help when the time comes. To me this is a legislative and executive branch responsibility. Right now the documents all sort of suggest that people can apply for money to work on JT. I just don't see it being a good use of these public funds that are primarily aimed at exposure mitigation.
3. **Prioritizing larger, integrated multi-project program grants.** I understand and support the Air District's desire to ensure manageability and cost effectiveness. But for this to be successful in the real world of our community, I think there are some important things to clarify and decide before opening applications
 - o I think it would be wise to be explicit about the mix of large, medium and small grants that are contemplated/desired. We could spend all of the funds on one major exposure mitigation program that delivered home ventilators, installed window replacements & weatherproofing, and planted trees. So I think we should head this problem off at the pass by saying that some percentage of the money is reserved for other projects not related to exposure mitigation
 - o Since City Government is an option for the Lead Applicant role, it would be wise to speak with the City Managers, DPW Department Heads and Parks and Rec Department Heads of both Richmond and San Pablo to see what they think about their ability to take on some of these projects as well as their level of interest. Perhaps presenting to the City Councils would be in order as a first step. And it wouldn't be a bad idea to ask them what their priorities are. (Sometimes it seems that BAAQMD wants to create new community engagement committees everywhere possible when simply asking the two City Councils what they think would be just as effective, more democratic, and potentially safer and more efficient.....)
4. **Program Overlap.** We should look at the possible overlap between some other existing grants and project activities and the eligible activities for the BAAQMD CBF funds. A simple interview or two with the city managers would likely clarify these overlaps. Richmond for example, recently got a \$70 mil grant that has a heavy green transportation component. Would it make sense to encourage or approve another grant in this space out of the BAAQMD CBF? Wouldn't we want the approval committees to be aware of existing overlapping or adjacent grants and programs?
5. **Role of the AB 617 Steering Committee?** As a 5 year member of this community engagement vehicle, and as someone who contributed to many of the sections of the PTCA document, I did find it extraordinary that there would be no role for the AB 617 CSC in deciding how the money

would be distributed. So I strongly supported the demand made by our CSC in the letter submitted ten days ago. But I would go further. In the same way that it is not helpful that BAAQMD consistently avoids meaningful collaboration with the town city councils and city managers, it is also not helpful that BAAQMD has 5 or more community advisory committees, each with different strengths and weaknesses. It is all quite fragmented and maybe that is the point, but as one participant, I have to say that I find it bizarre and driven by BAAQMD's internal structure and politics rather than any strategy for maximizing the quality of community engagement, deliberation and participation in decision-making. So I would say that right now, BAAQMD should have two CBF Community Advisory Committees - one for the established AB 617 area which should simply be the AB 617 Steering Committee for Richmond/North Richmond/San Pablo. And another for Rodeo/Martinez/Benecia and Vallejo made up of people from those communities. (John Gioia and a number of us on the CSC could give you ten good recommendations in a heartbeat)

6. **Getting Good Applications for the things most in-line with our PTCA goals?** The focus of the guidelines document and the pitch deck is on the process. Ultimately it feels passive about helping to recruit good applicants and helping them produce high quality applications, preferably in line with our PTCA goals for improving public health in refinery communities. To me, getting good applications is a project in and of itself. It takes work - networking, encouragement, steering, shaping, clarifying, etc. Who's going to do this? This is not the same thing as BAAQMD having one or two slide deck presentations or having a phone number to call to get the process explained again. People will need help writing up the actual proposals. I would have thought this would be a joint effort of the AB 617 CSC and the Air District.
7. **How and Who decides our priorities and approaches?** While it is fine to have a process that sort of allows anybody to apply to do anything within the guidelines, we in fact have some PTCA goals and a bunch of people on the AB 617 SC who are familiar with most of the project candidates and are capable of discussing the relative values of the different initiatives. Mostly what's missing is cost information. But some of this could be a quick 3 month research project that would help everyone - applicants and decision-makers alike. Let's just say that a Coway home sized air purifier cost \$100 wholesale and we could either get Amazon to deliver them for free as a community service or spend \$40 per house to have them hand delivered by a person who could answer questions and provide some basic information about our pollution problems. Food for thought. And planting a tree might cost \$100 but we have lots of decisions to make about which streets and how many trees per block. Need some map work. And putting in a replacement window or weatherstripping a door or window might cost \$200 each but what guidelines would we use for qualification (condition of house, income, ownership, rental income, etc). Tricky business. Same kinds of questions around the collection of school inhaler usage data. - how much to spend being complete in terms of absent kids, etc, how many grades - 4th, 7th and 10th or just 4th and 10th, etc. All of these questions should be worked on in advance, edging us more toward an RFP process (or at least for our biggest grants). This doesn't mean, we can't be open to any application anyone wants to make. It just means that we have a vested interest in certain things being successfully done. Things that simply won't be done unless we use this money to get them done. Obviously the more the decision-making committees are familiar with PTCA goals and familiar with some of the basic costs and trade-offs, the better the application evaluation process will go.
8. **We should eliminate the suggestion that any of these CBF monies could be spent on pollution reduction.** The polluters are responsible for reducing their pollution wherever possible and reasonable. And BAAQMD and CARB are responsible for the regulations that enforce this. To repeat myself, we need these CBF funds to fix problems that won't be fixed any other way. Exposure mitigation, better health data collection, and community education about

pollution and public health are such things. Chevron electrifying the wharf, installing the wet scrubber on the Cat Cracker, repairing all of its valve and storage tank leaks are not what this money is designed to do.

Hope this helps

Jeff



Outlook

Comments on Draft Guidelines for local Benefit Fund in favor of a flexible approach to dispersement of funds due re: Benicia Valero Refinery Violations.

From jass1013 [REDACTED]

Date Mon 11/24/2025 7:26 AM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>; Marcy Hiratzka <mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov>; Vanessa Johnson <vjohnson@baaqmd.gov>

Please share this email with BAAQMED Board of Directors.

Dear BAAQMD Staff and BAAQMD Board of Directors,

I am writing in support of a flexible approach to the dispersement of funds due the City of Benicia and surrounding communities re: the massive violation of over 15 years toxic air quality abuse discovered in 2021, resulting in an 82 million dollar fine, with 60 million dollars regulated to Benicia and surrounding communities.

Along with many of my activist colleagues in Benicia, we are grateful that this abuse was finally discovered and a significant fine was given and paid for by Valero. There have been several fines since then, including one that dealt with a fire due to malfunctioning equipment that has yet to be fully repaired.

Our concerns for health and safety re: toxic air quality remain, due to insufficient monitoring capacities that still exist. A result of one of our recent large community meetings we had with you, prior to the more recent fire experienced at the Benicia Valero Refinery, many of us recommended installation of tent monitoring that was introduced as a much more accurate monitoring device which could cover the bases with real time awareness of abuses, along with a much broader spectrum of what could be detected that was harmful to our health. It would increase transparency, allowing issues of pollution to be dealt with in a more timely manner.

No action was taken on this. It's an old infrastructure that requires being dismantled with health and safety in mind.

As to fund distributions due to us, I agree with Benicia Mayor Steve Young's suggestions, but would add the request that interest gained from the amount originally allotted to us be added to the sum we are given. I would suggest flexibility in how how this can be used to help alleviate the unexpected budgetary stresses our city will have to deal with if and when Valero vacates. Our city budget will be

decreased by 10 million dollars which will have a dramatic impact on our ability to sustain necessary city functioning. Also many of us are concerned about the timing of dispersal of funding owed to us, as waiting until 2027 to begin receiving funds won't help with immediate necessary needs if they depart as planned in April of 2026.

Our non-profits will also suffer, as we won't be able to support them on such short notice if this impending change occurs. They will also miss being funded by Valero, our largest corporation donor, who gave to many of them from their substantial business profits made by doing business here.

If Valero does completely vacate their property, as we expect them to do, I feel it is their responsibility to pay for protecting our environs during clean up of their property in preparation of it being safe for future use. Having the tent monitoring would be beneficial for this purpose.

I also feel we may need added support from BAAQMD to oversee this process in re: to paying attention to the effects this clearing process may have on our overall health and safety.

If you don't already do so, I recommend that each BAAQMD Board Member check the Annual Report from the American Lung Association re: our region's health status. I have been doing this and reporting on it to our city council as it clearly states how our health is affected by our environment.

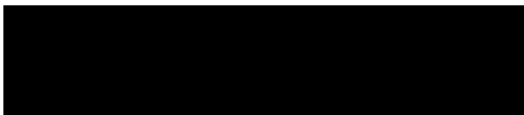
Solano Cty. has a D minus grade, with the major culprit identified as being industrial pollution. Health statistics tell the tale of how this affects our population. Since current statistics have been written about already in letters to you by others, I won't repeat them. Just hope you will pay attention to the results of these reports. You are the stewards of our air quality and we are seriously impacted by the choices you make.

I agree with the comments you have received from Benicia Mayor Steve Young, Benicia Council Member Terry Scott, and many Benicia citizens, (Steve Golub, Pat Toth-Smith, Marilyn Bardet, David Batechelor, and others from our environmental activist group in Benicia), who have spoken and/or written on this subject. We all have the health and safety of our communities as a major priority.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith S. Sullivan

46 year resident of Benicia, Ca.



LCBF Draft Guidelines Comments

From Robert Nickeson [REDACTED]

Date Mon 11/24/2025 1:09 PM

To Marcy Hiratzka <mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov>; Vanessa Johnson <vjohnson@baaqmd.gov>; BAAQMD
Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

[REDACTED]

(Note: I would request that this email be forwarded to the Air District Board of Directors)

This letter is written to support Benicia Mayor Steve Young's proposal to dedicate half of the \$60M of Valero fines penalty, earmarked for Benicia, to be made available over a five period to at least cut in half the \$10-11M annual budget shortfall the city now faces due to the closure of Valero refinery.

The special and dramatic economic circumstances Benicia finds itself in call for special and dramatic modifications to the normal penalty monies distribution process, that has been published in the Draft Guidelines for the Local Community Benefits Funds. That document, as it stands, prioritizes concerns that are drastically diminished for Benicia, with the closure, compared to the civic economic crisis that has been created, as well as a distribution process that is out of touch with the realities of Benicia's circumstances. Mayor Young's proposal addresses both issues with a fair and reasonable alternative approach that meets the true needs of the community, while also allowing the District to follow its traditional directives for distribution of such funds. It just doesn't put the directives, which don't account for a unique situation such as has occurred, above those dire community needs.

It should be noted that Strategy 2.8 of the District's 2024-2029 Strategic Plan To Advance Environmental Justice, states that "we will manage funds to benefit communities in partnership with those communities, including the money that the Air District collects in penalties from air pollution violations".

My personal view is that the District has played a part, along with Valero, in creating Benicia's current financial hardship. If the District had uncovered the supposedly egregious emissions violations sooner than the 15 plus years they took place, rather than apparently hoping or expecting Valero to 'self-regulate', the penalty amount would have been much less, which Valero may have accepted and managed as normal part of their operations. It also would have saved Benicians from the exposure to the emissions for such a long period. I have never heard an explanation of how or why the District could miss such a huge violation, and for so long. It seems a very obscure story.

So, I see Mayor Young's proposition as a very transparent way of making amends for past indiscretions, or even negligence, and actually help the community that has been harmed for so long in the past, and even now, in the present, and will be, going into the future, without the support it has earned, and deserves, from the District.

Bob Nickeson

Comments on the Draft Guidelines for the Local Community Benefits Fund

From Sheri Leigh [REDACTED]

Date Mon 11/24/2025 1:31 PM

To **BAAQMD** Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>; Marcy Hiratzka <mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov>; Vanessa Johnson <vjohnson@baaqmd.gov>

[REDACTED]

Hello,

I am sending my comments in favor of changing the policy on Air District grantmaking to a more flexible approach. At a recent Bay Area Air District meeting, Benicia's mayor, Steve Young made a proposal to change the guidelines allowing for the City of Benicia, which is by far the most heavily impacted community among those eligible to receive clean air grant funding from the fines imposed upon Valero, to receive assistance in recovering from the loss of tax based income to its general fund. I understand that this is a significant change in policy, but it will be a crucial one to any city in the same position as Benicia. Not only has the City of Benicia, as host to Valero, suffered more than any other community from the air quality impacts of Valera's emissions violations, but we stand to be devastated by the financial impacts of Valera's sudden departure. This should not be allowed to happen.

As the governing agent of air quality, and the steward of the \$82 million dollars in fines imposed upon Valero, I believe it would be fair and morally imperative for the Bay Area Air District to help the community that has been the most impacted to recover both environmentally and economically. The City of Benicia may be the first government in this District to completely lose a major industry that has been both an environmental impactor and the primary contributor to the local economy, but as the United States transitions to cleaner energy, we won't be the last. As the communities of Martinez, Richmond, Hercules and others go through similar situations, having a flexible recovery strategy sponsored by the District will help us all to remain viable communities.

I sincerely hope you will set a new precedent to make this happen.

Please forward my comments to the Air District Board.

Thank you for your serious consideration.

Sheri Leigh
[REDACTED]

COMMENT LETTER

UC Berkeley Labor Center – Green Economy Program
Comments on Draft Local Community Investment Fund Guidelines
Submitted to the Bay Area Air District

November 24, 2025

Contact: Betony Jones, betony.jones@berkeley.edu

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Local Community Investment Fund Guidelines. The UC Berkeley Labor Center strongly supports the Air District's goals of reducing air pollution exposure, advancing public health, and ensuring that investments benefit communities that have borne disproportionate burdens from industrial pollution. Our comments offer:

- (1) minor clarifications to strengthen clarity and usability;
- (2) suggestions on scoring and phasing; and
- (3) substantive recommendations concerning Just Transition, economic resilience, and labor standards appropriate to each grant type.

Our insights draw on the Labor Center's long-standing research on climate, labor, and equitable economic transition; deep stakeholder engagement in Contra Costa County's refinery transition; research on the Green Empowerment Zone project; and decades of advising policymakers on labor standards in the clean energy sector. One of our researchers architected the U.S. Department of Energy's Community Benefits Plan framework for over \$200 billion in grants and loans. Lessons from these efforts inform the comments below.

I. Funding guidelines should reflect two geographic regions with different needs

With the Valero Benicia refinery announced closure in April 2026, the community is likely to experience a significant reduction in pollution and corresponding negative public health impacts; however, the closure could also result in an economic emergency for workers and the community of Benicia. The closure will result in the loss of hundreds of jobs within and outside of the facility, compounded by the potential loss of additional jobs in both public sector and critical public services resulting from significantly reduced tax revenue.

In the Richmond area, Chevron has not indicated any near term plans for closure, and while there have been some layoffs from recent global staffing cuts by the company, there is not an immediate economic and employment crisis. Rather than the triage support needed in Benicia, supporting economic resilience and a just tea in Richmond requires medium to long term economic diversification, in addition to efforts to reduce pollution and improve community health in one of the most pollution-burdened communities in California.

The funding guidelines should reflect these two realities.

II. Labor unions should be eligible to apply

Labor unions are not for profit entities that are organized as 501(c)(5)s. There is growing innovation in labor unions to develop and run programs. For example, the Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation union (SMART) has been installing and self-funding rebates for heat pump installations. Many unions in the construction trades and beyond have training programs relevant to air quality improvements and climate resilience. To meet the funding program's goals, we recommend expanding eligibility of lead applicant to nonprofit labor unions.

II. Shift Outcomes, Milestones, and Indicators to Post-Selection

Sections on measurable outcomes (Section 5.1), milestones (Section 5.2), and indicator tracking (Section 5.3) place a high burden on applicants, especially community-rooted organizations with limited capacity. These specialized requirements favor entities with sophisticated proposal-writing capabilities rather than those most embedded in impacted communities. High quality responses to these questions will reflect proposal writing expertise rather than promising projects and partnerships.

We recommend moving these sections to the **post-selection, pre-award** phase. This would:

- reduce administrative burden on community applicants;
- allow the Air District to provide targeted technical assistance to selected awardees to develop high-quality metrics, milestones, and indicators;
- strengthen accountability frameworks; and
- Minimize burden on proposal reviewers to compare highly technical or difficult to decipher, apples-to-oranges responses.

This shift would meaningfully further the CIO's goal of building *community-driven and collaborative, place-based solutions*.

The draft guidelines are very well thought out with strong attention to criteria that should lead to the selection of strong projects; however, capacity, particularly of local groups, is limited. Given the goal of "strengthening community-led and collaborative solutions", we suggest shifting some sections from the proposal phase to the negotiations phase.

