



**COMMISSION
AGENDA MEMORANDUM**

Item No. 10b

ACTION ITEM

Date of Meeting February 9, 2021

DATE: February 2, 2021

TO: Stephen P. Metruck, Executive Director

FROM: Andy Gregory, Sr Program Manager Environmental Engagement, External Relations

SUBJECT: **Authorization to Execute the South King County Fund Environmental Grants**

Amount of this request: \$217,585

Total estimated project cost: \$217,585

ACTION REQUESTED

Request Commission authorization for the Executive Director to execute up to fourteen (14) contracts through the South King County Fund Environmental Grants Program, for a combined total not to exceed \$217,585.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following is a list of 14 recommended projects for funding in the first round of the South King County Fund Environmental Grants Program. These recommendations come following a robust outreach, solicitation, and selection process and with the enthusiastic support of program staff, community reviewers, and senior leadership. The selected projects, organizations, and communities served reflect the rich diversity of South King County. The recommended projects are community-led and will provide much needed environmental public improvements in near-airport cities. The authority for this funding comes from RCW 35.21.278, and all contracts will be drafted and executed in accordance to the statutory requirements therein. In the statement in support of Motion 2019-10 establishing the eight guiding principles for the fund, Commission stated their intent to “retain review and approval authority for proposed projects and to retain the authority to approve funding of projects recommended by Port staff.” This is why staff are requesting authorization for the Executive Director to execute the following contracts.

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Organization Name	Project Name	Cities Served	Requested Amount
Federal Way Korean American Association	Federal Way Korean Garden	Federal Way	\$20,000
Multicultural Self-Sufficiency Movement	Community Garden	Federal Way	\$9,000
Bridging Cultural Gaps	Raising an Environmentally Conscious Generation	Tukwila	\$20,000
Bhutanese Community Resource Center	Engaging and empowering Bhutanese community to local public spaces	Tukwila	\$14,000
Congolese Basketball	Park Improvement and Immigrant Inclusion Project	Tukwila	\$20,000
New Start Community Garden	Art for New Start Community Garden Fence	Burien	\$15,000
Partner in Employment	Youth-Led Park Restoration & Community Clean-Up	SeaTac and Tukwila	\$20,000
EarthCorps	Hill Top Park Restoration & Community Engagement	Burien	\$15,000
Highline Botanical Garden Foundation	Seike Japanese Garden Expansion	SeaTac	\$20,000
Environmental Science Center	Beach Heroes: Fostering Stewardship for Nearshore Habitat	Burien	\$10,000
Friends of Normandy Park Foundation	Marine View Park Forest Restoration	Normandy Park	\$8,683
Summer Search	Expanding Environmental Justice Education and Service Learning	Tukwila	\$20,000
Puget Soundkeeper Alliance	South KC Community Stewardship Project	Tukwila, Burien, Des Moines, and Federal Way	\$10,902
Tilth Alliance	Soil and Water Stewardship Training	Federal Way, Burien and Tukwila	\$15,000
Total:			\$217,585

BACKGROUND

The South King County Fund was created in November 2018 to provide \$10 Million in resources to near-airport communities for projects that address airport noise, environmental health, and sustainability. In June 2019, the Commission approved eight guiding principles to further shape the fund stating that the South King County Fund will:

- *Be used to fund projects in the South King County area: defined as near-airport communities, with other locations considered on a case-by-case basis;*
- *Prioritize community input to inform Port decision making;*

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- *Support Port equity policies and practices;*
- *Provide added benefit to current Port programs;*
- *Prioritize projects that are ready to proceed;*
- *Build on established programs and commitments to fulfill current obligations;*
- *Promote innovation; and,*
- *Encourage matching funds where possible.*

The Port Commission created the Airport Community Ecology (ACE) fund in motion 2016-5, adopted on November 22, 2016. The ACE Fund was bifurcated into two programs. A contract with nonprofit Forterra established Green City Partnership programs in Burien, Des Moines and SeaTac. Community groups and nonprofits serving these cities also became eligible to apply for funding through the Small Matching Grants Program (SMGP) for environmental public improvement projects per RCW 35.21.278.

