**Port of Long Beach Application to the AAPA Environmental Improvement Awards**

**Category: Mitigation, Calvin Hurst Award for Outstanding Achievement**

**May 27, 2021**

## POLB Community Grants Program Overview

The Port of Long Beach (Port) is the second busiest seaport in the United States, moving over 8.1 million twenty-foot container units (TEUs) and cargo valued at $200 billion last year. The Port supports 51,000 jobs in Long Beach, 576,000 jobs throughout Southern California, and 2.6 million jobs throughout the country, but this robust economic activity has environmental and public health impacts on the surrounding communities through increased air, noise, and water pollution, and the disruption of local transportation systems. The Port has made important strides to mitigate these negative environmental impacts through its Green Port Policy and project-specific mitigation measures implemented as requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act. Over the last decade, the Port has been a leader in addressing its environmental and public health impacts through such groundbreaking efforts as the Clean Air Action Plan (CAAP) and Water Resources Action Plan (WRAP), which contain some of the most aggressive and innovative pollution-reduction strategies. However, the Port recognizes that its environmental impacts have had years to accumulate, and even the Port's cutting-edge and aggressive mitigation efforts do not fully address the cumulate effects of Port operations on neighboring communities.

Initially launched in 2009 as a more modest and narrowly scoped Mitigation Grants Program, the Board of Harbor Commissioners (Board) adopted a new Community Grants

Program in 2017, which set aside $46 million for community-based mitigation (total of $65 million including the 2009 funding) to address these cumulate impacts. The Community Grants Program expanded the scope of eligible projects under the previous Mitigation Grant Program, complied with legal mandates, and integrally involved the community in deciding how these funds would be spent. *The Community Grants Program is the largest voluntary seaport mitigation program in the country and received a commendation letter from the State Lands Commission, establishing the Port of Long Beach program as a model for other seaports to follow.*

The Community Grants Program includes three specific sub-programs: Community Health, Facility Improvements, and Community Infrastructure. The Community Health Program supports healthcare programs and services related to asthma and cardiopulmonary ailments. The Facility Improvements Program funds projects at facilities that reduce impacts associated with port related air pollution, noise pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, such as new doors and windows, air filtration, and renewable energy. Lastly, the Community Infrastructure Program provides grant funding to capital projects that reduce port-related impacts on air quality, noise, traffic and water quality, such as parks and open space and storm water projects.

Competitive solicitations are released on an annual basis, targeting communities most vulnerable to the impacts of Port operations. In addition, the Port prioritizes expenditures that benefit sensitive populations, including children, pregnant women, senior citizens, the chronically ill and those with respiratory and cardiopulmonary disorders and diseases.

**Goals and Objectives**

The goals and objectives of this program are outlined in the Community Grants Program Investment Plan, which include:

1) Reduce Port-related impacts by prioritizing projects with the best mitigation potential for the largest number of residents
2) Benefit areas most impacted by Port operations in alignment with the Community Impact Study (described in more detail later in this application)
3) Prioritize projects which address multiple impacts

**Discussion**

Background

In 2005, the Port made a commitment to the community to reduce its environmental impacts by adopting the Green Port Policy, which set forth high level goals for reducing our impacts. A year later, the Port implemented the Clean Air Action Plan, or CAAP, a joint effort with Port of Los Angeles, that contained specific strategies for reducing air emissions from ships, trucks, trains, and terminal equipment. This plan was updated in 2010 and again in 2017, and is the most aggressive air quality plan of any seaport complex in the world, with ambitious goals for zero emissions goods movement and clean trucks. Additionally in 2009, the Port implemented the Water Resources Action Plan (WRAP), another joint effort with the Port of Los Angeles to address water and sediment pollution from Port operations, vessel activity, legacy contamination, and upstream sources.

The Port launched the Mitigation Grants Program in 2009, which funded community-based projects to minimize the impacts of port operations. This was a limited program and was directly funded by two major capital programs – the Middle Harbor Redevelopment Project and the Replacement of the Gerald Desmond Bridge. $15 million was allocated from these two projects and the scope was only for air quality projects like asthma education programs, air filters, and trees.

In 2016, the Board decided that the Port needed to do more to improve the quality of life for local communities. Work was underway to implement the strategies outlined in the CAAP and the WRAP, but many of the benefits would take years to realize. The Board directed staff to revisit the Mitigation Grants Program to look for ways to expand and enhance this program.

Objectives and Methodology

The objective of the Community Grants Program is to reduce Port related impacts on the surrounding community, addressing effects on air and water quality, traffic, and noise, while maximizing equitable investment into those neighborhoods bearing the greatest burden.

Development of the Community Grants Program posed four major challenges:

1. The Port's revenues are strictly governed by the Tidelands Trust Act and Public Trust Doctrine, which prohibits expenditures on projects outside the Harbor District unless a "nexus" has been established between the impact and Port operations. The California State Lands Commission, which was established to manage the States' public trust lands and to monitor use of public trust lands and resources, would need to weigh in on the approach.