In short, we suggest that the Air District withhold asking for details on outcomes, milestones, and indicators until after selection. An abstract idea starts to become more concrete when it has been tentatively selected for funding, and if you wait until after selection and before award, applicants will be better able to think about metrics and outcomes as they begin to think about implementation in more practical, less abstract terms.

Saving these sections to post-selection, pre-award, would also allow the Air District to provide quality technical assistance or workshops to selectees to develop strong data metrics and accountability mechanisms for their projects. Better metrics and milestones will also make it easier for the Air District to develop a coordinated data tracking and reporting system.

In addition, moving these sections to the post-selection phase will reduce the burden on applicants, freeing them to do more of the partner development and engagement work. If part of the application phase, both applicants and reviewers could get bogged down in evaluating and debating whether something is an output, an outcome, or an indicator. These are specialized terms and concepts that the people you are most trying to serve may not have nuanced expertise in.

At the appropriate time, we suggest adding to the list of measurable outcomes “to maximize economic benefits, such as financial savings and high-quality job creation” (p.12), the italicized additions:

- Direct financial savings for residents, such as through energy bill savings.
- Development of workforce development and training programs with career pathways for residents, in partnership with local workforce development boards, state approved apprenticeship programs, and other key stakeholders
- Creation of local, high-quality jobs that offer prevailing wages, health care and retirement benefits, access to ongoing training opportunities, and partnerships with state-approved apprenticeship programs.
- Barrier removal and support to maximize participation of small *and locally-owned* businesses and contractors

III. Publish Draft Scoring Criteria and Streamline Categories

Scoring drives who applies and who is selected—and therefore ultimately shapes short- and long-term community benefits. Publishing scoring criteria for public comment will improve transparency and ensure alignment with program goals.

We advise limiting the number of scoring categories to focus points on the highest-value goals. Too many categories can detract from the program goals, dilute impact, and increase confusion.

As part of scoring, the Air District should provide a clear completeness checklist including:

- overall narrative, budget;
- priority goals of project
- governance structure and team (lead + co-applicants);
- organizational financials; and
- documentation of community support.

IV. Clarify Lead vs. Co-Applicant Eligibility and Strengthen Limits on Consultant Use

The Guidelines define eligibility for Lead Applicants but not for Co-Applicants. Because Co-Applicants may hold governance authority and significant budget shares, the Air District should explicitly clarify whether Co-Applicants may include private firms, technical consultants, labor unions, academic partners, and/or community-based organizations. We support the inclusion of each of these types of entities as co-applicants.

We also strongly recommend capping consultant costs well below the proposed 50%, which risks incentivizing consultant-driven project design and diverting funds away from community benefit. A **12.5% baseline cap**, with the ability to increase to **25% if consultants are based in Solano or Contra Costa counties**, will ensure that funding supports local economic resilience and recirculates in the impacted region. Higher caps for out-of-region consultants would undermine the program's economic resilience goals.

While larger capital projects may need to contract out construction work, local firms that are employing or giving hiring prioritization to laid off refinery workers or their family members will be more aligned with project goals. While you can invite this kind of creativity, requiring such conditions will ensure that more money stays in and recirculates in the local economy, thus contributing to economic resilience and a just transition.

V. Align CIO and Fund Goals—Strengthened Focus on Economic Resilience

The Guidelines contain two overlapping sets of goals (Community Benefits Fund Goals and CIO Goals), but their relationship is unclear. The CIO goals omit explicit reference to **economic resilience and Just Transition**, even though this is a core purpose of the Fund.

We recommend adding the following CIO goal:

“Ensure investments support economic resilience and Just Transition by supporting the transition needs of local workers and communities and investing in projects that support the growth of the local clean energy economy, generate ongoing economic activity, and retain or create high quality jobs.”

This addition emphasizes that economic resilience - retaining and growing local jobs and economic activity as the region drives towards emissions and pollution reduction goals is central—not incidental—to not only the Fund but also CIO’s operational focus.

On just transition and economic resilience, the guidelines and operational focus both matter.

These funds are being directed towards two refinery communities. The [anticipated closure of all or a majority of the Bay Area oil refineries](#) by 2045 will have a disproportionate effect on jobs as well as local tax revenue for critical services. The best way to promote economic resilience in the region is to promote high road economic development projects that keep and recirculate money in the region and ensure high-quality jobs are created on these projects. Local workers, local businesses, and local residents spend locally. While perhaps the Guidelines cannot legally restrict out-of-region organizations from applying, you can condition funding on the use of local content, local suppliers, and high labor standards that support the people that live and work in the region. It is possible that such a signal could even attract clean manufactures and suppliers to these communities.

VI. Strengthen and Clarify Just Transition and Economic Resilience (Section 4.3)

The Guidelines’ “Build Economic Resilience for a Just Transition” strategy correctly recognizes that transitions away from fossil fuels can cause profound disruptions. We applaud the Air District for including this important strategy as a core element of the Guidelines, reflecting the very real pressures Bay Area refinery communities are facing in the energy transition and the valuable role the Air District can play in advancing a Just Transition.

We recommend strengthening this section with clarity on the principles of Just Transition. Specifically, it is important to articulate [Just Transition as a worker and community-centered framework](#) that seeks to ensure the successful support and transition of fossil fuel workers and communities to a new, just economy powered. This new economy, powered by clean energy, centers the shared goals of quality jobs, community health, and economic resilience—informed by the leadership and engagement of those workers and communities that are most impacted.

A Just Transition requires proactive, intentional planning, deep engagement, establishment of social safety nets and economic diversification rooted in quality job creation, among other activities to mitigate economic disruption for workers and municipalities dependent on fossil fuel jobs and tax revenue. We suggest CIO consider revising Section 4.3 (Economic Resilience) to explicitly state:

“Communities experiencing the transition away from fossil fuels face disproportionate economic risks, including job loss, wage declines, reduced stability for workers and families, loss of local tax revenue supporting essential community services, and ongoing disinvestment. Economic resilience strategies should provide

targeted, community-directed support that addresses these impacts while fostering long-term clean-economy development and economic diversification.”

The current phrasing (“such as benefits in air quality and public health” p.9) conflates environmental outcomes with economic resilience, weakening the integrity of both goals. These should be complementary but distinct.

VII. Consider how the Fund can be a force multiplier supporting a robust multi-sectoral decarbonization economy

Bay Area Air District AAQMD Rules 9.4 and 9.6 are market-creating regulations. With nearly 2.8 million households in the Bay Area Air District region, the zero NOx regulations will stimulate demand for 140,000 to 190,000 residential heat pumps and heat pump water heaters per year. To put this into context, total market demand for HPWH across the US is just 190,000. Nationally, demand is projected to double by 2030, thus current manufacturers are already looking to expand production. Under a full compliance scenario, the Air District region will be leading the expansion of heat pump demand in the US. The geographic concentration of demand for these appliances in the Bay Area coupled with strong incentives and support for manufacturers to expand in traditional refinery communities could support both decarbonization and air quality efforts, while also catalyzing long-term economic and employment benefits from the manufacturing and installation of these compliant appliances. This multi-sectoral approach would help rebuild the tax base affected by refinery closures and signal that these communities are eager for investment and ready to lead in US clean energy manufacturing. The Air District should consider broader policy and market conditions in evaluating and recommending proposals for funding.

VIII. Expand Eligible Project Types

We recommend adding the following *eligible projects* (underlined and italicized) or *clarifications* (italicized) :

Clean Air Technologies:

Promote local clean energy technologies such as solar, wind, geothermal, *virtual power plants, battery storage, and clean energy equipment and supply chain manufacturing* with an emphasis on local high-wage job creation and training.

Examples:

Seed worker-to-owner conversions of maintenance or installation businesses for solar.

- *It's not particularly clear what this means. Are you suggesting efforts to support workers to train for and become licensed contractors, access financing, and other barrier removal?*

~~Utilize local solar providers to install solar on public buildings.~~ Install solar, batteries and/or heat pump systems on public buildings, community centers or other public infrastructure utilizing local firms that meet specified labor standards (see comment XI below).

~~Innovation centers and training programs at community colleges.~~ Develop a clean energy technology innovation center, catalyzing the long-term growth of new clean energy industries and supply chains in the region that have the potential to create high-quality jobs and advance the region's Just Transition and economic resilience goals, in partnership with the clean tech industry, local labor unions, educational institutions, local government and other entities

Zonal decarbonization pilots that would include neighborhood electrical panel upgrades, heat pump installation, and other decarbonization technologies, aligned with SB1221 legislation.

Green Infrastructure and Urban Greening:

Expand green spaces by planting trees, creating community gardens, restoring urban wetlands, new parks, land use conversion, and multi-benefit use projects. Projects should be designed according to applicable standards for air quality benefits.

Examples:

Plant trees and shrubs as part of targeted vegetative buffers (e.g., along heavily trafficked roadways or along industrial/residential boundaries)

Establish community gardens or plant nurseries on public or underutilized land

Convert asphalt schoolyards into green schoolyards

Retrofit existing public facilities with vegetated or permeable features

Establish living/green walls and co-beneficial stormwater infrastructure that supports greening initiatives

Restore degraded wetlands and shoreline areas that can improve air and water quality in pollution-burdened communities, as well as increasing community access to nature

Wage subsidies or wage supports to retain or expand public and unionized employment for such projects.

Climate Resilience:

~~Workforce development~~ Wage subsidies and training for public trail and park maintenance programs

~~Workforce development programs to employ~~ Wage subsidies and training for public first responders in local hazard mitigation efforts

Programs to help community members build supplementary air filtered exchange (SAFE) boxes

Planning, development, launch or administration of public cooling centers or resilience hubs to increase a community's ability to withstand extreme heat impacts

Transitional Economic Support/ Resilience and Just Transition Support:

Planning for community stabilization and worker support in response to energy market transitions.

Examples:

Fund fossil fuel worker transition and case management programs, to support displaced fossil fuel workers secure quality new employment, minimizing economic hardship, led by or in close collaboration with impacted unions

Fund pilot projects for providing ~~Provide employer wage parity for displaced fossil fuel workers moving into new industries, where there is a gap in wages from their previous position, led by or in close collaboration with impacted unions.~~ bonuses to firms that hire eligible workers at or above prevailing wage for ≥ 12 months and support the transition away from fossil fuels

Fund pilot projects to establish bridge-to-retirement stipends for fossil fuel workers laid off within five years of pension eligibility, led by or in close collaboration with impacted unions

Fund pilot projects for a local tax remediation fund, that provides funding to city, county and/or special districts that face a significant, sudden drop off of tax revenue as a result of a closure or downsizing of a fossil fuel facility, allowing the city/county/special district time to advance tax revenue diversification and budgetary adjustments and avoid or minimize significant layoffs or reduction in public services

Integrate paid apprenticeships for laid-off refinery workers, ensuring a direct job bridge

- *It's unclear to us what this means. Are you suggesting that refinery workers should enter apprenticeship programs or are you suggesting that state-registered apprentices should be employed on funding projects? It's better not to be overly prescriptive about who apprenticeships should be more or which apprentices should be hired.*

Offer stipends for contractors to attend HVAC, solar, or EV charger installation training at union-affiliated programs, community colleges or other similar opportunities.

Capitalize zero-interest loan programs for residents to do any of the above projects.

Use funds as a credit enhancement to incentivize existing lenders to lower interest rates and consumer borrowing costs for any of the above projects.

Establish a Revolving Loan and/or Pre-Development Fund for Community-Based Projects to build local capacity, stretch public funds, advance community ownership and good jobs, and support durable, long-term economic resilience beyond the immediate grant cycle.

Subsidies for expansion or new factory investment in clean technologies that improve air quality, e.g. heat pumps, HPWH, and induction stoves to meet local demand and create good, long-term manufacturing jobs.

IX. Portfolio-Level Balancing of Short- and Long-Term Benefits

Not all quality projects can or should deliver both short-term air quality improvements and long-term economic resilience. The Guidelines should clarify that these goals will be balanced at the **portfolio** level—not forced into every project. This allows:

- Catalyst Grants to support durable, structural investments;
- Opportunity Grants to deliver community-rooted innovations;
- Seed Grants to support early-stage development and experimentation; and turnkey projects to deliver immediate public health benefits.

X. Tiered Labor Standards by Grant Type

Because Catalyst, Opportunity, and Seed grants vary significantly in size and complexity, tiered labor standards will ensure job quality, local economic benefit, and alignment with Just Transition principles.

XI. Proposed Tiered Labor Standards by Grant Type

Because Catalyst, Opportunity, and Seed grants vary widely in scale, complexity, and risk, labor standards should be tiered, ensuring that larger projects adhere to stronger requirements while preserving flexibility for smaller community-driven projects.

A. Catalyst Grants (\$10–\$40 million; 5-year term; multiple Co-Applicants)

Recommended Standards (highest tier):

1. **Prevailing Wage** and reporting requirements (California Labor Code § 1720, *et seq.*) for all construction, installation, and technical work.
2. **Healthcare**: Provide a minimum equivalent of Covered California Silver Level Coverage paying at least 85% of the premium for full time employees, including paying at least 75% of the premium for family and dependents, if applicable.
3. **Apprenticeship**: Hire Contractors that participate in joint labor-management and state-registered apprenticeship programs.
4. **Above average compensation for non-construction work** benchmarked to BLS 75th percentile for appropriate industry and occupation.
5. **Priority recruitment** for 1) workers laid off or facing layoffs from refineries, 2) immediate family members of workers laid off, and 3) residents from Disadvantaged Communities impacted by refinery pollution, including youth and limited-english proficient residents.
6. **Labor peace agreements** for projects involving long-term operations.

7. **Pledge that operating workers will have a free and fair chance to form or join a union**, as evidenced by existing Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), neutrality agreement with card check union recognition, pledge to let union organizers access non-work sites, commitment to negotiate and settle first contracts, pledge to refrain from captive audience meetings, or other similar commitments.

Rationale: Catalyst Grants represent the highest funding levels and the greatest risk that benefits could flow to external contractors or consultants rather than communities or create poverty-level jobs.

B. Opportunity Grants (\$500,000–\$5 million; 3-year term)

Recommended Standards (moderate tier):

1. **Prevailing Wage** and reporting requirements (California Labor Code § 1720, *et seq.*) for all construction, installation, and technical work.
2. **Healthcare**: Provide a minimum equivalent of Covered California Platinum Level Coverage paying at least 85% of the premium for full time employees, including paying at least 75% of the premium for family and dependents, if applicable.
3. **Apprenticeship**: Hire Contractors that participate in joint labor-management and state-registered apprenticeship programs.
4. **Above average compensation for non-construction work** benchmarked to BLS 75th percentile for appropriate industry and occupation.
5. **Priority recruitment**: for 1) workers laid off or facing layoffs from refineries, 2) immediate family members of workers laid off, and 3) residents from other residents of areas impacted by refinery Disadvantaged Communities impacted by refinery pollution, including youth and limited-english proficient residents pollutionair quality.

Rationale: These projects involve meaningful capital or service delivery but should not be burdened with Catalyst-level requirements.

C. Seed Grants (\$100,000–\$200,000; nonprofit-only)

Recommended Standards (light tier):

1. **Basic worker protection standards** (wage and hour, classification, OSHA).
2. **Responsible employer statement** outlining contractor/vendor practices that align with strong labor standards.
3. **Scoring preference** for local or community-based organizations committed to recruiting for funded project work 80% from “Priority Recruitment” populations identified above.

Rationale: Seed grants support early-stage, community-led project development that must remain nimble. These are unlikely to be large capital projects.

Conclusion

The draft Guidelines provide a strong foundation for advancing air quality and public health in heavily burdened communities. Strengthening the integrity of Just Transition, clarifying roles and scoring, adopting tiered labor standards, and expanding eligible economic resilience tools—particularly revolving loan and pre-development funds—will maximize durable benefits and support community-rooted solutions.

The UC Berkeley Labor Center appreciates the Bay Area Air District's leadership and looks forward to continued engagement.

Comments on the Draft Guidelines for the Local Community Benefits Fund

From Vicki Dennis [REDACTED]

Date Mon 11/24/2025 4:59 PM

To **BAAQMD** Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>; Vanessa Johnson <vjohnson@baaqmd.gov>; Marcy Hiratzka <mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov>

Cc syoung@ci.benicia.ca.us <syoung@ci.benicia.ca.us>; Terry Scott <TScott@ci.benicia.ca.us>; Mario Giuliani <MGiuliani@ci.benicia.ca.us>

November 24, 2025

To the Bay Area District Board of Directors -- I am a resident of Benicia and am very concerned about the economic future of my city with the withdrawal of Valero and the dollars they pump into our local economy. While I am a longtime critic of Valero and the damage the refinery does to our air quality and health, the reality is that the departure in such a short time will leave the city in a difficult budgetary situation. Ultimately, we will survive as a community and be stronger and healthier as a result, but in the meantime, we need a bridge as we work toward this transition.