After three years and six rounds of funding, ACE has supported forty-two projects and distributed \$364,092 in funding. Building upon the success of the ACE Small Matching Grants Program and drawing from the SKCF principles to “provide added benefits to current Port programs,” and to “build on established programs and commitments to fulfill current obligations,” the Environmental Grants Program was established under the South King County Fund. The application and underlying statutory authority are the same as ACE, but with the maximum contract value raised from \$10,000 to \$20,000 and the eligible cities expanded to also include Federal Way, Normandy Park and Tukwila.

The remaining balance of \$186,000 from ACE will be transferred to the South King County Fund Environmental Grants Program. These funds will be set aside and allocated only to projects occurring in the three ACE cities- Burien, Des Moines and SeaTac. Purchase Orders for these projects will link directly to the remaining ACE balance. Both Staff and Commission recognize and honor the commitment that was made to those cities in 2016.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

After three years of conducting outreach and receiving community feedback regarding the ACE program, several common barriers emerged. First, is the required 3:1 match enumerated in RCW 35.21.278. Small community groups find the match difficult to meet due to its financial and tracking burden. While Port staff have identified eight options for meeting the match including volunteer time, value of trees planted, and in-kind support, among others, it remains a real and perceived barrier for groups with limited experience in grant management or groups with smaller organizational budgets. Other common barriers identified by community members include the complexity of the procurement and contracting processes and the use of formal and inaccessible contract language.

To address these barriers, and to align with the SKCF principles to prioritize community input and implement Port equity policies and practices, External Relations engaged a group of Community Liaisons. Led by Alma Villegas Consulting, the liaisons represented South King County’s diverse

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population which includes: Latinx, African American, Korean, Somali, Filipino, Bhutanese, Pacific Islander, and Congolese communities. The liaisons chosen are trusted community leaders with deep connections to their communities. They include both Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and unaffiliated community leaders.

Early in 2020, the Port team began training the liaisons about the mission of the Port of Seattle, its role and limitations as a “special purpose government,” and the history of the South King County Fund. Next, the team went through a series of brainstorming exercises aimed at developing potential project ideas. The liaisons would then replicate this brainstorming activity with their communities. This served as an important foundation, equipping the liaisons with the tools and knowledge they needed to conduct community outreach.

Over the Spring and Summer of 2020, in the midst of COVID, liaisons engaged their communities to develop ideas and interest in applying for the Environmental Grants Program. Given the constraints on in-person gatherings, and the relived trauma of the most recent race and social justice movements, the liaison’s accomplishments are nothing short of astonishing. In total, eight liaisons:

- Engaged 10 BIPOC communities,
- Conducted 57 project brainstorm interviews,
- Identified 35 potential project locations,
- Helped drive 32 participants to grant info sessions, and
- Supported six applications from diverse communities.

In addition to this incredible community engagement work, the liaisons were also instrumental in the development of outreach messages, supporting grant materials, and training Port staff on multi-cultural engagement. An early suggestion from the group was to include a “sample application” in the supporting materials. This would give first time applicants the level of detail required in the written application. The sample application was developed and translated into Spanish, French and Korean upon request.

Another first for CPO and the Community Engagement team, was direct collaboration on the content, structure, and delivery of presentations for the public information sessions. Port staff prepared a draft presentation and delivered it virtually to the liaisons before delivering it to the general public. The liaisons gave feedback in real time on format, word choice, and graphic depictions of information. To increase language accessibility, Port staff members were also asked to use simple words and slow down the pace of the presentation. This feedback was incorporated in the presentation materials and how Port staff delivered the presentation.