2. The Port had not yet documented its community impacts beyond air quality, and needed a way to understand those broader issues. It was evident that the Port had impacts on noise, open space, mobility and traffic, and the Port wanted to find solutions in these areas.
3. The Port wanted to ensure its efforts targeted the parts of the community that needed it most, those that experienced the highest impacts.
4. Port staff recognized that they were not experts in health-care programs, open space access, or alternative transportation, such as bicycling and pedestrian networks, and would need to partner with public agencies and community-based non-profits to identify cost-effective solutions.

Identifying these challenges led the Port to a solution based strategy through asking the following questions:

- How do we maintain compliance with state law?
- How do we address impacts other than air quality?
- How do we help those most impacted?
- How do we engage the community to help craft solutions?

In 2016, the Port took the first step to addressing these challenges by developing a Community Impact Study. This study took a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)-like approach to establishing the nexus between port operations and community impacts, and identifying the Port's proportional mitigation for those impacts. To ensure transparency and public participation, the Port held numerous meetings with community groups to discuss the findings and released the study for public comment. This analysis revealed a broad range of

community impacts – air quality, greenhouse gases, water quality, traffic and noise – which provide a legal basis for expanding the eligible grant projects. Mitigation options were included in the study in order to define the types of projects which could be effective in reducing community impacts.

Having satisfied the State Lands Commission's requirement for a nexus, the Port was able to establish the new Community Grants Program with more dollars for community-based projects outside of the Harbor District. The next step taken by the Port to ensure that dollars were spent in accordance with the public trust doctrine, and that project investments maximized benefits to the local community, was the development of the Community Grants Program Investment Plan. This plan identified three goals, mentioned above under the Goals and Objectives section:

1) Reduce Port-related impacts by prioritizing projects with the best mitigation potential for the largest number of residents
2) Benefit areas most impacted by Port operations in alignment with the Community Impact Study
3) Prioritize projects which address multiple impacts

In addition, eligible project types were outlined within the Investment Plan and are described in Figure 1.

**Community Mitigation Program Focus Areas**


*Figure 1 Eligible Projects under the Community Grants Program*

The Investment Plan also identified the priority populations, the geographic boundaries for program investments, and the three program structure – Community Health, Facility Improvements, Community Infrastructure - of the Community Grants Program. Guidelines for all three programs were later developed and adopted by the Board in 2017.

Two geographic zones found in Figure 2 determine the most eligible grant recipients. While the entire City of Long Beach is eligible for grant funding as well as parts of Wilmington, Carson, Compton and Paramount, there is a priority zone covering the truck trafficked downtown area of Long Beach and extending north along the interstate 710 corridor.

Notably, the neighborhoods which fall in the Priority Zone are also known to be lower income as demonstrated by the map of socioeconomic index in Figure 3. These neighborhoods also tend to be non-white. Maximizing investments in these neighborhoods is critical to ensure equitable investment and to ensure historically disadvantaged communities reap the greatest benefits. Many of the projects identified in the program guidelines are only eligible within the Priority Zone.

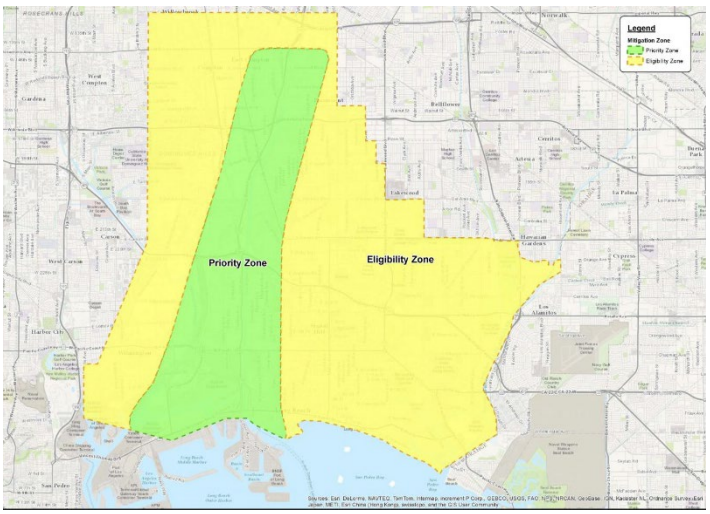

*Figure 2 Priority and Eligibility Zones*

Finally, to ensure community involvement in program implementation, the Port established a five member Advisory Committee selected by the Mayor of Long Beach. These meetings are open to the public, advancing community participation.