For years, we have suffered from the damage to our air from the refinery's activities, some documented, others ultimately uncovered by the Air District, resulting in the current \$82 million fine levied against Valero for its years of undisclosed toxic emissions. Now we are facing even more damage to our city as the refinery pulls out. While our air will be cleaner and we will be a healthier community, our budgetary picture is bleak.

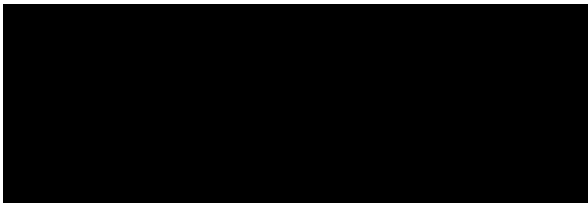
As a result of the fine, various Benicia projects could be funded with \$60 million relating to air quality improvements. While I applaud that goal, it is the mechanism for the dispersing of those dollars that I ask the Air District to reconsider. Ours is a small city with limited staff, and we are possibly facing even further reductions because of our budget crisis. We do not have the staff to successfully facilitate the complex grant application process that is currently in place.

Our city leaders are working hard to bring about a vision for our future, but it will take time and money to allow us to achieve it. I strongly support Mayor Steve Young's proposal to the Air District that \$25 million over five years from that \$60 million should go for budget support to help Benicia through the imminent loss of Valero revenues, calculated at about \$10 million per year or a total of \$50 million over five years. I urge you to reconsider the funding mechanism to allow these dollars to be used for budget support as we re-create a strong Benicia that looks to the future. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Vicki Byrum Dennis

Vicki Byrum Dennis



Comments on the Draft Guidelines for the Local Community Benefits Fund

From Andy Shaw [REDACTED]

Date Tue 11/25/2025 12:49 PM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

Cc syoung@ci.benicia.ca.us <syoung@ci.benicia.ca.us>; tscott@ci.benicia.ca.us <tscott@ci.benicia.ca.us>; MGiuliani@ci.benicia.ca.us <MGiuliani@ci.benicia.ca.us>

[REDACTED]

Honored recipients,

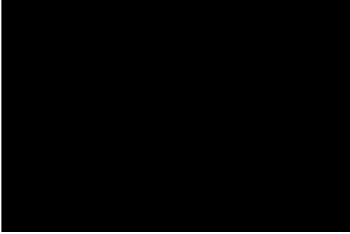
I write as a 30+ year resident of Benicia, having lived the entire time under the shadow of the Valero Refinery and its predecessor owner/operators. My home lies within sight, hearing, and smell of the operation and I have been a direct witness to multiple instances of airborne release that gave me concern at the time and yet I only came to learn later were likely to have had serious impacts on my health and that of my family and neighbors. As a member of the community I have been sensitive to the critical financial role that the refinery played over these years and I do not wish to seem ungrateful for that support. However, in my opinion, the impact of that operation on the citizens of this community far exceeds any remuneration that the company has voluntarily provided or been forced to provide through fines and rulings over this time. I've always felt that the refinery conducted operations in such a way as to keep the community at arm's length and it has been clear that many accidents have happened due to poor management or even possibly neglectful policies that elevate profit over safety. For example, I've always been curious as to why we are subject to some of the foulest emissions from the refinery only at night and it has made me suspicious about what sorts of things they were doing under cover of darkness. Is the refinery a necessary evil that we must tolerate and even participate in the playing down of risks in order to maintain a particular level of municipal standards? I would argue not and that our community has been more than tolerant of clearly unsafe operation of this supposedly good neighbor. It is time that we take care of ourselves in face of the threat that Valero will cease operations and take their coveted revenues elsewhere.

I would advocate therefore, that the majority of the Local Community Benefits Fund be funneled back into the community that has borne the brunt of the toxic legacy that belongs to Valero alone. I don't think this is a greedy expectation and I wonder what sort of impact the years of toxic emissions have had on the other communities being considered. Arguably, the community that is nestled directly beneath the smoke stacks of this operation is the most impacted. Clearly, impacts must be proportional to proximity. The consideration that includes the financial impact of Valera's imminent departure on the ongoing Benicia city budget is quite compelling and certainly puts Benicia at the forefront of any recipients that would have claims in that realm. However, my feeling is that injured parties who are the direct victims of Valera's ingenuous performance over the years, conducted behind the mask of a silent, benevolent corporate "friend", are far and away the most deserving beneficiaries

of this fund. If it must come in the form of shoring up a city budget that has come to rely on the benevolent corporate friend, then I would of course support such a distribution. However I would also encourage some consideration of how to benefit the victims perhaps even more directly if such a possibility existed. I find it difficult to extend the label of victim to people who live many miles away and are not accustomed to being awakened at night by the acrid, cloying stench of some questionable refinery operation being conducted while the innocent folk living nearby sleep.

Sincerely,

Andy Shaw





Benicia Community Foundation, Inc.

Investing in the Promise of Benicia by connecting people and resources to benefit all who live, work, and play in Benicia

David Batchelor
Chairman

Donna Koontz
Secretary

Bobbie White
Treasurer

Leeann Cawley
Board Member

Dan-ell Doi
Board Member

John Takekawa
Advisory Board

Steven Green
CPA/Agent of Record

Email Information
info@beniciacfb.org

Mailing Address
Benicia Community
Foundation

November 25th, 2025

Bay Area Air Quality Management District Board

375 Beale Street, Suite 600
San Francisco, CA 94105

City of Benicia Leadership

250 East L Street
Benicia, CA 94510

RE: Request for Allocation of Annual Interest Earnings from Benicia's Remaining Valero Penalty Funds to Support Local Nonprofits and Community Services

Dear Members of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District Board and City of Benicia Leadership,

On behalf of the **Benicia Community Foundation (BCF)**, I respectfully submit the attached proposal requesting that up to **100% of the annual interest earnings** generated from Benicia's remaining share of the Valero penalty settlement be directed to BCF for distribution to local nonprofits and community-serving programs.

The **Benicia Community Foundation** is a **Benicia-based, Benicia-focused 501(c)(3)** philanthropic organization devoted entirely to strengthening the health, stability, and quality of life of our residents. BCF was created to help Benicia's nonprofits, youth programs, arts organizations, social services, and community resources, all rooted directly in the city we serve.

BCF has a long-standing and trusted partnership with the **City of Benicia**, collaborating closely with City leadership and local organizations to enhance services, increase nonprofit capacity, and strengthen our civic and cultural fabric. Our work includes providing direct funding to help offset costs for major community traditions such as the **Fourth of July Fireworks**, and the **Holiday Tree Lighting** public celebrations that bring our community together and supporting nonprofits through fundraising, grant development, resource coordination, and strategic planning.

To ensure strong financial stewardship, BCF is structured with professional systems and controls suitable for managing large-scale community funds. We have **contracted with LTD Global**, an accounting firm specializing in nonprofit financial management, compliance, and audit-ready reporting. This partnership ensures that all funds entrusted to BCF are administered with industry-standard accuracy, transparency, and fiduciary responsibility. Our governance structure, financial controls, and partnerships position BCF to manage the Valero-related interest-earnings program effectively and with full accountability to the City, the Air District, and the community.

As **Valero winds down its operations**, Benicia faces two critical losses:

1. A significant decline in annual municipal revenue, and
2. The disappearance of long-standing corporate philanthropy that has historically supported our schools, youth sports, arts programs, food security efforts, senior services, and many essential nonprofit activities.

This loss will create immediate and long- term hardship for Benicia’s residents and nonprofits, particularly in a county that already receives **less than 1% of Bay Area philanthropic investment**. The organizations that care for our community—our food programs, youth organizations, arts groups, senior services, and social support nonprofits—now face rising needs with diminishing resources.

BCF is uniquely positioned to help fill this gap. We are rooted in Benicia, accountable to the community, and structured to administer these funds with professional oversight and transparent reporting. Our strong partnership with the City ensures alignment with community priorities, and our capacity to support nonprofits allows us to distribute funds equitably and effectively where they are most needed.

Directing the **annual interest earnings** from the remaining Valero penalty funds to BCF will sustain essential programs, protect services during this transition, and ensure that community benefit dollars directly support the people most impacted by refinery operations. Equally important, this structure keeps the **principal intact** under BAAD stewardship for long-term environmental and community-benefit purposes.

We deeply appreciate your leadership and your thoughtful consideration of this request. BCF stands ready to administer and steward these resources with the highest standards of transparency, accountability, and community partnership. Our commitment to Benicia is long-standing and unwavering, and we look forward to continuing our shared work to build a healthy, vibrant, and resilient community.

Thank you for your time, partnership, and service to the residents of Benicia.

With appreciation,



David Batchelor

Chair – Benicia Community Foundation



Proposal to the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAD) Benicia Community Resilience Funding Program (BCRF)

Executive Summary (November 25th, 2025)

The Benicia Community Foundation (BCF) respectfully requests authorization from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAD) to allocate up to 100% of the annual interest earnings generated from Benicia's remaining portion of the \$56 million Valero penalty fund— after planned principal reductions of \$5 million per year for five years—to support Benicia-based nonprofits and community-serving programs beginning in Fiscal Year 2026.

This proposal ensures that *all interest earned from the remaining balance* is directed toward local community benefit during a period of significant transition, while preserving the principal under BAAD stewardship for its broader environmental and regional commitments.

Background & Purpose

The closure and departure of Valero's Benicia operations have created two simultaneous challenges:

1. Major loss of city revenue (estimated at \$10 million annually), and
2. Loss of substantial philanthropic support previously provided by Valero to Benicia's schools, youth programs, arts organizations, social services, and food assistance programs.

These combined impacts place immediate pressure on Benicia's nonprofit sector—the very organizations that form the foundation of community stability and resilience.

Solano County already receives less than 1% of Bay Area philanthropic investment, making Benicia especially vulnerable as traditional sources of support disappear.

The Benicia Community Foundation proposes a practical, equitable, and sustainable solution: dedicate up to 100% of the annual interest earnings from Benicia's remaining penalty -fund principal to community-serving nonprofits, ensuring continuity of vital services for residents.

Proposed Structure

Principal Reduction

To meet City of Benicia obligations and BAAD program commitments, the proposal acknowledges:

- A principal reduction of \$5 million per year for five years,
- Resulting in a total reduction of \$25 million from the initial \$56 million allocation.

This leaves an estimated \$31 million average investable balance over the first five-year period.

Interest-Only Allocation

BCF requests that up to 100% of the annual interest earnings generated from the *remaining* principal be directed to BCF for nonprofit grant distribution. This principle would be reduced further with local allocations.

This structure:

- Preserves the core principle for future District-guided projects,
- Ensures ongoing community benefit during Benicia's economic transition,
- And avoids depletion or erosion of long-term capital.

Projected Funding Capacity

Using conservative public-fund investment rates (approximately 4%): These projects will change as funds are further allocated. Example:

Year Est. Avg. Principal Gross Interest Allocation to BCF (100%) Nonprofit Grants			
2026 \$56 M	\$2.24 M	\$2.24 M	\$2.24 M
2027 \$51 M	\$2.04 M	\$2.04 M	\$2.04 M
2028 \$46 M	\$1.84 M	\$1.84 M	\$1.84 M
2029 \$41 M	\$1.64 M	\$1.64 M	\$1.64 M
2030 \$36 M	\$1.44 M	\$1.44 M	\$1.44 M

Result:

BCF can distribute approximately \$1.4M–\$2.2M annually in grants to Benicia nonprofits, depending on the remaining balance and interest rate.

This level of investment ensures that:

- Local nonprofits remain stable during the refinery transition,
- Food assistance, youth services, arts programming, seniors and community safety nets remain intact,
- Community resilience is strengthened without touching BAAD's core principle.

Administration & Governance

The Benicia Community Foundation will administer the Benicia Community Resilience Funding Program with:

- Independent Advisory Oversight, including potential representatives from:
 - BAAD
 - The City of Benicia
 - The Benicia Community Foundation
 - Education, health, and community equity sectors
- Annual Audits performed by an independent CPA firm
- Quarterly reporting of receipts and grant disbursements
- Public transparency through a dedicated webpage and annual outcomes report
- Administrative costs capped at 5% or less

Eligible Use Areas

Funds will be awarded through a competitive, transparent grant process with priority given to organizations providing:

- Youth and education support (BUSD enrichment, after-school programs, counseling)
- Food security and basic needs (Benicia Community Action Council, senior services)
- Arts and culture programs fostering wellbeing and community engagement
- Youth sports and recreation access and inclusion
- Health, equity, and community-support initiatives that protect vulnerable residents

Expected Outcomes

Immediate Benefits:

- Prevents collapse or reduction of core nonprofit services.
- Maintains youth programs, arts access, and community well-being.
- Helps protect local families during economic transition.

Long-Term Benefits:

- Provides a stable, predictable community funding source during years of declining city revenue.
- Ensures compliance with BAAD's Community Benefits framework.
- Establishes a model that other small Bay Area cities can adopt when facing similar industry transitions.

Conclusion

This proposal offers a balanced, responsible, and high-impact approach to reinvesting the interest generated from Benicia's remaining share of the Valero penalty settlement.

By allocating 100% of annual interest earnings to support local nonprofits—and preserving the principal under BAAD governance—this structure ensures that the funds deliver measurable, ongoing community benefit, strengthen resiliency, and uphold the Air District's commitment to the people most affected by refinery operations.

Alignment with BAAD Community & Economic Resilience Principles

The Benicia Community Foundation's request for the interest generated by Benicia's remaining Valero penalty funds is grounded firmly in the Bay Area Air District's own Community Benefits Penalty Funds Policy and the stated purpose of the Local Community Benefits Fund.

BAAD has publicly established that the penalty funds policy is designed to direct significant resources back into the communities where violations occurred, especially those that have been disproportionately impacted by air pollution. The Local Community Benefits Fund is explicitly intended to reinvest penalty funds into community-driven solutions that improve public health, reduce pollution, and support a just transition for affected residents. [BAAD+2BAAD+2](#)

In official communications regarding the Valero settlement, it has also been stated that more than \$64 million of the penalty total is designed specifically to support the local community around the refinery, financing projects that reduce air pollution exposure, mitigate air-pollution impacts, and improve public health in Benicia and surrounding neighborhoods. [Benicia City Government](#)

In Benicia, these objectives cannot be met by infrastructure alone. They depend on a network of local nonprofits and community organizations that:

- Deliver food and nutrition support to low-income families and seniors;
- Provide youth programs, recreation, and mentorship that protect children from the health and social harms of economic disruption;
- Offer arts, culture, and community-building activities that strengthen mental health and social cohesion; and
- Support vulnerable residents—including elders, people with disabilities, and those with chronic health conditions—who are most affected by both air quality and economic stress.

These organizations are, in practice, the front-line infrastructure of community and economic resilience. By ensuring residents have food, care, social support, and safe, constructive spaces for youth, they directly contribute to the health, stability, and adaptive capacity of the community during and after the refinery transition.

Directing up to 100% of the annual interest earnings from Benicia's remaining penalty fund principal to local nonprofits, administered through the Benicia Community Foundation, is therefore:

- Consistent with BAAD's Community Benefits policy, which calls for penalty funds to be reinvested in impacted communities in ways that support health and mitigation of pollution impacts; [BAAD+1](#)
- Aligned with the Local Community Benefits Fund's focus on public health, pollution reduction, and a just transition for refinery-impacted areas; [BAAD+1](#)
- And responsive to the real-world structure of resilience in Benicia, where nonprofit organizations are essential partners in protecting residents' health, well-being, and long-term economic stability.

For these reasons, BCF respectfully submits that channeling the interest earnings from the Valero penalty funds to Benicia's nonprofit sector is not only appropriate, but is one of the most direct, effective, and policy-aligned ways to fulfill the community and economic resilience goals embedded in the Air District's framework.

Outlook

Re: My Comments on the Proposed Draft Guidelines for Air District's Community Investments Office, Local Community Benefits Fund

From Emi Wang [REDACTED]

Date Tue 11/25/2025 1:30 PM

To Bodil Fox [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Hi Bodil

Thank you for your public comment regarding the Draft Guidelines for the LocalCommunity Investment Fund, The Community Investments Office has received your submission and willinclude it in the record for consideration as part of the public comment process.

We appreciate your time and thoughtful engagement in helping shape this important community program.