All of this work yielded a participation rate in the information sessions that was nearly five times that of prior sessions. In the second session, four interpreters worked simultaneously to translate into three different languages to support participants. All of this was done in a virtual space and recorded and posted to the website for those unable to participate at the time of the event.

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Additionally, Contract Administrators with CPO provided weekly technical assistance on the use of the Port’s Vendor Connect (VC) system. After working with Liaisons, they identified the VC system and its contractor-centered language as a barrier to accessing project materials. All materials were first posted in VC, and then cross-posted to the SKCF website. Staff then provided “office hours” for technical assistance to access the VC system.

APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

The application and selection processes were led by the Service Agreements team in the Central Procurement Office (CPO). The process mirrored what was developed for the Economic Recovery grant process with both written and oral components. Applicants completed a short two-page application and participated in a thirty-minute interview via MS Teams. All materials were reviewed by a three-member Port selection panel and two community reviewers. The community reviewers provided project strengths and weaknesses to the evaluation panel who made the final funding recommendations.

Community reviewers provide a critical level of community input and accountability. Their input in this process, much like the Economic Recovery Grant process, helped paint a clear picture of the needs of BIPOC communities and the authenticity and urgency of the organizations’ funding requests. The process to work with community to inform decision-making is new to the Port but is standard practice in community grant-making. The inclusion of community advisors helps to normalize this practice in Port procurement processes and is consistent with procurement and selection processes implemented through the Duwamish Valley Community Equity Program.

RECOMMENDED PROJECTS

The following is a full list of the recommended projects for the first round of Environmental Grants. All projects meet the basic grant eligibility requirements and have demonstrated capacity for community collaboration. All projects serve or will directly benefit diverse near-airport communities through improvements to public spaces.

1. **Federal Way Korean American Association** will build a Korean garden in Federal Way’s BPA Trail, and create a cultural space where community members can nurture and sustain the garden through intergenerational bonding. This project is also a larger part of a five-year plan with the organization’s sister city in Korea to build out the garden. This project will take place in Federal way and they are requesting \$20,000.
2. **Multicultural Self-Sufficiency Movement** will develop a community garden for community members, youth, and older adults to engage with the natural spaces; have access to safe and healthy food; and grow and cultivate the garden space. This will be led by intergenerational families and community members. This project will be taking place in Federal Way and they are requesting \$9,000.
3. **Bridging Cultural Gaps** will support Black and East African immigrant families and youth to organize park clean up days and a recycling initiative that will be in multiple East African

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languages. They will also accept nature photography submissions and hold podcast conversations in several languages to better engage community members. This project will take place in Tukwila and they are requesting \$20,000.

4. **Bhutanese Community Resource Center** aims to educate young adult and youth immigrants and refugees in Tukwila to learn about native plants the region, and how to reduce waste through composting. They will also adopt and clean up the Cascade View Community Park in Tukwila. They are requesting \$14,000.
5. **Congolese Basketball** will focus on improving Crystal Spring Park in Tukwila. The group and volunteers will host small group park clean-up days, install basketball and tennis nets, and redesign the courts with art installations. They are requesting \$20,000.
6. **New Start Community Garden** will add culturally relevant art pieces for the garden fencing at New Start Community Garden, which is home to community gardeners and New Start High School student gardeners. This project aims to commission the art from students and local South King County artists to create a more welcoming garden space. This project will take place in Burien and they are requesting \$15,000.
7. **Partner in Employment** will work with immigrant and refugee youth to learn about, and work on park restoration and maintenance; identify native and non-native plant species; restore and design planting sites; and reach out to others in a variety of environmental fields to sustain the work. This project adds capacity to host five additional youth beyond what was funded through their Economic Recovery Grant. This project will take place in SeaTac and Tukwila and they are requesting \$20,000.
8. **EarthCorps'** young adult crew members will clear 60,000 square feet of invasive blackberry bushes at the Hilltop Park . They will also work with community volunteers to plant native trees for shade habitat and a safe place for community members to gather and enjoy the park. This project will take place in Burien and they are requesting \$15,000.
9. **Highline Botanical Garden Foundation** seeks to expand the Highline SeaTac Botanical Garden by moving twelve mature bonsai trees donated from The Seike Family in SeaTac. The original garden was impacted by airport expansion and the twelve trees will be incorporated into the new garden location. They are requesting \$20,000.
10. **Environmental Science Center** will serve 1100 Highline School District students in Kindergarten through 3rd grade with virtual beach habitat and stewardship classes live streamed and recorded at Seahurst Park. The naturalist-teachers from ESC will also clean up beaches during and after each of the fifty classes taught. Schools with at least 50% of their students on free or reduced lunch will be given priority. This project will take place in Burien and they are requesting \$10,000.

