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AGENDA ITEM 8a
HCAOG Board Meeting
December 12, 2024

DATE: December 4, 2024
TO: HCAOG Policy Advisory Committee (PAC)
FROM: Beth Burks, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Proposed Approach to the Regional Climate Action Plan (RCAP) Committee and Manager Position for FY 25-26

Discussion Item

In September 2025 the HCAOG Board received a presentation on the Regional Climate Action Plan and voted to have staff explore if HCAOG would be a good fit for the Regional Climate Committee and Climate Program Manager Position. Collectively this will be referred to as the Climate Program.

The Environmental Impact Report for the Regional Climate Action Plan (RCAP) is currently being prepared. It is anticipated that public review of this document would begin in Spring 2025 with adoption of the Regional Climate Action Plan in June 2025.

Workflow

The formation of the Regional Climate Committee and Climate Program Manager position is considered a cornerstone strategy of the RCAP (see attached RCAP excerpts). Ideally, simultaneously with the RCAP adoption, the Regional Climate Committee would become active and a position for Climate Program Manager would be in place. This would allow implementation to start immediately.

To accomplish this, time will need to be spent in the current fiscal year (FY 24-25) to:

1. Work with legal counsel to determine the best means to formalize the Regional Climate Committee. This may include changes to the Joint Powers Agency origin documents or could possibly be accomplished through a series of memorandums of understanding with all involved agencies. The goal would be to have these changes or agreements approved at the same time as the RCAP is adoption in each jurisdiction.

The Regional Climate Committee could function similar to the current HCAOG Policy Advisory Committee, which adds Caltrans and Humboldt Transit Authority as voting members when transportation decisions are being made. In the case of the Regional Climate Committee, additional voting members would at minimum be the Humboldt Transit Authority, Humboldt Waste Management Authority, and Redwood Coast Energy Authority.

2. Create job description for Regional Climate Program Manager and post opening on a promotion only basis.

Within the OWP 24-25 Amendment #2, time has been included for the executive director to work on these tasks. Additionally, the direct costs related to legal fees has been increased in anticipation of coordinating with legal counsel.

By conducting this work in the current fiscal year, the program will be ready for implementation beginning FY 25-26 (starts July 1, 2025). Making the position promotion only, allows for a more flexible start date for the position. This way, if adoption does not happen as anticipated, the individual would continue their current position at HCAOG until the Climate Program launched.

Budget Pathway

Long term, for the Climate Program to be successful, the staff position and Committee will need to be funded through grants and cooperative agreements with member jurisdictions. Approximately 75% of the implementation measures are related to transportation and overlap with HCAOG’s Regional Transportation Plan priorities, so it also makes sense that HCAOG funding sources such as Regional Planning Assistance, or Local Transportation Fund could be used to provide a portion of the needed funding on an ongoing basis.

However, given the urgency to launch the Climate Program, HCAOG has the means to sponsor the program for the first year. The first year’s work would need to include the development of a long-term funding plan, including contributions from member agencies.

HCAOG currently has an unrestricted fund balance of approximately \$650,000. This fund has been slowly but steadily increasing since the inception of HCAOG and is made up of carryover funds and interest earnings. HCAOG’s auditor has indicated that 5-10% of the basic operating budget is a typical goal for unrestricted fund balances. In HCAOG’s case our basic operations are approximately \$2 million per year. This consists of staff salaries, benefits, and direct costs obligations. It does not include grant funds. This means we have approximately 32% of our basic operating costs in unrestricted reserves. Because many of the grants we receive are on a reimbursement basis and can take and it can take an inordinate amount of time to get reimbursed it helps HCAOG’s cashflow to have a healthy reserve. Having a healthy reserve is also beneficial if unexpected costs come up in any given year. I would recommend maintaining a reserve of \$400,000. With this in mind, HCAOG could dedicate up to \$200,000 for the Climate Program and maintain a healthy reserve.

Costs for the Climate Program in FY 25-26 will include the Climate Program Manager salary and benefits, ancillary staff support hours such as admin support and Executive Director involvement, and direct cost of \$17,148 to cover an RCAP Monitoring tool that includes. Additional direct costs may include equipment and supply purchases which would be expected to be minimal.

Table 1. Anticipated Costs for Year 1 Climate Program

Climate Program Manager (salary and benefits)	\$167,442
RCAP Monitoring Tool	\$17,148
Additional staff hours	\$10,000
Equipment and supplies	\$2,000
Total	\$196,590

For context, the following Table 2 shows the proposed overall staffing costs for FY 25-26 including the Climate Program Manager position.

Table 2. Proposed Staffing Costs for FY 25-26

CAP Program Manager	\$167,442
Senior Planner	\$134,165
Fiscal Administrative Officer	\$144,889
Executive Director	\$199,983
Assistant/Associate Planner	\$107,089
Total	\$753,568

Table 3 shows the last 4 years of staff costs respectively.

Table 3. Staffing Costs for Past Four Years

FY 24-25*	\$704,100
FY 23-24	\$726,023
FY 22-23	\$724,112
FY 21-22	\$720,680
Total	\$196,590

* Includes direct costs for consultants in lieu of staff costs during reduced staffing period

The historical staffing costs show that even with adding the Climate Program Manager position, staffing costs will be fairly in line with the historical trend.

The purpose of this item is to receive general direction and feedback from the Board on the above approach so that it can be incorporated into the Draft FY 25-26 Overall Work Program which will be brought before the Board for a vote in February 2025.