Best regards,
Community Investments Office
Bay Area Air Quality Management District

Emi Wang (she/her)

Community Investments Officer

Community Investments Office

Bay Area Air District
[REDACTED]



Bay Area Air District

CLEAN AIR FOR ALL



Book time to meet with me

From: Bodil Fox [REDACTED]

Sent: Tuesday, November 25, 2025 1:25 PM

To: Emi Wang [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

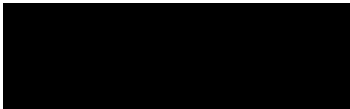
Subject: My Comments on the Proposed Draft Guidelines for Air District's Community Investments Office, Local Community Benefits Fund
[REDACTED]

To the Air District's Community Investment Office,

I know you are busy reviewing all the comments suggesting how to distribute the Local Community Benefits Funds. I would like to suggest that you think big and long-term. Ask questions addressing long-term needs that require larger funds. What would be most needed for a clean future for the area? One area would be sea level rise and how to protect local communities. Or how to explore and develop new clean energy that is needed in 25 years? Or can all roads be made with new, strong solar panels?

There are many directions to distribute the Local Community Benefits Funds. I encourage you to be BOLD.

Cheers,
Bodil



Outlook

Usage of Valero Fines

From Chris Kerz [REDACTED]

Date Tue 11/25/2025 8:12 AM

To **BMQMD** Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

[REDACTED]

As a long term resident and Vice -Chair of Benicia's Economic Development Board, I recommend a balanced approach in sharing the proceeds from this fine. It is clear that Benicia has been harmed by both the long term polluting event and by Valero's scheduled pullout which adds insult to injury. Benicia deserves some compensation for both which can be used to fill in short-term budgetary gaps and attract new non-polluting businesses contributing to the long term economic health of the City.

Best Regards,
Christopher Kerz

Contra Costa Building and Construction Trades Council

2727 Alhambra Ave. Suite 5
Martinez, CA 94553



Tim Sbranti
Executive Director
Phone(925)228-0900

November 25, 2025

Sent Via Email
communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov.

Re: Local Community Investment Fund grant program - Draft Guidelines

Dear Air District Board and Staff,

On behalf of the Contra Costa Building and Construction Trades Council, I am writing to express appreciation for the Air District's efforts to direct Local Community Investment (LCI) Fund resources toward projects that improve public health, advance equitable climate action, and provide meaningful community and worker benefits in Richmond and Benicia. The goals expressed in the draft guidelines are good. Our suggestions for the draft are aimed at strengthening these outcomes and to tailoring solutions to address the different context of the two different settings.

To begin with, Benicia faces the prospect of imminent loss that is wholesale for both workers and the community. They will need what is in essence first aid for acute trauma. Richmond, is less at risk for an immediate closure, and presents an opportunity to focus more on strategic investments with a long game in mind. Because these are different circumstances, we think it would be wise to accommodate different weighting of goals for the two.

We encourage the Air District to prioritize projects that advance all three of the District's goals simultaneously-public health, climate benefits, and just transition-and to award the highest scores to proposals that demonstrate leadership on all fronts.

We recommend the following specific program priorities and criteria be incorporated or emphasized in the final guidelines:

- Prioritize High-Quality, Union Jobs and Just Transition Benefits

As the region transitions to zero-emission buildings and transportation systems, it is essential that affected workers and communities benefit. Projects should be prioritized when they create high-road jobs, provide access to joint labor management apprenticeship pathways, and deliver long-term union employment opportunities in clean energy. This helps ensure the clean energy transition does not result in a loss of union density in fossil-fuel-dependent communities. For Catalyst or Opportunity grants, a best practice we would like to see used in either county for any project type that entails \$1 million or more in construction work is to utilize a Project Labor Agreement with the Local Building Trades Council.

- Prioritize SB 1221 pilot projects for zonal decarbonization that are backed by the local Building Trades Council, CBOs and the local jurisdiction. These programs offer a chance to demonstrate a cost effective approach to deploying union labor at scale under aggregated contracts to do high quality work in low income neighborhoods. They will help accelerate compliance with Rules 9-4 & 9-6 and deliver substantial public-health improvements, emissions reductions, and indoor air-quality benefits.
- For Zonal Decarb Programs, Allow Funding Flexibility to *Cover* Homes Not Eligible for Income-Restricted Programs

Zonal decarbonization efforts hold the potential to harness avoided costs to help pay for decarbonization work, but can't enjoy this benefit unless *every* home in the target zone fully electrifies. Since low income neighborhoods typically include some households that can't income qualify, a fully income qualified targeted program such as the CEC's Equitable Building Decarbonization Program can't on their own finance a zonal project. Rather, such funds need to be leveraged with more flexible funding that can cover those households that don't income qualify. We would like to encourage the Air District fund allow flexibility to serve this leveraging function for zonal decarb projects.

Thank you in advance of your consideration of these recommendations, and I look forward to collaborating with you moving forward. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Tim Sbranti
Executive Director
Contra Costa Building and
Construction Trades Council
tsbranti@ccbtrades.com

Bay Area Air District Local Community Investment Fund Grant Program
Public Comment on Draft Guidelines from Contra Costa County Department of
Conservation & Development

Regarding the Draft Guidelines for the Community Benefits Fund for Benicia, Richmond, and surrounding areas, Contra Costa County Department of Conservation & Development respectfully submits the following comments and recommendations for consideration:

- To the list of eligible projects that are included but not limited to (p.4, Appendix B), add: *“economic development strategies including methods to attract clean technology, advanced manufacturing and other clean and green industries; infrastructure real estate and capital strategies; catalytic investments in industries with inclusive growth opportunities; opportunities for small business support, entrepreneurship, and innovation hubs; support for career pathways for displaced and at-risk workers; support for regional education, training and apprenticeship programs; and tools to support redevelopment of former industrial and brownfield sites.”*
- To the list of goals that the CIO has identified (p.5-6), add the following:
 - Collaborate with impacted communities to identify and prioritize air quality *“and economic and workforce”* related needs and solutions.
 - Ensure investments are aligned with community needs by engaging local *“government”* leaders, non-profits, businesses, *“impacted workers,”* and community members.
 - When evaluating project proposals for alignment and consistency with Section 4.1, Strategies (p.9), we encourage the Air District to prioritize gap funding for existing programs that fill key barriers that support air pollution reduction and health outcomes.
- To the project goal (pp.4,10) that states “build economic resilience for a just transition,” add: *“by attracting and retaining high-wage, family-sustaining jobs suitable for local residents, particularly residents of impacted communities; attracting and retaining industries that are good neighbors and reduce and minimize greenhouse gas emissions and the pollution burden on neighboring communities; enabling the existing workforce and existing residents of impacted communities to compete for jobs in new and sustained industries close to where they live; maintaining and expanding the tax base; and building thriving communities in areas that have previously been impacted.”*

Comments on Draft Guidelines for Draft Local Community Benefits Fund

From Craig Snider [REDACTED]

Date Tue 11/25/2025 4:47 PM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>; Marcy Hiratzka <mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov>; Vanessa Johnson <vjohnson@baaqmd.gov>

[REDACTED]

Having been a Benicia Resident since 2003, it was disturbing to learn of Valero Refinery's 15-year illegal release of toxic emissions. During that time I've had several friends die or suffer from cancers likely related to Valero emissions. I don't think Benicia would have welcomed an oil refinery had residents known the degree and type of unregulated toxic air pollution they would be subjected to for decades.

I welcome the \$60 million dollar fine and while it won't relieve the illness and death likely linked to refinery pollution, it does provide an opportunity to improve the lives of Benicians remaining in town.

My concern is that the way the guidelines are drafted, **little** (if any) benefit will accrue to current residents. Sure, it would be great to seek ways to reduce air pollution through various local projects, but that doesn't begin to right a wrong. Creating onerous detailed requirements for marginally beneficial projects won't begin to address the egregious behavior of the refinery.

Now, to add insult to injury, the Valero has announced its closure in the coming year. Indeed, many Benicians have been concerned about the loss of tax revenue due to the closure of the refinery as fossil fuels are phased out. However, our city was surprised by the relatively sudden announcement of Valero's closure and is not prepared to finance city government in the wake of such lost tax revenue. The loss of \$5 million+ per year will have a major impact on city services including health and safety.

Therefore, in light of Valero's malfeasance and their impacts on Benician's health, it seems only fair that a large chunk of the \$60 million be given to Benicia to assist with our transition to an economy not reliant on refinery taxes.

Therefore, I support Mayor Steve Young's proposal to allocate \$25 million, over 5 years, to be used for budget support during the first years following closure of the Valero refinery. Thanks.

Craig Snider
[REDACTED]



November 25, 2025

Re: Local Community Investment Fund Grant Program - Draft Guidelines

Dear Air District Board and Staff,

CTWI is a non-profit partner to the Building Trades with focused hubs in the Bay Area and in the DC-Baltimore Metro region. We were formed to institutionalize support for targeted hire policies in project labor agreements to ensure their success. We advance economic justice by strengthening pathways into family-sustaining union construction careers for women, minorities, residents of low income communities, the justice impacted and veterans.

For several years, we have focused considerable attention on the development of strategies to make new green economy jobs good jobs, to ensure that the clean energy transition does not result in a loss of union density in fossil-fuel-dependent communities. The East and North Bay are ground zero for this work as this area has the highest concentration of fossil fuel workers in the State.

We see the Air District's Local Community Investment Fund priorities potentially aligning well with the approaches we have sought to foster. We would like to commend the District for focusing its local investment funds on projects that will contribute to public health, climate benefits and a just transition.

One key challenge is to be intentional about meeting job quality objectives. Another is to be inclusive. A best practice that can contribute to both of these goals is to utilize a Project Labor Agreement that features a targeted hire policy. We would recommend working with the local Building Trade Council to use this strategy for every project that entails a construction component larger than 1 million. If you are clear about advertising this preference in your RFP, we you will attract proposals that better align with the needs of working people.

One type of project we would especially like to see utilize a project labor agreement is an SB 1221 zonal decarbonization pilot. These programs offer a chance to demonstrate a cost effective approach to deploying union labor at scale under aggregated contracts to do high quality work in low income neighborhoods. They will



help accelerate compliance with Rules 9-4 & 9-6 and deliver substantial public-health improvements, emissions reductions, and indoor air-quality benefits. This type of program should be a priority for larger grants.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Frank'.

Tim Frank

CTWI Board Member and Policy Advisor

Comments on Draft Community Benefits Fund

November 25, 2025

These grants are a wonderful opportunity for community organizations to pull out their wish list, or increase the areas of successful work they're already doing to improve the health of their community. Thank you for letting the community be in the driver seat.

That being said, determining who has the capacity, or partners who share the top priority, or agreement on who needs to be added to the table to fill a missing role, takes building on relationships and often additional help and training.

It would be helpful for the Air District to clearly state the areas where they can help and those they can't. I couldn't find Appendix B. I encourage the CIO to offer technical assistance to under sourced applicants. It seems that every applicant will need a fiscal partner in order to verify use of funds and file tax returns.

How will the fiscal sponsor partner be paid for their services, since the administrative fee needs to cover costs of the ongoing work over the required time frame?

We need to remember that not everyone who submits an application has the capacity to even submit an application given the economics of the day. It will be on them to find a partner.

The administration fee is listed as 12%. I encourage you increase this amount to 15%. A different budget-based system would allow some upfront start-up funds. This would help cover initial costs and allow the focus on the program being created. Please consider flexibility especially for the seed grants.

Director John Gioia, Director Dionne Adams, and CCC Supervisor Shanelle Scales-Preston have staff working directly with the communities that are eligible to apply. Engage them to provide resources early in the process on where they can get help through Foundations or Community Colleges, or other agencies that can guide them in the grant application.

Grant applications are tedious, time-consuming, and hard. Let's strive for getting new voices to submit seed applications. Focus on what kind of help would encourage them; read applications and make suggestions to improve their chances of success.

Goals

- Encourage a broader goal to also support climate resilience and environmental justice.
- Include proven evidence or experience to recognize and value that communities know what has been successful.
- Expand positive impacts on health to include contributions to positive impacts.
- Add ways a non-profit with help could create growth to submit an Opportunity Grant.

I read that the scoring criteria will be released with the applicant solicitation. Please also release the time lime and process to apply to participate on the Community Review Panel and the Agency Review Panel and the process. What is the expected number to participate on each Review Panel and the process to be selected?

About the City of Benicia and her residents. They didn't ask for Exxon to build a refinery in their city. For years they have experienced negative health impacts, while at the same time have fought for cleaner air and better health for their residents.

I understand the health code and language the Air District is bound to support. I don't understand why the Air District isn't reaching out to our State congressional leadership to propose a bill to offer a way forward for Benicia. Maybe it's not your place. What can you offer?

Mayor Steve Young has proposed an amendment. This is a city of 23,000 + that is taking the hit for all of us who benefitted from the products and revenue from a refinery we're glad to see closing.

Can the Air District calculate the reduction in pollution after the refinery closes? Why can't this reduction be considered to fulfill the health code requirements, so the amendment can be considered. If not, why not?

There is time to work on a solution.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jan Warren

[REDACTED]

Outlook

Comments on Draft Guidelines

From Kathy Kerridge [REDACTED]

Date Tue 11/25/202 5:12:56 PM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

@ 1 attachment (24 KB)

Comments on AD draft investment fund.docx;

[REDACTED]

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to comment. I have attached my comments and included them in the body of the email.

Kathy Kerridge JD
[REDACTED]

Comments on Local Community Investment Fund DRAFT Proposed Guidelines

I have lived in Benicia for 42 years. My grandchildren live near the fenceline and suffer from asthma. I have had breast cancer. While I can't pin these problems on air pollution I know that air pollution can contribute to both.

I am a member of the Good Neighbor Steering Committee, Air Watch Bay Area and the Benicia Community Air Monitoring Program. I am part of BAAD's Refinery Corridor Bimonthly Meeting Group and have given presentations on community science at two Environmental Measurement Symposiums. I was a founding member of the Community Sustainability Commission in Benicia. The commission awarded \$2.3 million dollars in grants to reduce air pollution and GHG emissions. I have been actively involved in air pollution control and monitoring for over 15 years.

A city is the primary entity that protects a community's health and safety. The parks department provides exercise, recreation and all the benefits that trees give us. The water department protects the safety of our water and prevents the outbreak of waterborne diseases. The fire department protects us from what is increasingly becoming the most dangerous form of air pollution - smoke. The Police provide for our protection against criminals. Safe streets allow us to **walk** and drive without accidents. The building department makes sure our homes are safe to live in. The city provides for our health at the most basic level.

With the loss of Valero Benicia faces not a just transition, but an abrupt transition without the funds necessary to provide for a transition or to provide for the health of its residents until new sources of revenue are developed. Valero exposed our community to dangerous emissions for well over a decade. It is only appropriate that some of the fine money from Valero be given directly to the city to support the overall health and safety of our residents.

At a minimum \$5 million a year for the next 5 years should be allocated to the city. Ideally this money could go into the general budget with few strings attached. The grant requirements laid out would not apply since the city already does reporting and takes community input on the budget. The expenditures are made by elected representatives who represent the overall desires of the community. Benicia has already done extensive surveys to determine what the community wants. Supporting our fire department and parks and recreation have a direct impact on our air. So, if the money needed to be directed the second choice would be to fund the fire department and parks by direct grants into the city budget.

Funding should also go to the city over and above this \$25 million to enable the city to hire staff to work with local businesses to transition from supporting Valero to supporting a clean economy. The city will need to provide assistance and support to local businesses to make the transition. Additional money could also be allocated to attracting new business that could provide the city with products that can aid in cleaning the air, for example distributors for space and water heat pumps and merchants selling induction ovens. These projects would all fall under the grant category of Build Economic Resilience for a Just Transition. But this should not be a substitute for immediate operating expenses. The city requires both budget support and support for transition.

The grants should be flexible enough to fund basic pre-existing services and not just to start something new.

Specific comments on the draft proposed guidelines:

Time limits-

In general the time limits are too short. This is particularly true when applied to air monitoring. If you spend \$500,000 to \$1million on a comprehensive air monitoring system why would you want to limit the operation to 3 years when you may be able to run it far longer. You would be spending money up front on equipment and ignoring the long term operation of that equipment.

The community does not want air monitoring for 3 years, the community wants air monitoring forever. If you are distributing home or school filtration devices they will need filter replacements for years. For low-income people the cost of a filter replacement could be a burden. They may need help for years after they get a filter.

Another problem is that the second year of a program could be subsumed by trying to find more funding. Having a period that is too short is a step to failure, by the time the project is funded and gets off the ground it will **almost** be over. Why not have all grants last for 5 to 10 years or longer?