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11. **Friends of Normandy Park Foundation** will engage Highline School District families and friends to remove 20,000 square feet of invasive plant species at Marine View Park. The community members will then replace the area with native trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants. This project will take place in Normandy Park and they are requesting \$8,683.
12. **Summer Search** will work with eighty young people of color and underrepresented youth to explore land, water and air issues. The youth will develop and research four small group outdoor work sessions that will include planting trees and maintenance improvements around Tukwila’s parks. The students will also be in YMCA’s Summer Outdoor Leadership School, which was successful during COVID-19 in 2020. They are requesting \$20,000.
13. **Puget Soundkeeper Alliance** will empower youth leaders to support immigrant and refugee families as they do debris cleanups on kayak patrols, water quality monitoring, and microplastic education. This project will take place in Tukwila, Burien, Des Moines, and Federal Way and they are \$10,902.
14. **Tilth Alliance** will train twenty volunteers on urban farming techniques. The volunteers will then install rain gardens, habitat restoration, and create and support community gardens. They will partner with a local immigrant and refugee organization and serve Federal Way, Burien and Tukwila. They are requesting \$15,000.

JUSTIFICATION

The fourteen proposals submitted for Commission approval will support near airport communities hardest hit by COVID-19 and support environmental projects and programs in these areas.

These fourteen proposals directly support the Commission Motions that establish the South King County Fund. The original intent of the fund was to address Airport Noise, Environmental Health and Sustainability. These projects are direct investments in community environmental programs under the statutory authority set forth in RCW 35.21.278.

The work not only supports vulnerable communities including BIPOC, immigrants and refugees, it also supports the Highline Cities at a time where parks budgets and staffing have been reduced due to COVID. Most projects involve direct coordination with City park staff to make improvements to neighborhood parks. Additionally, many projects will work to directly implement Green City Partnership Urban Forest Management Plans by removing invasive species and planting natives. The plans were developed with support from Forterra under the Port’s ACE Fund and these projects reflect early applications of the long-term planning that will guide forest restoration priorities in the decades to come.

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Schedule

Contracts should be executed by March. All contracts' end dates are 12 months from execution. The following is a summary of expenditures.

Annual Budget Status and Source of Funds

The expenses have been included in the annual operating budget, which is \$1.5 million for 2020 and \$2.0 million for 2021. The funding source is tax levy.

ATTACHMENTS TO THIS REQUEST

1. Presentation slides

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS OR BRIEFINGS

April 28, 2020 | **Motion 2020-10**

The Commission to add economic development to the permissible uses for the South King County Fund, in support of local recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

June 25, 2019 | **Motion 2019-10**

The Commission adopting principals to guide outreach and development of the South King County policy.

November 27, 2018 | **Motion 2018-14**

The Commission directing the Executive Director to designate funding in the 2019-2023 plan of finance for South King County communities...;

November 22, 2016 | **Motion 2016-5**

The Port Commission directing the creation of an Airport Community Ecology Fund to support projects and programs in Sea-Tac Airport-area communities to improve ecological and environmental attributes in airport-area communities.