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Air District Board approves new grant program to reinvest penalty funds in impacted communities

Over \$90 million available for Benicia, Richmond and surrounding neighborhoods

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area Air District Board of Directors has approved the grant guidelines for the Local Community Benefits Fund, marking a major milestone for the Bay Reinvesting Penalties for Air Improvement and Resilience program, or Bay REPAIR program. The program will begin accepting grant applications on **Jan. 29, 2026**, opening a new opportunity for community-led projects that reduce air pollution, improve public health and strengthen community resilience in Benicia, Richmond and surrounding communities.

“The Air District’s enforcement actions have returned more than \$124 million to Bay Area communities, and the REPAIR program makes sure those dollars are spent where they matter most,” said Dr. Philip Fine, executive officer of the Air District. “These investments fund projects in neighborhoods that have carried the heaviest air quality burdens for decades. This is how enforcement translates into measurable improvements in air quality and real health protections for Bay Area residents.”

“Our new historic policy to spend fines and penalties in the community where the harm occurred is vital to helping achieve equity and fairness for communities like Richmond, North Richmond and San Pablo,” said Contra Costa County supervisor and Air District board member John Gioia, who represents the Richmond area. “I helped advocate for this policy since communities on the front lines of impacts from pollution should be on the front lines of receiving the health and economic benefits of the fines/penalties.”

“The action by the Board in approving the guidelines for the use of penalty funds is enormously important to the City of Benicia,” said Steve Young, mayor of the city of Benicia and Air District board member. “With the impending closure of the Valero refinery, and the significant loss of revenue to the city and community, access to these funds to help fund community projects and services will be crucial.”

The Local Community Benefits Fund is supported by the Air District's Community Benefits Penalty Funds Policy, which directs a portion of monetary penalties from air quality violations back into the communities impacted by those violations.

Grants will be offered in three categories:

- **Seed Grants (\$100,000 to \$200,000):** support smaller-scale, community-led projects
- **Opportunity Grants (\$500,000 to \$5 million):** support collaborative projects led by multi-stakeholder partnerships
- **Catalyst Grants (\$10 million to \$40 million):** support large, multi-project collaborations designed to address multiple community needs

Projects must advance at least one of the program's two core strategies: reducing air pollution and improving health outcomes or building economic resilience.

Eligible lead applicants include nonprofit organizations, local government agencies, cities, counties, schools, unions and California Native American Tribes.

The anticipated timeline for Round 1 includes:

- **Jan. 29, 2026:** Grant applications open
- **Feb. 18 – 19, 2026:** Grant information sessions
- **May 1, 2026 (5 p.m.):** Benicia Catalyst Grant application deadline
- **May 29, 2026 (5 p.m.):** Grant application deadline (excluding Benicia Catalyst Grant)
- **Summer – Fall 2026:** Board consideration of funding recommendations
- **Late 2026 – 2027:** Grant agreements finalized and projects begin

Application materials and detailed program information are available on the Air District's website at: www.baaqmd.gov/community-investments. For questions about the program or application process, applicants may contact the Air District's Community Investments Office at communityinvestments@baaqmd.gov.

The [Bay Area Air District](#) is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality in the nine-county Bay Area. Connect with the Air District via [X](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

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