Sec 3.1

What does partnership structure entail? A legal partnership will require contracts and the formation of a legal entity and all that that entails. Does a partnership structure mean less than that? This needs to be clarified. Will a memo of understanding between groups be enough to set up the structure?

4.2 Community Needs

This requirement seems quite onerous to me. How is a small nonprofit supposed to do a community wide survey? A forum will be attended by those already interested in that area and in support of it. They will all want to see it funded. A city may be able to do a needs assessment, but it is a time consuming and expensive endeavor. To expect a city to do a thorough needs assessment when it's about to lose 20% of its budget is unrealistic. Benicia has already done extensive surveys on what services the residents want to prioritize. I would urge that that be a sufficient assessment. Maybe a community forum is all we should expect from a group applying for a Catalyst grant. We are often asking people to assess something

that they don't know about. While heat pumps are a great way to reduce air pollution, GHG emissions and save money, a lot of people have no clue about what they are. Part of a grant should be to educate. A needs assessment can do that but otherwise this is a burdensome requirement. There should be no expectation at all for this in a Seed or Opportunity Grant.

4.3 Community Engagement

It can be very difficult to engage the community. In my experience if you can get 40 or 50 people to an event you are doing well. Sometimes only a few people attend an event that you may have spent a considerable amount of work on. I think community education is very important and could be a requirement. Indeed, many of the programs that could be funded will have education as an important feature. Being flexible about improving a program based on feedback is good. But I would have a hard time envisioning making changes to a program after it's established based on the comments of one or two people at a meeting. This seems to be a requirement in the proposals. I would eliminate this requirement for the Opportunity and Seed grants.

5.1 Measurable Outcomes

Minimize harm caused by air pollution.

Some of these goals seem almost unattainable. How is a small 501c3 ever going to be able to meet some of these goals? All the funding that they would receive would be spent figuring out whether the goals are met. Tracking the reductions in pollutants for a very concrete project like installing heat pumps should be possible since there should be information available publicly that would show the average emissions of a gas furnace vs a heat pump. Measurable outcomes for tree planting could be the number of trees planted. But many projects may not have clearly objective outcomes.

Looking at health data is a whole different ball game. I would hope this is only a requirement when the project itself is centered on health data. For a project like air monitoring or installing heat pumps it would be impossible to collect health data. Not even the air district has done that with refineries. This is an unrealistic requirement for most projects. Health studies are a world unto themselves requiring doctors, university researchers, time and large grants to accomplish. So unless that is the purpose of the grant I would drop that requirement.

7.2 Financial Capacity

"The Lead Applicant and Co-Applicant(s) must demonstrate sufficient financial capacity

to manage the grant, including **evidence of sufficient cash flow to manage**

reimbursement-based grant funding."

If a small nonprofit wants to set up an air monitoring system or station it would in all likelihood not have sufficient money to spend on equipment upfront. It would need the money first in order to invest in the equipment. That will be the same with many projects. Who will pay the salaries of the employees without getting the grant money first? This requirement would eliminate many nonprofits from applying for grants and only enable those already established with budgets available to apply for grants. It would require an outlay by cities for money that may not be budgeted or available. How could Benicia hire people with no money to pay them? Especially if this was not in the city's budget. Not getting grant money up front to do the work is a requirement that is unnecessary, restrictive, and counterproductive. It will be a project killer.

The reimbursement model seems to create a lot of unnecessary work for both the grantee and the investment fund. Why not just give the money out and require periodic accounting?

Hopefully the advance payment system will take care of this problem. But if the program will depend heavily on equipment purchases, like air monitors or filters, those costs could exceed 25%. Why create that extra bureaucracy?

7.3 Approvals & Alignment

"Site control: Applicants must demonstrate that they **own or control the site where**

a project will be located or that they have legally binding access or permission to

the site." In an ideal world all of this is worked out in advance. In reality it often takes time to find sites for air monitoring and other activities. Here the expectation is that the entity will do all of this work and possibly expend money without even knowing if they will get the grant. That's not fair or realistic. Is a business expected to lease or buy a site to run a project without knowing if they are getting the grant?

How can you obtain a permit for something that has not yet been funded?

This requirement should be eliminated.

9.2 Application Review & Scoring

"Review Panel members cannot be associated with a grant application and will be subject to applicable conflict-of-interest limitations on participating in Air District decision-making." Does this mean that they will not be able to vote on just the application they may be a part of or that they can't be part of the panel at all?

Grant Payment

Wouldn't it be a whole lot easier just to give out a portion of the money periodically? This is very bureaucratic.

It seems that the AD wants the applicant to do a great deal of work that would be necessary once a project is funded before any funding takes place. This work would not be reimbursed. Why not grant a project money and then let the people doing the work get paid while they set up the site, ect?

The Draft investment fund guidelines are unnecessarily bureaucratic and have unrealistic expectations built in. Maybe the district needs to do a needs assessment instead of each applicant. Maybe grantees should get paid for the work they do in implementing a grant. This entire process needs to be streamlined and simplified to be successful.

Kathy Kerridge JD

Outlook

Draft Guidelines to govern use of Valero fines

From Linda Stone [REDACTED]

Date Tue 11/25/2025 1:14 PM

To Marcy Hiratzka <mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov>; Vanessa Johnson <vjohnson@baaqmd.gov>; BAAQMD
Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

[REDACTED]

As residents and home owners in Benicia, we are writing in support of Mayor Steve Young's proposal that \$25 million should go to the City of Benicia to help with the imminent loss of Valero revenues.

Please forward the above to the Air District Board of Directors.

Thank you,

Linda Stone
Eric Byrne
[REDACTED]

My Comments on the Proposed DRAFT Guidelines For the Local Community Benefits Fund [LCBF]

Date: Nov 25, 2025 — letter sent via communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov

For: Emi Wang, BAAD Community Investments Office

— mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov and vjohnson@baaqmd.gov

Please forward my comments to all members of the BAAD Board of Directors.

Thank you!

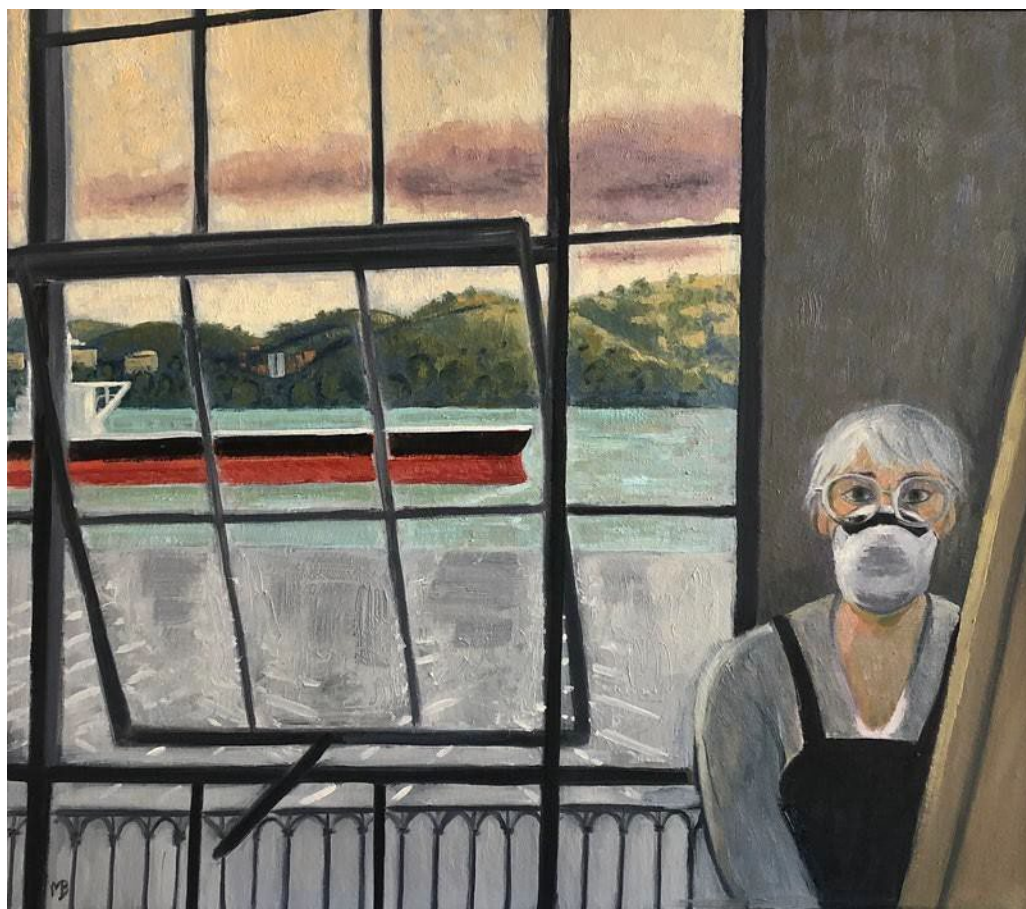
From: Marilyn Bardet

Regarding my experiences as a community leader:

As a 39 year resident of Benicia, I've dedicated over 30 years as a local and regional civic and environmental activist, addressing issues involving city planning, land use development, and refinery operations and management. I've helped coordinate successful community-led campaigns challenging major oil industry project proposals: in 1995, Koch Industries' "Coke Domes" storage and shipping terminal project intended to serve all 5 Bay Area refineries; and later, in 2013-2016, Valero's proposed Crude-By-Rail project. I have actively participated in EPA/USACE-led toxic site investigations, cleanups, and site restorations, including of the Benicia Arsenal under the federal Formerly Used Defense Site program [FUDS]. I served 2-1/2 years on the council-appointed 17-member General Plan Oversight Committee, charged to rewrite the City's outdated general plan, and worked on the Community Health and Safety chapter. The new plan was adopted in 1999, the same year that Valero bought the refinery from Exxon. I co-founded the Good Neighbor Steering Committee [GNSC] in 1999 to serve as a refinery watchdog group in the community's interest and concern for public health and safety under the refinery's then new owner. I co-founded and served as board chair of Benicia Community Gardens/Sustainable Solano, 1999 - 2024. More recently, I helped establish and serve as board member of Benicia Community Air Monitoring Program [BCAMP] 2019 - present. I've remained a member since the 90s of the BAAQMD COALITION, and am a member representing the GNSC on the Valero Refinery Community Advisory Panel. I continue as an ex-officio member of the City of Benicia's Community Sustainability Commission.

Experiences related to uses of public funds, grants and grant management:

The two non-profits I helped co-found, Sustainable Solano and Benicia Community Air Monitoring Program [BCAMP], received funding from a 2008 Settlement Agreement initially negotiated for \$14 million, between the GNSC and Valero Energy Corp. The GNSC's pro-bono attorney, Dana Dean, handled the legal work while I served as researcher and writer broadly documenting reasons for our legal challenge of a CEQA review process that did not provide for public circulation of a supplemental EIR to cover extensive upgrades to their decade-long "Valero Improvement Project". The Agreement was amended in 2010 to include the City of Benicia as a party to its benefits, and was again amended in 2019 when certain dedicated funds were considered non-performing, allowing those funds to be redirected with approval from Valero headquarters in San Antonio. From the get-go, in 2000, the GNSC had called for creation of an air-monitoring program for Benicia. Thus, by means of the amended Settlement, years later, BCAMP's creation was substantially funded, and that of Sustainable Solano, similarly rewarded to continue educational programs in Benicia and surrounding communities. Many other beneficial projects merging environmental and social/cultural objectives sprung from those Settlement funds and their careful administration.



Inside out: Self-portrait with mask, oil tanker and sooty pink cloud, Benicia 2019
36 x 38 oil on canvas

Personal chronicle: learning about air pollution in my community

As an artist by vocation and training, I was born in California, graduated as a humanity's field major from Cal-Berkeley in the late 60s, studied painting at Boston U's College of Fine Arts, and after 10 years in Boston teaching and working,

I moved to Benicia in 1986 with Bill Harsh, my soul mate and fellow painter, printmaker and college art instructor. We married soon after moving to Benicia. When Bill wasn't teaching he was every day and evening in the studio working. We'd rented studio spaces in various old Army buildings of the former Benicia Arsenal in Benicia's industrial port area. This is where I would first gain direct awareness and experience of what industrial-grade air pollution is in the form of invisible black soot particulate matter (PM2.5) that we were unknowingly breathing, but noticing where it visibly landed on surfaces and window ledges leaving a thin smearing film of black residue, not quite "dust", hard to clean off.

In 2004, we leased a large upstairs space in a building situated within about 3,000 ft of the Valero's petroleum coke storage silos and shipping operations and directly across from the enormous parking lot serving Amports LLC's car and truck import business operations. From our windows we could see at least three times per week giant oil tankers, guided by tug boats, heading either toward Valero's tanker port, the stacks belching puffs of black smoke as the ship slowly maneuvered toward the dock, or heading to and from the Martinez refinery's port. We also would observe massive cargo ships regularly parked at Amports LLC dock, where the hulls opened up with roadway ramps permitting fleets of Toyota vehicles to be disgorged, their traffic flows and patterns, like a slow Formula One off-loading operation, forming a visual drama of our industrial asphalt landscape, the routines of "come and go", displaying new cars and trucks ripe for sale, powered by gasoline and diesel fuels some of which were being produced at Valero's Benicia refinery. I'd learned from several drivers for Amports that the cars' roofs and hoods had to be covered in paper to protect the paint from petcoke dust, especially when a petcoke ship was being loaded in port. Otherwise, if left uncovered, the vehicles had to be run through a carwash. Throughout the day, vehicles would be jockeyed around and parked, then transported to other storage lots in the industrial park and along the Strait, then to distributors, all via huge double-decker transport trailers.

Over the years, from our studio building's surroundings, I've witnessed in fascination and fear several major port area fires, with voluminous plumes of smoke rising up just beyond our building then drifting up river, eastward, past the Benicia Martinez Bridge. I've watched giant fires blaze at the Martinez Refinery Co. (formerly Shell) and years back, saw the terrifying fire at the Marathon refinery (formerly Tosco), when four men died trapped high up on a scaffolding of a huge tower in flames.

In 1987, we'd purchased an old one-story house, "vintage historic Benicia", located downtown on Benicia's East Side one mile south of the refinery buffer zone and across from school district offices, Liberty High, and a few doors down from an old elementary school soon slated for closure. It would be years later that the school buildings would be transformed into a LEED certified community center with funds garnered from the Good Neighbor Steering Committee's Settlement Agreement with Valero, for which I'd played a role in achieving. I'd help direct funds to the creation of the community center as a co-signer of the Agreement, thus learning what significant, unexpected funding could achieve if the vision for its uses are supported by public consensus.

From our back porch, during a major refinery emergency shutdown owing to a sudden total power outage, I saw the darkest plumes I'd ever seen drifting southward toward town. The extreme danger of that event was not well understood by anyone at the City; we seemed to have escaped an even more catastrophic situation, as we'd later learn from engineers and refinery experts with Communities for a Better Environment.

Downtown, on a fateful late afternoon, August 6th, 2012, around 5 pm, I saw a single, thread-like sooty, lozenge-shaped 'filmy cloud' hovering over the Strait and guessed it was coming from a refinery, so tuned into KQED radio to check: a catastrophic fire had just occurred at the Chevron refinery in Richmond. A leaking pipe being repaired was full of hot fuel and suddenly erupted in flames causing a giant fireball and explosion that rocked the area and sent 15,000 people to seek medical attention for burning eyes, throats and respiratory distress. That event was subsequently analyzed by the US Chemical Safety Board, which produced a video simulating how the explosion happened.

I had plenty to contemplate that year. In October, my Bill tragically died of advanced lung cancer, age 59. Yes, he'd been a smoker who'd quit in his 30's, resumed and quit again; but 30 years on, he'd been working daily in the port area breathing the toxic mix: petcoke "PM", diesel exhaust from the container ships, tailpipe exhaust from payloads of hundreds of cars and trucks off-loaded and moved around, as well as toxic fumes of volatilizing organic compounds ["VOCs"] from solvents we used to clean our brushes). I've intuited from everything I've learned that Bill, like so many others among us, suffered consequences of the little studied 'synergistic effects' of breathing daily doses of multiple air toxins found ubiquitously in urban air, our toxic soup that includes every sort of ingredient—"second hand smoke" from distant wildfires or from the kid vaping on the street. Who doesn't know a child or adult in our North Bay refinery corridor communities with chronic asthma? Or an elder with "COPD" (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease)? No, toxicologists tell us, we can't point to a single cause or culprit that over a lifetime contributes to one's own medical outcome—it's going to be a case of multiple factors: personal habits, one's DNA, and chronic or acute exposures to air toxins, or other environmental source of pollution in soil or water.

