

DEVELOPING THE DELTA CONVEYANCE PROJECT COMMUNITY BENEFITS PROGRAM

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What is a Community Benefits Program? A Community Benefits Program is a defined set of commitments made by project proponents and created in coordination with the local community. These commitments are made separate from, and in addition to, permit conditions or environmental mitigation. These commitments can include a wide range of benefits; including jobs training programs and local hiring targets to funding for parks and other recreational facilities. Their purpose goes beyond traditional concepts of “mitigation” and is to demonstrate goodwill and a concern regarding adverse effects the communities endure through construction of major capital construction works and to provide greater flexibility in addressing these effects than what is afforded in existing regulatory processes.

Why would the Delta Conveyance Project pursue a Community Benefits Program? Large infrastructure projects such as the proposed Delta Conveyance Project inevitably create effects to the communities and the local environment in which they are built. Some of these effects are beneficial as, not only will this construction project provide significant increases in economic activity in the Delta, the project may have ancillary benefits in terms of training, infrastructure and possibly multipurpose facilities that can serve the community for years to come. The Department of Water Resources (DWR) recognizes, however, that the construction and operation of the Delta Conveyance Project may also adversely affect the Delta’s unique values and envisions a comprehensive Community Benefits Program as a way to work collaboratively with Delta communities to identify and build in additional aspects of the project that can provide lasting benefits to the Delta. In addition, a Community Benefits Program would provide opportunities for Delta communities to articulate ways the Delta Conveyance Project can address project conflicts with any local Delta uses that adversely affect the unique cultural, recreational, natural resource, and agricultural values of the Delta as an evolving place (*Delta as Place*). It is intended that the development and implementation of the Community Benefits Program will assist in supporting DWR’s certification of consistency with Delta Plan policy DP P2 *Respect Local Land Use When Siting Water or Flood Facilities or Restoring Habitats and with the state’s coequal goals for the Delta*.

What would the Community Benefits Program’s objectives be? The creation of a Community Benefits Program for the Delta Conveyance Project would seek to do three things: 1) Provide a mechanism for the Delta community to identify opportunities for local benefits; 2) Provide a mechanism for the project proponents to demonstrate good faith, transparency and accountability to the community through formal commitments developed with stakeholder input; and 3) ensure the project is consistent with Delta Plan policy DP P2 and, ultimately, the state’s coequal goals for the Delta.

What would Delta communities have to gain from participating in development of the program? A comprehensive Community Benefits Program provides local stakeholders with a leadership role and voice in generating and prioritizing ideas that can provide benefits from the Delta Conveyance Project, and with respect to the anticipated fund, a leadership role in bringing forward and implementing certain actions to contribute to the Delta community. The economic development opportunities are significant; and will benefit from local insight in the coordinated development of a Community Benefits Program.

What types of benefits could be included in a Community Benefits Program? While the details of a Community Benefits Program would be created through community engagement, there are two components DWR will be discussing with Delta stakeholders at the outset:

- **Conceptual Project-Implementation Commitments**
 - Jobs, training and labor: Commitments about hiring practices for the local community; training programs for the local job force; and worker retention
 - Business, economy: Commitments to prioritize local business and economic development, e.g. ports, service companies, local manufacturing or product supply, office space, housing, and food service, childcare, agricultural tourism
 - Construction partnerships: Identify opportunities to partner with existing local public organizations to provide shared benefits, e.g. emergency services, electric bus service, sustainability targets, etc.
 - Multipurpose Facilities: Commitments to create multipurpose project facilities or repurpose and leave-behind certain project features for the community, e.g. electric busses, cellular/broadband service; sidewalks, bike lanes, roads; on-site recreational space; facilities for community services; banking/lending; public safety infrastructure

- **Delta as Place Fund**
 - Commitment to create a Delta as Place Fund with a community-driven framework for fund management that empowers local residents, leaders and other stakeholders to implement projects pursued independent of the Delta Conveyance Project by the community that contribute to *Delta as Place*.
 - Focus the fund on those projects that can help to protect, enhance, and sustain the unique cultural, historical, recreational, agricultural, and economic values of the Delta as an evolving place, in a manner consistent with the coequal goals. (Wat. Code, § 85301)

Note: The Community Benefits Program is one of three distinct, but complementary processes intended to address effects within the community. The other two processes are 1) Regulatory Mitigation: to address impacts related to specific regulatory requirements (e.g. CEQA/NEPA); and 2) an Ombudsman Program: to provide a clearinghouse and single point of contact to streamline information, support and claims and ensure just compensation as a result of direct construction-related issues.



How would a Community Benefits Program be developed? The process for developing a Community Benefits Program is as important as the ultimate commitments and resulting benefits. Local communities are best equipped to tailor benefits to their particular needs. A collaborative approach to develop the Community Benefits Program provides a safeguard to ensure that the local Delta community shares in the development and application of benefits. DWR anticipates a three-phase process to develop the Community Benefits Program.

1. Phase 1: Information Sharing and Gathering

Conduct community interviews to gather initial input.

- a. Timeframe: January and February 2021
- b. Product: Revised Concept Paper, guiding principles, interview summaries

2. Phase 2: Community Benefits Framework

Public workshops to develop draft Community Benefits Framework, including program goals, benefit categories, objectives, project types and community engagement process. Address metrics for Environmental Justice, ensuring diverse participation.

- a. Timeframe:
 - i. By mid 2021
 - 1. Product: Preliminary Draft Framework (focused on goals, benefit categories, objectives and project types)
 - ii. By end of 2021
 - 1. Product: Final Draft Framework, to be included as Appendix to Draft EIR (adding in text for the community engagement process)

3. Phase 3: Community Benefits Program

Utilize the “framework” described by Phase 2 to develop detailed implementation components of the Community Benefits Program.

- a. Timeframe: Ideally the Community Benefits Program would be finalized ahead of when DWR certifies consistency with the Delta Plan
- b. Product: Community Benefits Program [Mechanism for formalizing is TBD.]
- c. Process: To be determined based on results of Phase 2. Recommend the creation of a new DCA committee (Community Benefits Committee) to be the primary vehicle to develop the Community Benefits Program.*

*Focused on elements related to design and construction components of the Delta Conveyance Project. If there are any proposals that are unrelated to design and construction of the DCP, those elements would be addressed through a separate method.