As I learned more from my local involvements, my observances became fixtures in my imagination. In my mind I'm perpetually building a dynamic, changing panoramic picture of reality that my heart knows from my lived experiences, from reading, and from my curiosity where it leads. What I see where I live teaches me to see deeper at a distance. I relate local problems to those of global proportion and extent. I see images of the devastation of bombed out Gaza and know that many of those surviving will die from breathing lethal doses of toxic dusts constantly being stirred up and blowing from the giant piles of cement rubble surrounding them—just as happened to first responders

and firefighters in New York who breathed the thickened, acrid air the day the Twin Towers collapsed, and worked day and night to clean the site, many of whom would die years later from lung disease and cancers. Nobody then spoke about "particulate matter" as a killer. And right now, no nightly news reports on Gaza speak of the ghastly air quality that contributes to the attrition of an entire people.

What do we selectively "not see" around us that might be an ecological disaster-in-the-making that could be prevented? How do we revere the places we inhabit? How repair them, prevent the worst excesses of an industrial society we've built our lives around? How participate in the creation of beauty? Almost every evening as I leave the studio, closing the door, I stop and look at the sky and take pictures of the familiar scene under changing effects of weather and light.

My experience in grassroots organizing, and in governance of grassroots non-profits has informed and widened my perspectives and parameters of what constitutes health and well-being of a community and region—and how we can participate *where we live* to co-create communities that qualitatively exhibit more vibrant life. I see beauty come alive while looking up at feathery pink and orange sunset clouds that arch above port warehouses, rooftops, power lines and asphalt parking lots. It is my lot to bear witness and tell. . .

— Marilyn Bardet, Nov 23, 2025



Springtime in Old St. Dom's cemetery, Benicia February, 2020

36 x 38 oil on linen

I. About my comments, with acknowledgements, appreciation and aims

As a board member of BCAMP, [Benicia Community Air Monitoring Program] I offer my comments respecting my fellow board members, Benicia residents and commenters, my City, and all in the North Bay Refinery Corridor Communities [NBRCC] with whom BCAMP affiliates for common purposes and by varied means, aiming to improve the health and quality of life in our respective communities. I include in this consideration those Solano communities downwind of Benicia's Valero refinery and other Contra Costa County refineries. I believe that the brief reasons given in the Draft Guidelines for the exclusion of Suisun City and Fairfield from LCBF grant eligibility should be reconsidered and that their eligibility be re-evaluated.

I sincerely respect BAAD's purposes for establishing the LCBF as a repository of fine monies paid to the District for violations incurred by refineries and other industrial polluters, so that those funds, through the Community Investment Office [CIO] granting mechanisms, will be fairly redirected to impacted local communities where repeated Air Quality violations have occurred and been penalized.

With regard to the core regulatory mission of the Air District and the outreach goals of the new Strategic Plan, the public's role will continue to be crucial in developing trust in the ways and means by which the CIO will oversee LCBF grants: how they will be awarded, processed, utilized and fairly judged for effectiveness.

Herein, I incorporate by reference comments submitted by Jeff Kilbreth representing the Path To Clean Air (PTCA) Community Steering Committee (CSC) for Richmond, North Richmond and San Pablo. In solidarity, I endorse comments of Benicia residents as well as those submitted by community members of Healthy Martinez, the Rodeo fenceline community, members of the BAAQMD Coalition and others from the NBRCC.

Let global and local aims converge—the time is now!

From a global perspective, our collective aim must be to drastically reduce GHG emissions and protect the bio-diversity of the planet: the survival of human communities and that of all life is drastically imperiled by what may become by 2040 irreversible global warming.

Climate change as we know it here in California is real, while "business as usual" ticks away in its own positive-feedback-looped echo chambers of infinitely regressing sounds and illusions of endless growth and consumption projected onto a future that is now. . .

Locally and regionally, BCAMP continues to work productively with Air District staff, sharing purposes to improve local and regional air quality, greatly reduce toxic emissions, provide air monitoring instruments whose reliable data can inform communities and provide for public health research. Thus, we are together vested to create better conditions overall to protect human health and safety in our North Bay fenceline communities. Each day offers a collective opportunity to re-define and refine what we mean by "community health and well-being" and how to achieve it.

II. About the CIO's responsibilities and LCBF focused priorities

(Section 1: Grant Summary & Section 2: Program Vision)

As outlined in the Draft Guidelines, the CIO will be overseeing protocols, eligibility requirements, terms and criteria for awarding grants at three different levels —Catalyst, Opportunity and Seed— each to fund projects with purposes and strategies to help build community strength and mitigate local effects of chronic air pollution for sake of the public's health and community resilience. As the

Guidelines make clear, the Catalyst and Opportunity grants will be the primary focus because CIO staffing is limited for administering smaller Seed grants.

- 1) Overseeing grants at any scale is a daunting, complicated task, as would be the case for the CIO in distributing and managing even the largest grants awarded from the LCBF, given that they would be variously reviewed on differently scheduled grant time-frames.
- 2) For prospective grant recipients, the Draft Guidelines describe a very elaborate grant application procedure and reporting requirements, (similar to those of CARB grants of which I'm familiar). Such an evaluative process, requiring measurement indicators of project progress, must be conducted over the entire duration of a grant's timeline (5 years for Catalyst grants; 3 years for Opportunity grants; one year for Seed grants). The sum total of administrative work involved, from application to completed project, presumes experienced staff-level management, above and beyond the actual work to be accomplished that comprises the funded project or program.
- 3) The Catalyst grant requirement that Lead Applicants coordinate with multiple Co-Applicants adds levels of complexity that could ideally be widely beneficial, as the Draft Guidelines suggest. However the coordinated planning envisioned plus reporting requirements demands seasoned experienced staff of the Lead Applicant and Co-Applicants. Can this be expected of a small city of Solano County, already in the throes of adjustments to Valero's closure?
- 4) Regarding grant administration costs: 12% allowance is not enough; currently the going rate for non-profits is 15%.
- 5) Smaller non-profits notoriously die slowly for lack of funding to support and build staff capacity. Staff burn-out is common. The non-profit sector of the economy is huge and needs much more support to be consistently effective. Non-profits provide hundreds of entry-level job opportunities in underserved communities throughout California.
- 6) From my own experience with Sustainable Solano, I've seen how a worthy project funded at Seed Grant levels, at \$100k to \$200k, when successful, can serve as a model for customized projects initiated elsewhere, with welcome "rippling effects" fortifying neighboring communities' connections. Such initiatives stir public curiosity and may reveal and exercise hidden creative talents in communities. For example, residents may build a public garden, team up to design a bike path, create mural designs for regional buses, plant trees to shade city sidewalks: all such hands-on activities, inspired by local residents to meet perceived needs, can pull people together in common purpose, regardless of economic status, politics or other marker of exclusiveness, to create healthier, livelier, stronger and more vibrant communities.
- 7) Management of numbers of Seed grants might be contracted out to a venerable large foundation paid from the District's regional investment funds. This option should be investigated. The Tides Foundation and Rose Foundation are possible contractors, also, Magic Cabinets, a foundation whose grant funds support building the administrative capacity of smaller non-profits that have proven their programs' worth but need financial assistance to develop further.
- 8) I recommend that the CIO compile a list of all the grassroots non-profits and foundations in our North Bay Area Refinery Corridor Communities that would be eligible for Opportunity and Seed level grants, and publish the list as a directory incorporated in the

final Draft Guidelines. Connections can then be found between larger orgs and smaller ones for common benefit.

III: Comments Related to the City of Benicia's proposed Amendment to the Draft Guidelines criteria for Catalyst grants, under exceptional circumstances of refinery closure.

It appears that the Draft Guidelines were drawn up well before April 16, 2025—the date when Valero Energy Corporation officially announced to their investors, the State and the City of Benicia their stunning, unexpected news of their intent to *"idle, restructure, or cease refining operations"* at their Benicia refinery on or before April 2026.

Background: The State, the City of Benicia, and apparently BAAQMD were not prepared for Valero's announcement and its fallout for California, our community and regional neighbors. During a final legislative hearing on Aug 20th in Sacramento, the California Energy Commission presented plans for "phased transition" over the next decade to meet climate goals while addressing the estimated "significant gap" in the state's gasoline supply, even to meet declining demand, that would result from cessation of gasoline production at the Benicia refinery. About 50 members of the public, some of us from Benicia, our region and from around the state, were given two minutes to testify. Large and small environmental orgs, who battle to support **"just transition"** principles to help refinery communities move away from fossil fuel dependence had barely been able to hold ground to defend precious, hard-won environmental protections in the face of the state's proposed "solutions": for example, the allowance finally adopted for more drilling in Kern County oil fields. Also, proposals for creating "refined gasoline import terminals" at select locations, such as at existing or soon-to-close refinery sites—an option no one in the Benicia community would agree to.

The City of Benicia and community face an abrupt transition: the terms of the City's proposed Amendment to the Draft Guidelines are clearly justifiable.

On Nov. 12th, the City of Benicia submitted to the Community Equity, Health and Justice Committee a formal amendment to the Draft Guidelines that petitions the Air District to account for the exceptional and immediate circumstances the City of Benicia faces: significant and cumulative annual revenue loss, estimated at \$10 mil annually, posed by the Valero refinery's immanent closure. Any such estimates of losses are fungible, but they indicate the level of deep concern shared by our mayor, city council members and city staff for the City's near-term financial survival over the next decade.

Essentially, the City's proposed Amendment would allow unrestricted use of Catalyst grant funds, without requirements for partnering with Co-Applicants, in order to protect core city services under unprecedented and exceptional conditions of an unplanned for refinery closure.

Notably, the City's proposed Amendment would exclude a key Catalyst grant requirement to coordinate/partner with multiple Co-Applicants.

- a. Presumably, collaboration with Co-Applicants could benefit the City as a whole, strengthen shared and varied purposes with strategic, leveraged advantages that present potentially "rippling beneficial effects" for regional neighbors.
- b. Functionally, collaboration with Co-Applicants would create a supra-executive container structure possibly representing varied but related funding priorities.
- c. Such an organizing structure would optimally create accountability, encouraging and advancing cooperative decision-making, providing oversight by others in the distribution and perhaps evolving uses of grant monies over time.

However: I understand the City's viewpoint: a multiple Co-Applicant organizational structure would require high-level coordination and staff capacity, which the City does not now have or can afford, even if the City were to receive a maximum Catalyst grant.

- A five-year Catalyst grant for a total of \$25 mil, dispersed over 5 years, would serve as a bridge to stabilize city finances, help preserve basic services, and help support programs that serve the community's "good", e.g. social and cultural activities that lend to community strength, health and well-being.

According to the 2020 US Census, Benicia's population of ~27,131, dropped to ~ 26,900 in 2023. The demographics show an aging population. While Benicia has been the most economically prosperous city in Solano County, that prosperity was underwritten by consistent revenue from the Valero refinery, whose annual contribution represents up to 20% of the city budget.

- a. Even before the Valero closure announcement, the City faced steep budget shortfalls, requiring staffing adjustments, early retirements, and a hiring freeze.
- b. Successful passage of bond measures for restricted funds to resurface and maintain city roads that have been in terrible shape, and, separately, for maintaining public area landscaping cannot be spent to fill the budget gap for basic city services.
- c. In 2023-24, City staff proposed sharp cuts to its annual contributions to Cih's bety-affiliated orgs, but there was much public outcry and pushback to retain as much funding as possible "for the time being".
- d. The Benicia Unified School District and other charitable orgs historically received generous donations from Valero for crucial support of valued programs (STEAM program in schools; Benicia Community Action Council; Benicia Community Service Fund; Arts Benicia; Benicia Community Foundation; Benicia Historical Museum; Benicia Ballet and more.)
- e. Difficulties and obstacles will inevitably arise owing to post-closure conditions and activities. These will be occurring under potentially worsening federal "watch"; extreme uncertainty surrounds federal EPA support of any kind. More losses could accrue, should other businesses leave Benicia following Valero's departure.
- f. Many of the Benicia Industrial Park tenants variously depend on relations to the refinery. Examples: All Points Petroleum, which distributes fuel (the company left); Amports LLC, which imports Toyota vehicles and operates Valero's petcoke shipping terminal operations; UNICO, a local machine shop
- g. The grant application process will be arduous: Catalyst grant monies even if awarded under the proposed Amendment—without restriction, such as requirements for partnering with Co- Applicants—wouldn't be available, according to the Draft Guidelines until 2027. The grant-funding schedule is worrisome for the City in the next two years.
- h. If the City's Amendment is adopted, the Board of Directors could consider adjusting the funding schedule to accommodate revenue loss in the gap between Valero's departure by April 2026 and 2027 when the Catalyst grant monies would become available according to the current schedule outlined in the Draft Guidelines.

On the bright side, if the City receives a large Catalyst grant under terms of the Amendment, considerable pressure on staff would be relieved to allow focus on new opportunities that will arise for ventures economic revitalization from 'shovel ready projects' that could be supported by Opportunity grants, such as programs to develop and promote historic tourism.

For all the reasons given by the City, and my own understanding, I endorse adoption of my City's proposed Amendment. However, I recommend one essential modification to the Draft Guidelines that would establish the role of local public involvement in oversight of a Catalyst grant's uses, closure transition activities and planning. (Please see full comments below).

The Draft Guidelines require local public engagement through a grant's lifecycle (Section 4.3 Community Engagement)

Problem:

The City of Benicia right now lacks any dedicated 'just transition' community stakeholder oversight mechanism to facilitate timely, regular transparent communication between the public, elected officials and City staff. The City's proposed Amendment to the Draft Guidelines may imply but does not directly state a provision for such inclusive public stakeholder engagement.

I recommend that the Draft Guidelines' criteria for awarding a Catalyst grant be modified to require creation of a dedicated local mechanism for community stakeholder engagement to ensure public oversight of 'just, equitable uses' of grant funds dispersed from the LCBF over years. Such a mechanism could be a council-appointed "community oversight task force for just transition", which would inclusively address community sustainability related to refinery closure. The duties of such a task force would be to monitor and advise the city council on issues related to facility site environmental investigations, cleanup activities and any and all planning for redevelopment of refinery properties. The scope of these issues and time demands preclude exclusive use of a city planning commission or economic development board to devote focused attention to a broad spectrum of topics requiring input from various subject matter experts.

IV: The Draft Guidelines strategies aim to mitigate air pollution, improve public understanding of local air pollution impacts, and improve health outcomes. (Section 4, Core Elements)

Communities of Richmond, Rodeo, Martinez, Vallejo and Benicia continue to bear heavy burdens of air pollution, disproportionately harming lower income neighborhoods owing to pollution sources located in their midst: refineries, chem plants, fuel storage tanks, port terminals and other polluting industrial facilities.

From childhood onward, the insidious human health impacts of breathing the "toxic soup" of urban air is the daily toll taken on people's lives. The broadly outlined picture of total cumulative lifetime health impacts of the risks that residents of fenceline communities face cannot be ignored. The resulting impacts to immune, cardiovascular and pulmonary function are recorded in our populations' hospital visits.

- The growing alarm about health risks from acute exposures to tiny particulates (PM2.5) from urban/wild-land interface fires, such as the conflagrations that occurred in L.A. in January 2025, give new meaning to air monitoring data in the age of accelerating climate change.
- Asthma rates in our region (Contra Costa and Solano counties) are sky high, impacting young children's lung development, yet we lack house to house survey data.

Still, the synergistic effects of lifetime daily exposures to low level concentrations of multiple numbers of toxic gases are not known or studied—toxicologists cannot keep up with the numbers of new chemicals produced, each one having specific risk factors. To this day, few health studies are

performed. The last EPA-sponsored "Health Risk Assessment" [HRA] for Benicia was conducted in 1993.

We in communities of the North Bay refinery corridor are concerned to promote the kinds of grants from the LCBF that would inspire, generate and maintain "healthier conditions" in our communities. What are *qualitative* markers of such conditions?

What are indicators of improvement in public health beside medical records? From the perspective of community 'sustainability' and 'resilience' — those buzz words that remain abstractions unless put into practice—must reach beyond the domain of economics to contain the meanings of 'community well-being' and 'healthy cities'.

- 1) Catalyst and Opportunity grant criteria should allow interpretive expansion of the concept of 'public health' for which purposes fine monies may be awarded. Indicators for 'community well-being', 'community resilience', 'liveability', 'healthy cities' should be incorporated in the Draft Guidelines in accordance with well-established global standards promulgated by the World Health Organization, and principles of One Planet Living, <oneplanet.org>, <bioregional.org>.
- 2) The City of Benicia's general plan, whose over-arching goal is sustainability has a dedicated chapter, Community Health and Safety, with many goals and policies pertinent to developing strategies and programs for "improving community health outcomes" that may serve as examples for other cities and civic orgs seeking an LCBF grant.
- 3) Helping the public's understanding of local air pollution impacts has been part of the educational mission of BCAMP [Benicia Community Air Monitoring Program], which has offered webinars for the general public with expert presenters explaining reasons for the need for reliable air monitoring data and how air quality affects human health.

V. Will our small City of Benicia be able to achieve a 'just transition' in the wake of the abrupt departure of Valero? How will we know it?

(Section 4-Core elements)

- 1) The term '*refinery closure*' does not appear in the Draft Guidelines, although its conditions might generally be inferred from issues referenced as "just transition", which the Guidelines support at all three levels of scale (Catalyst, Opportunity, Seed). (Section 1 Grant Summary).
 - a. The Draft Guidelines should identify 'refinery closure' as an actual circumstance in Benicia that could auger other related changes to other fenceline communities in the Bay Area. Phillips 66 actually preceded Valero's announcement by a year, in 2024, stating they would be completing closing of their Wilmington refinery in this year, 2025. The Draft Guidelines should acknowledge this. A refinery closure poses drastic economic change affecting cities, communities and the state. (See above my account of the California Energy Commission's "phased transition" plan for the next 15 years).
 - b. The Draft Guidelines should define the main features that contribute to public understanding of the scope of a full refinery closure, especially as related to concepts of 'livable cities', 'quality of life', 'economic resilience', 'community well-being', etc.
- 2) The true costs of 'transitioning' a city over time that has lost its primary corporate revenue source that happens to be an oil giant's refinery are little known or publicly understood. With the industry's corporate lobbyist, Western States Petroleum Association, holding sway in daily access to state legislators, the CEC, and the Governor's office, it's not surprising that to date there is scant state policy guidance that specifically targets issues of "refinery closure" and

"just transition".

- a. Over the last six months, behind closed doors, the state continued to incentivize Valero to keep their Benicia refinery operating.
- b. Valero did not take the state's bait.

As our City Manager Giuliani remarked to me recently, "*We're on our own now!*".

- 3) The concept of 'just transition implies timely, phased city and community planning initiatives and "boots on the ground" work, such as:
 - analysis of existing conditions and envisioning alternatives;
 - creation of effective strategies to enable diversification of a city's economic base;
 - qualitative assessment of successful performance toward diversification;
 - scenario building for multiple challenges of a "bottom line" wherein a refinery potentially opts to permanently cease operations for whatever corporate reasons and incurs full Primary Responsible Party investigation and cleanup responsibilities and costs;
 - Advocacy at the state level for requiring a refinery to fully disclose upfront its total closure / enviro investigation and cleanup plans and costs. (Currently there is no such state requirement of refineries.)
 - Re-employment training and support for refinery workers;
 - Provisions for supporting existing civic orgs central to a community's identity, social and cultural cohesion and liveliness.
- 4) In the best of all possible worlds, the City of Benicia would have been "staffed up" and been working assiduously with community partners to realize transition objectives that, in the main, reflect integrated guidance for sustainability outlined in our City's updated 1999 General Plan goals and policies for a livable, healthy city.
- 5) Benicia's experiences navigating an uncharted, bumpy road of its "just transition" toward diversification of its economy and remaking a great portion of our city that the refinery occupied since 1968, could help other California communities that in the near future could face similar 'refinery closure' circumstances. The CIO could take advantage of such opportunity to share what Benicians will be learning and support the idea that Benicia serve as a model "Transition Town". Should such a proposal be made by a non-profit with close historical ties to Benicia, I believe such an org would deserve an Opportunity grant, knowing the positive rippling effect of such an undertaking!

* * *

Because of my limited time, I have not supplied citations or footnotes to back up my assertions of fact; so I take full responsibility for any errors in my statements that may be recognized by my City, the Air District and my fellow community cohorts.

I am attaching the pdf of the brief comments I delivered orally to the Community Equity, Justice and Health Committee on Nov. 12.

Thank you sincerely for your attention to my voluminous comments!
Best wishes for your holidays!

Marilyn Bardet
November 25, 2025

Comments on the Draft Guidelines for the Local Community Benefits Fund: in favor of a flexible approach

From Mary Shaw [REDACTED]

Date Tue 11/25/2025 3:19 PM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>; Marcy Hiratzka <mhiratzka@baaqmd.gov>; Vanessa Johnson <vjohnson@baaqmd.gov>

[REDACTED]

To the Bay Area Air Quality Management District

Although I agree with Benicia Mayor Steve Young's proposal, in theory, of Benicia receiving 25 million over the next 5 years I would suggest that this amount seems less than fair considering how much financial support Valero has provided to Benicia over the years and how much Benicians have been impacted by their toxic emissions. Benicia's losses will be about \$10 million per year, totaling \$50 million over five years. That's a very large financial hole left due to Valera's departure. \$50 million over the next 5 years would be better for Benicia's solvency. There will also be years of clean up and no, we absolutely do not want a tank farm. Property values in my neighborhood may never recover from Valero, its toxic emissions and the subsequent cleanup.

Of all the communities affected by Valera's toxic emissions, Benicia has taken the biggest hit over the years and we've had to accept Valera's misbehavior (profits over safety) in order to function financially. Valero, the petroleum giant, absolutely does not care about Benicia. I've lived right next to the refinery for over 30 years and my family has been directly impacted by it every single day. There is an elementary school in our neighborhood next to the refinery and children who have attended the school have been exposed to Valera's toxic emissions for a decade. Ask anyone who lives in Benicia about the prevalent black dust that covers everything.

I truly hope that the BAAQMD will be flexible and compassionate in its funding distribution for Benicia and understand that Valero has impacted our lives much more than in any other Bay Area community.

Mary W. Shaw
[REDACTED]

Outlook

[Draft] Fw: IMPORTANT action required Support Flexible Catalyst Grants & non-profit Capacity Building for Benicia

From

From: Peter Ciriscioli [REDACTED]

Sent: Tuesday, November 25, 2025 4:43 PM

To: Philip M. Fine [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: IMPORTANT action required Support Flexible Catalyst Grants & non-profit Capacity Building for Benicia

[REDACTED]

Dear Dr. Fine,

I've lived in Benicia more than 25 years. Over that entire time there have been consistent health concerns expressed by my family, friends, and neighbors about the Valero refinery's harmful emissions, which have resulted in, as you know, record fines against the refinery.

I am distressed to learn that now Benicia must fight to receive the funding needed to minimize the negative impact on our community resulting from the Valero refinery's planned closure.

The funding is needed, as the letter to the BAAQM states below, to stabilize city services, prevent cuts to essential programs, maintain public safety and municipal operations, support worker adjustment programs where appropriate, provide targeted assistance for Benicia Industrial Park businesses affected by the closure, community health monitoring and services, environmental remediation and site assessment, for investments in clean energy and resilience which create local jobs while reducing pollution exposure, and more.

I write to support Benicia Mayor Steve Young's proposed actions as described by the message to the BAAQMD Air Pollution Control Officer below. I hope you will support Mayor Young's actions as well.

Sincerely,

Peter

Peter Ciriscioli Ph.D.
[REDACTED]

Air Pollution Control Officer
Bay Area Air Quality Management District

375 Beale Street, Suite 600

San Francisco, CA 94105

Dear Air Pollution Control Officer and Members of the Board,

I'm writing to support Benicia Mayor Steve Young's proposed amendment to the Guidelines and to urge the Board to approve a flexible allocation mechanism that allows direct funding to the City of Benicia from the up to \$60 million potentially available following the planned closure of the Valero refinery.

Steve Young's proposal rightly recognizes the need for rapid, locally controlled resources to implement a just transition: stabilization of City services to prevent cuts to essential programs and maintain public safety and municipal operations, support for worker adjustment programs where appropriate, targeted assistance for Benicia Industrial Park businesses affected by the closure, community health monitoring and services, environmental remediation and site assessment, and investments in clean energy and resilience that create local jobs while reducing pollution exposure.

The City faces a substantial fiscal shortfall from Valera's wind-down-local reporting estimates roughly \$10.7 million per year in lost revenue-which threatens municipal services and the City's ability to support community transition efforts. Direct, flexible funding to the City would enable timely measures to stabilize municipal budgets, preserve essential services, and implement locally driven transition strategies.

The Draft Guidelines and Draft Call for Projects already contemplate both a Local Community Investment Fund and a Call for Projects covering Benicia and neighboring communities (Rodeo to Pittsburgh). While neighboring communities should be eligible for some investments based on PM2.5 exposure calculations, the Guidelines themselves-most notably the Catalyst Grants category (\$10-40 million) and the prefatory language in staff materials-support a flexible, community-centered approach. The draft Guidelines explicitly state that listed project examples are illustrative and not exhaustive, and Board precedent and the stated Fund goals (reducing pollution impacts, improving public health, and building economic resilience for a just transition) support directing substantial, discretionary funds to the city most directly affected.

Regarding grants to non-profits, there is a known phenomenon called the Solano County "doughnut hole." Solano County 501(c)(3)s have historically received funding at levels only a small fraction of other Bay Area non-profits. As former Director of Arts Benicia, a regional non-profit arts center based in Benicia, I know first-hand about this funding disparity. We are the poorest and most diverse of the nine Bay Area counties, yet we receive the smallest share of grant funding. A recent United Way study shows that although Solano County currently makes up nearly 6% of the Bay Area's population, it receives less than 1% of nonprofit funding. This imbalance hinders local organizations like Arts Benicia from serving the community effectively. As a result, most of our non-profits lack the capacity to manage grants at the scale becoming available.

Therefore I urge the District to include capacity-building grants or grant components-technical assistance, fiscal sponsorship support, phased funding, simplified application processes, and smaller pilot awards-to ensure local non-profits can access and responsibly manage funds intended for community benefit.

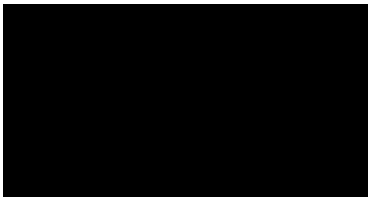
For these reasons I urge the Board to:

- Adopt Mayor Young's amendment allowing flexible, direct allocations to the City of Benicia within the up to \$60 million fund;
- Prioritize Catalyst Grant eligibility and flexibility so the City can both stabilize municipal services and fund locally driven transition projects; and
- Include capacity-building support for Solano County non-profits and require transparent, community-led planning with measurable outcomes for jobs, health protection, and environmental remediation.

Thank you for acting swiftly and equitably to support Benicia through this transition.

Sincerely,

Peter Ciriscioli Ph.D.



November 25, 2025

Bay Area Air District Community Investments Office
375 Beale St, Suite 600
San Francisco, CA 94015

To Whom it May Concern:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the *Draft Local Community Investment Fund Guidelines* for Benicia, Richmond, and surrounding areas.

I am a Benicia resident, a governing board member of Food is Free Solano, an appointed member of Benicia's Community Services Commission and the SolTrans Advisory Board, a career-long nonprofit and government affairs professional, and a small business owner in Benicia. From this perspective, I offer the following comments on the draft guidelines.

1. The guidelines for the Benicia grant should take into consideration the landscape of organizations and funding in southern Solano County.

Most grantees will not be able to replace these grant funds with other funding of the same volume after the grant cycle ends. Solano County receives the fewest philanthropic dollars of any Bay Area county. Grants the size of the Catalyst and Opportunity Grants are unlikely to be available again after the program ends.

Further, *Catalyst and Opportunity grants will require a significant scale-up for most qualified applicants.* Nearly every community organization in southern Solano County has a budget of less than \$500,000.

It is important to consider these items in the grantmaking process, to ensure that these funds are reinvested back into the community in impactful projects that truly benefit residents and the organizations that serve them. There are many [great articles](#) about the effect of Mackenzie Scott's grantmaking that discuss the impacts of an influx of significant one-time funding on smaller organizations.

2. The guidelines should support long-term sustainability of the grantees and their programs.

The draft guidelines' requirement to use almost all funds directly for program activities occurring during the grant term will pose a growth and sustainability problem for many grantees. To address this, the Bay Area Air District should consider broadening the Eligible Costs. Some considerations:

- Allow grantees to invest at least 25% of grant funds in financial reserves, to avoid facing a financial cliff at the end of the grant.
- Allow grantees more flexibility to use grant money for fundraising, especially activities targeted at sustaining the project past the end of the grant term (e.g. hiring a grant writer during the last 18 months).
- Explicitly allow grant funds to support operational infrastructure that strengthens an organization's financial health, such as software, accountants and financial systems, HR and operations leadership to develop internal policies, and legal assistance.
 - Southern Solano organizations, and even our local governments, tend to be scrappy and sparsely staffed due to limited funding resources.
 - Under the current guidelines, grantees are likely to categorize most of these as "indirect costs," and the 12% cap is not sufficient for organizations that are scaling up.

3. The guidelines should allow more time for operational planning.

Given the size and term of these grants, many applicants may seek to build new programs or facilities. It will be an enormous burden for sparsely-staffed community organizations and local governments to be expected to do all strategic planning and logistical efforts before applying for the grant.

To address this, the Bay Area Air District may consider:

- Explicitly allowing grantees a planning phase (6-18 months) for larger projects.
- Relaxing some of the requirements detailed in Section 7.3. Organizations who wish to acquire or build a new site (allowable under Eligible Costs) should be allowed to pursue site control, permits, land use issues, and more *after* they are assured they have the funding for the project.

4. The guidelines should include a broader list of Eligible Applicants.

One of the focus areas of the Benicia grant is to "maximize economic benefits, such as financial savings and high-quality job creation". However, many of the local organizations best positioned to achieve that impact are not eligible to apply for this grant.

To address this, the Bay Area Air District should consider expanding the list of Eligible Lead Applicants and Co-Applicants to include 501(c)(6) organizations, which encompasses Chambers of Commerce and other similar entities that tirelessly serve the business needs of our community.

- Currently, 501(c)(6) organizations are not eligible to be Lead Applicants; per Section 3.2, this only applies to 501(c)(3)s, local government, Tribes, and schools.
- 501(c)(6) organizations are currently *also* not eligible to be Co-Applicants, as Section 3.3 only adds for-profit businesses to the list created in Section 3.2.

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Thank you for your thoughtful management of this reinvestment in our communities. It has the opportunity to be truly transformative.

Best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rachel I. Bhagwat".

Rachel Bhagwat



Public Comment - Draft Local Community Investment Fund Guidelines

From Richmond BPAC [REDACTED]

Date Tue 11/25/2025 2:53 PM

To BAAQMD Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>

[REDACTED]

Hello,

I would like to add a vote for air quality improvements related to modeshift in the city of Richmond and surroundings.

Execution of projects within the city approved [Richmond Bicycle Pedestrian Action Plan](#) will help make it safer and more convenient for people who walk and roll to move around.

Similarly, the city would benefit from funding for project execution allocated to the recently approved [Richmond Parkway Transportation Plan](#).

In general, our neighbors in Richmond would benefit from support for sustainable mobility in the form of quick build projects, mode shift education and first and last mile e-mobility devices incentives.

~Dani Lanis
Chair, Richmond Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Outlook

Fw: Support for the Necessary flexible funding to keep Benicia afloat until we can generate more independent revenue to support our city.

[REDACTED]

From: Sandra Kozak [REDACTED]

Sent: Tuesday, November 25, 2025 4:56 PM

To: Philip M. Fine [REDACTED]

Subject: Support for the Necessary flexible funding to keep Benicia afloat until we can generate more independent revenue to support our city.

[REDACTED]

Dear Dr. Fine

Please read the letter below that I a 26 year Benician support wholeheartedly.

Benicia needs flexibility in some of the Valero fine money awarded guidelines to help stabiize the financial impact that Benicia will experience with the withdrawal of Valero Refinery.

The plan below is sound and uses only some of the monies being directed to Benicia.

Please support our town.

Thank you

Sandra Summerfield Kozak

Air Pollution Control Officer

Bay Area Air Quality Management District

375 Beale Street, Suite 600

San Francisco, CA 94105

Dear Air Pollution Control Officer and Members of the Board,

I'm writing to support Benicia Mayor Steve Young's proposed amendment to the Guidelines and to urge the Board to approve a flexible allocation mechanism that allows direct funding to the City of Benicia from the up to \$60 million potentially available following the planned closure of the Valero refinery.

Steve Young's proposal rightly recognizes the need for rapid, locally controlled resources to implement a just transition: stabilization of City services to prevent cuts to essential programs and maintain public safety and municipal operations, support for worker adjustment programs where appropriate, targeted assistance for Benicia Industrial Park businesses affected by the closure, community health monitoring and services, environmental remediation and site assessment, and investments in clean energy and resilience that create local jobs while reducing pollution exposure.

The City faces a substantial fiscal shortfall from Valero's wind-down-local reporting estimates roughly \$10.7 million per year in lost revenue which threatens municipal services and the City's ability to support community transition efforts. Direct, flexible funding to the City would enable

timely measures to stabilize municipal budgets, preserve essential services, and implement locally driven transition strategies.

The Draft Guidelines and Draft Call for Projects already contemplate both a Local Community Investment Fund and a Call for Projects covering Benicia and neighboring communities (Rodeo to Pittsburgh). While neighboring communities should be eligible for some investments based on PM2.5 exposure calculations, the Guidelines themselves-most notably the Catalyst Grants category (\$10-40 million) and the prefatory language in staff materials-support a flexible, community-centered approach. The draft Guidelines explicitly state that listed project examples are illustrative and not exhaustive, and Board precedent and the stated Fund goals (reducing pollution impacts, improving public health, and building economic resilience for a just transition) support directing substantial, discretionary funds to the city most directly affected.

Regarding grants to non-profits, there is a known phenomenon called the Solano County "doughnut hole." Solano County 501(c)(3)s have historically received funding at levels only a small fraction of other Bay Area non-profits. As former Director of Arts Benicia, a regional non-profit arts center based in Benicia, I know first-hand about this funding disparity. We are the poorest and most diverse of the nine Bay Area counties, yet we receive the smallest share of grant funding. A recent United Way study shows that although Solano County currently makes up nearly 6% of the Bay Area's population, it receives less than 1% of nonprofit funding. This imbalance hinders local organizations like Arts Benicia from serving the community effectively. As a result, most of our non-profits lack the capacity to manage grants at the scale becoming available.

Therefore I urge the District to include capacity-building grants or grant components-technical assistance, fiscal sponsorship support, phased funding, simplified application processes, and smaller pilot awards-to ensure local non-profits can access and responsibly manage funds intended for community benefit.

For these reasons I urge the Board to:

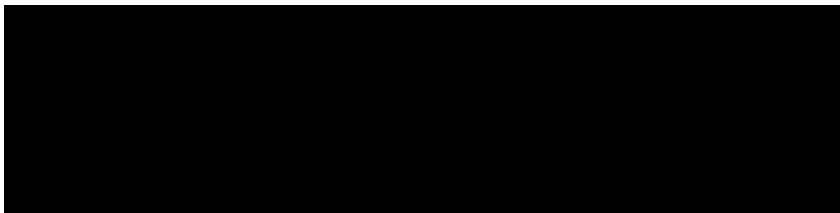
- Adopt Mayor Young's amendment allowing flexible, direct allocations to the City of Benicia within the up to \$60 million fund;
- Prioritize Catalyst Grant eligibility and flexibility so the City can both stabilize municipal services and fund locally driven transition projects; and
- Include capacity-building support for Solano County non-profits and require transparent, community-led planning with measurable outcomes for jobs, health protection, and environmental remediation.

Thank you for acting swiftly and equitably to support Benicia through this transition.

Sincerely,

Sandra Summerfield Kozak

Sandra Summerfield Kozak, M.S., ERYT-500, C-IAYT, YACEP



"May you enjoy the best life has to offer within this day"



November 25, 2025

Re: Support for the Local Community Investment Fund grant program

Dear Air District Board and Staff,

On behalf of the Sierra Club we are writing in support of the Air District's efforts to direct Local Community Investment (LCI) Fund resources toward projects that improve public health, advance equitable climate action, and provide meaningful community and worker benefits in the cities of Richmond and Benicia.

These communities have borne major air-quality and public-health burdens for decades. The LCI Fund represents a rare and important opportunity to deliver cleaner air, reduce climate pollution, strengthen community resilience, and support a fair transition for workers and neighborhoods. We encourage the Air District to prioritize projects that advance all three of the District's goals simultaneously—public health, climate benefits, and a just transition for workers—and to award the highest scores to proposals that demonstrate leadership on all fronts.

We recommend the following specific program priorities and criteria be incorporated or emphasized in the final guidelines:

- **Prioritize Community-Scale Building Decarbonization that Supports and Demonstrates Implementation of Rules 9-4 and 9-6**

Neighborhood-scale, all-electric upgrades can both accelerate compliance with Rules 9-4 & 9-6 and deliver substantial public-health improvements, emissions reductions, and indoor air-quality benefits. The LCI Fund should prioritize projects that show how

zero-emission heat pumps—already 2–4x more efficient and providing lower utility bills—can be deployed equitably at scale in frontline communities.

- **Prioritize High-Quality, Union Jobs and Just Transition Benefits**

As the region transitions to zero-emission buildings under Rules 9-4 and 9-6, it is essential that affected workers and communities benefit. Projects should be prioritized when they create high-road jobs, provide strong access to apprenticeship pathways, and deliver long-term employment opportunities in clean energy. This helps ensure workers in fossil-fuel-dependent communities have a fair and supported transition.

As the region transitions to zero-emission buildings under Rules 9-4 and 9-6, it is essential that affected workers and communities benefit. Projects should be prioritized when they create high-road jobs, provide strong access to joint labor management apprenticeship pathways, and deliver long-term employment opportunities in clean energy. This helps ensure union workers in fossil-fuel-dependent communities have a fair and supported transition. These provisions will also help to create a north star for the clean energy transition, building a future where the green energy economy matches the high union density of the fossil fuel industry that is replacing.

- **Allow Funding Flexibility to Cover Homes Not Eligible for Income-Restricted Programs**

Implementation of Rules 9-4 and 9-6 will be far more successful if communities can upgrade every home on a block — not just those that qualify for state income-limited programs. We urge that the LCI Fund explicitly allow its dollars to fill the gaps left by programs like the CEC’s Equitable Building Decarbonization Program, which cannot serve moderate-income households, in order to support neighborhood scale electrification.

- **Clear, transparent scoring and monitoring**

We encourage the agency to use a simple rubric that weights health/equity impacts, scalability/replicability, workforce commitments, and evaluation when allocating funds. Please require baseline and post-project monitoring of air quality (PM2.5 and NOx where applicable), energy/GHG savings, and documented community benefits.

- **Support Projects that Leverage Coordination with CCAs and Utilities**

The agency must prioritize proposals that coordinate early with Community Choice Aggregators and PG&E. Strategic leveraging maximizes the climate and health benefits of every dollar of the LCI Fund.

Richmond and Benicia are frontline communities that stand to gain immediate health and economic benefits from well-designed LCI Fund investments. By prioritizing whole-building/zonal decarbonization pilots, permitting flexible capital stacking, requiring authentic community and trades partnerships, and investing in technical assistance and workforce development, the Air District can ensure settlement funds produce long term equitable outcomes and ready-to-scale models. State and local incentives can make these options affordable and these funds should fill the remaining gaps so households realize the benefits now, not decades from now.

Sincerely,

Dylan Plummer

Acting Deputy Director, Building Electrification

Sierra Club

Outlook

Further comments on Draft Guidelines for LCBF

From Stephen Golub [REDACTED]

Date Tue 11/25/2025 4:47 PM

To **BAAQMD** Community Investments Office <communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov>; Emi Wang <ewang@baaqmd.gov>

To: Bay Area Air District Community Investments Office (CIO)

From: Stephen Golub* [REDACTED]

Date: November 25, 2025

Re: Comments in favor of a flexible Local Community Benefits Fund (LCBF) approach for all grant applicants and recipients

I am writing to urge the Air District to adopt far more flexible final guidelines for the LCBF than those set forth in its October 2025 Draft Proposed Guidelines.

As currently structured, I'm sure with the best intentions, the Draft Guidelines impose unnecessary and counterproductive burdens on local governments and nonprofits seeking LCBF support. They cut against sound principles of grantmaking, equity, partnership, social and environmental justice, impact maximization and cost-effectiveness.

In offering previous comments to the Community Investments Office, specifically in my November 11, 2025 email, I have mainly focused on the case for the CIO to amend the LCBF Draft Guidelines so as to permit Benicia to access budget support of at least \$25 million over the course of five years, as per Mayor Steve Young's proposed Draft Guidelines amendment (though I have argued for considerably more funds for that purpose).

To be clear, I am now also arguing for a more general flexibility that would benefit all communities covered by the Air District, as well as Air District grantees, staff and Board members. I am gratified that other comments I've seen and heard submitted to the CIO are taking a similar pro-flexibility tack.

The reasons for far greater flexibility include:

1. The Draft Guidelines' current top-down, co-applicant requirement undercuts partnership. Though no doubt constructed with positive funder-grantee relationships in mind, the Draft Guidelines force funds-seeking entities into artificial official partnerships. The far better and true partnership-oriented perspective is to let such relationships spring organically from prospective grantees' own community knowledge and organizational priorities. If applicants wish to seek joint funding, fine. If not, that should be respected.

2. An overemphasis on measurement and artificial indicators. When the U.S. Agency for International Development started to go down the path of over-reliance on quantitative

measurement years ago, it was rightly decried as "indicator madness" within the Agency. There is nothing wrong with seeking such data when appropriate. But for many grants and grantees, such an approach artificially forces them into producing numbers that do not indicate whether the grant has done any good and/or a search for attribution of impact where it does not really exist.

A far better approach is to require grantee narrative reports that draw on data when - and only when - it is available, attributable to producing results and appropriate in assessing progress and impact. In contrast to indicator-reliant vehicles, such reports can acknowledge problems as well as progress and discuss what has been learned. Speaking of which...

3. Undercutting learning. At the November 12 Air District Community Equity, Health and Justice Committee meeting, one Committee member wisely asked about what procedures were being put in place to learn from grants and grantees. The answer indicated that this crucial element of grantmaking had not been considered yet. This is understandable, given the burdens of getting the LCBF up and running. But it must be emphasized that the more measurement/indicator-driven a reporting system is, the more the grantees must report on the numbers themselves rather than learning about and improving their projects.

4. Organizational burden on and expense of CIO staff, and resulting non-financial costs. The co-applicant, measurement, Community Review Panels and other requirements will translate into extensive CIO staffing needs and expense in order to put the Draft Guidelines' strictures in place. This in turn will translate into a budget that consumes significant Air District resources that could have instead gone for grants. It also could impose significant delays on the grantmaking process and/or superficial approaches driven more by process than results, more by bureaucratic requirements than substantive learning.

5. Organizational burdens and expense of grantee staff. Under the Draft Guidelines, prospective and actual grantee personnel needing to apply for, implement and report on LCBF support will have to devote tremendous amounts of time and effort - and resulting expense - to these processes. The burden might fall most heavily on smaller nonprofits and local government units. But even the larger ones will need to shoulder these large, unnecessary burdens. This of course also applies to nonprofits and government staff working within Board member communities, which could result in significant problems for the CIO as grant applicants and recipients report difficulties to elected officials on and *off* the Board.

6. A bureaucratic burden. On a more personal note, the Draft Guidelines are among the most bureaucratic and burdensome funding approaches that I have come across in more than 35 years of grantmaking experience (summarized below)* regarding human rights, social and environmental justice, legal aid, minority rights, community advocacy, democracy and related fields. I have worked with leading foundations, nonprofits and policy institutes, as well as huge governmental institutions. The combination of complications imposed on LCBF grant application, implementation and reporting is daunting. Even if certain other grantmaking entities impose similar requirements, that does not make such requirements appropriate for achieving Air District goals.

7. Due process. As a matter of due process, the public has had little chance to discuss with Air District staff concerns and questions about the Draft Guidelines. Counter to statements on the CIO site, the October 29 webinar discussion of the topic discouraged comments in favor of a less responsive, less partnership-oriented Q&A approach. The CIO survey circulated online earlier this year made little or no mention of what should and should not be included in the final guidelines. If it had solicited such input, the feedback likely would have favored a far less burdensome approach. Finally, allowing barely a month to review the Draft Guidelines reflects a regrettably restrictive approach.

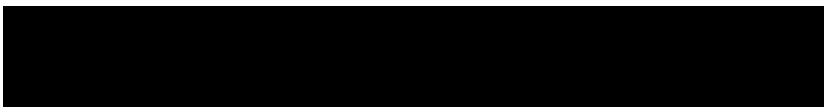
8. A broad interpretation of goals is justified. Finally, the LCBF's goals are admirably broad but might still be interpreted in an unnecessarily restrictive manner. The Draft Guidelines admirably frame them in terms of air pollution, public health, economic resilience and just transition. Yet certain regulatory language referenced in the October 29 and November 12 Zoom discussions is framed along the lines of curing and mitigating harm from air pollution (including but not limited to public health). This is fine, if interpreted broadly. Given that air pollution triggers justifiable, necessary governmental regulatory responses, and can in turn drive polluters to cease or reduce operations that fuel government revenues, it is logical to include financial impact on a community as an air pollution harm that the LCBF may address.

I request that these comments also be seen as applying to the CIO's Draft Calls to Projects.

In closing, please let me assure you that, despite the criticism voiced here, I am a great supporter of the Air District's mission, operations and personnel. My central priority is the communities that would benefit from more productive partnership with the Air District. But some of the points offered here spring from concern for how the Draft Guidelines, as currently framed, could backfire on Air District staff and Board members.

I wish you the best success in your important work, not least but not only in finalizing the LCBF guidelines. And Happy Thanksgiving!

*Stephen Golub has headed or conducted global reviews of Ford and Open Society Foundation programs featuring social, environmental and economic justice; equity and human right priorities; indigenous and other minority people's rights; and related topics. He has similarly led and conducted research and consultancies on such matters for several UN bodies, including the Office of the Secretary-General; the Danish, UK and US aid agencies; and several policy institutes such as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. This has in turn involved research about and working with numerous grassroots groups and networks doing rights-oriented work, including currently as an advisor for the largest such global network. A Harvard Law School graduate, he has taught about these topics at Berkeley Law, the Central European University School of Public Policy and other academic institutions, as well as edited several volumes and published widely on them.



Outlook

Benicia Funding

From Terry Scott <TScott@ci.benicia.ca.us>

Date Tue 11/25/2025 9:11 AM

To Emi Wang <ewang@baaqmd.gov>

To: Bay Area Air District Board:

From: Terry Scott, Benicia City Council Member

We are asking the Air District to recognize what should be obvious: Benicia's situation is unique and directly tied to the violations that generated the \$82 million Valero penalty.

Benicia residents have already sacrificed their health for the Bay's industrial benefit. Now our community's quality of life and safety are at risk because of the financial chaos that will be left behind when the Valero refinery ceases operation and almost 10 million dollars or 17% of our general fund revenue is immediately lost.

This double burden of having faced higher health risks due to decades of toxic emission exposure and now potential economic collapse provides an opportunity to look at a redefinition of true environmental justice.

The Air District has a unique opportunity to demonstrate that environmental justice means more than simply checking boxes on and for proscribed rigid grant applications.

To avoid the certainty of a Benicia financial crisis, we're asking that your fund eligibility criteria be relaxed or rewritten specifically for Benicia. We ask for accommodation to avoid economic disaster.

Mayor Young has suggested an amendment to the draft guidelines that settlement monies directed to our community be split 50/50 between the catalyst projects envisioned in the draft guidelines and with a direct annual infusion to the city of funds to bridge the financial gap from revenue loss as we work toward economic transformation be considered.

This amendment provides Benicia with the ability to maintain essential city services to administer catalyst grant programs as well as maintain safety services at a level matching the quality of life our residents deserve.

This is not about avoiding the guidelines intent-it's about compromising to ensure Benicia survives to fulfill the obligations of the catalyst Fund Guidelines.

We are not asking you to simply trust us with unrestricted funds. We're proposing concrete accountability measures which ensures guardrails remain while acknowledging our extraordinary circumstances.

We'll provide full transparency on bridge funding expenditures. We'll demonstrate how these dollars preserve the community stability that decades of refinery operations already compromised.

As staff members, committee members, public servants, politicians we know that to do our jobs we must find the balance between risk and rewards. The risk here lies within the need to help the city of Benicia avoid financial uncertainty and a fiscal cliff without a substantive change in eligibility requirements.

The reward lies in the desire to see environmental justice. Using the funds to help a city that has been at the epicenter of the impact of Valero's environmental injustice and now faces the impact of Valero's economic departure.

I ask you to weigh the risk of change and not be fearful to provide justice for Benicia.

Sincerely,

Terry Scott

Benicia City Council Member



Terry Scott

Council Member

Elected Official

O: 707-746-4213

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www.ci.benicia.ca.us



City Hall is closed on alternating Fridays. Learn more about closures [here](#).