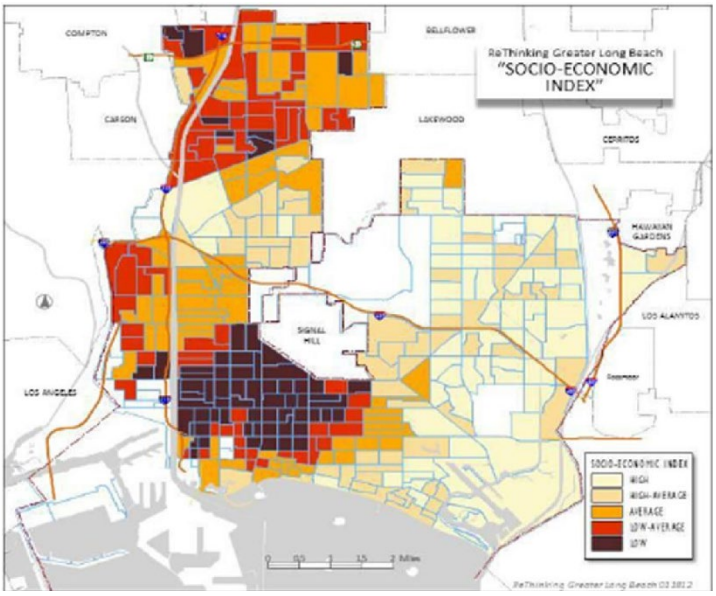

*Figure 3 Socio-Economic Index*

## Fulfillment of Six Award Criteria

### *Benefits to Environmental Quality, Beautification, or Community Involvement*

Recently funded Community Grants Program projects exemplify the program's ability to secure a multitude of environmental benefits, including beautification of public spaces.

In 2019, the City of Long Beach was awarded nearly $1 million for the 51st Greenbelt Project, which will serve a low-income area, located only 1,370 feet from the 710 freeway, along

the Los Angeles River. The project is focused on planting carbon sequestering trees and plants and native drought-tolerant landscaping. It will also install irrigation, a walking path, and trail connection. Similarly proposed tree palettes for parcels of this size have been estimated to remove over 180,000 pounds of $CO_2$ throughout the tree's lifespan.

In the same year, the City of Long Beach Public Works Department was awarded $1 million to purchase and install one stormwater filtration unit in the Long Beach Municipal Stormwater Treatment Plant Facility, known as the LBMUST. The LBMUST project will improve water quality by intercepting and treating the dry weather flows and a portion of the first flush of stormwater runoff normally discharging into the Los Angeles River.

*Figure 4 Aerial view of the LBMUST*

The Willmore City Heritage Association received grant funding in 2018 to add a bioswale to the Willmore Heritage Garden. Bioswales aid in the removal of pollutants that would otherwise enter surface waters and have additional greenspace, habitat, and climate change benefits. These are just a few of the examples of the benefits to the environment realized by the implementation of the Community Grants Program in the last few years.


*Figure 5 Participants plant trees at the Wilmore Heritage Garden*

Community involvement is an integral component of the program. The Port hosts annual public workshops with Spanish, Khmer, and Tagalog translation to establish funding priorities. In

addition, the program has a Community Grants Advisory Committee, which provides input on program implementation, and helps evaluate and recommend funding awards.

*Independent Involvement and Effort*

The Community Grants Program received a commendation letter from the State Lands Commission, establishing the Port of Long Beach program as a model for other seaports to follow. By addressing the "nexus" requirement described previously, and establishing project types which maximize environmental benefits, the Port has paved the way for other seaports to more easily implement similar programs.

*Creativity of the POLB Community Grants Program*

As previously stated, the Community Grants Program developed the Community Impact Study which outlined the process for other ports to establish voluntary mitigation programs. In addition, the Port has established an internal policy which requires future capital improvement projects to pay into this program, ensuring long-term sustainability and benefits to the community.

*POLB Community Grants Program Results*

The Port has invested $33.1 million in community-based mitigation projects since 2009, and $14.8 million since the Community Grants Program was established in 2017. Award allocations since 2017 include $6.7 million for asthma-related health programs, $1.2 million for air filtration/HVAC projects in schools, hospitals, and senior facilities, over $313,000 for energy

efficiency projects, such as door and window replacements, $3.6 million for parks and open space projects, and $3 million in stormwater projects.

Outcomes across project types have been vast and a few examples are provided herein. Port funded healthcare programs reached more than 8,000 children, seniors, and adults in 2018 via home visits, mobile health clinics, education, and community outreach. Pools of Hope provided direct asthma care services to 626 children and youth within North Long Beach, Paramount, and Compton through the Respiratory Health Improvement Program (RHIP) in partnership with LA County and the USC Breathmobile. 74% of the children and youth served experienced a reduction in emergency room visits; 89% experienced decreased symptom severity; and 84% of children missed fewer school days and maintained a better quality of life. Miller Children's Hospital was able to eliminate 2,774 gallons of fuel and 25 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions by replacing fossil-fuel cars with electric.

*Cost Effectiveness*

The eligible project types under the program were selected for their demonstrated ability to achieve cost-effective environmental and public health benefits.

The Community Grants Program funds projects that are scientifically proven to reduce port impacts, such as air filters known to reduce indoor pollution by at least 85% and stormwater projects proven to benefit water quality, which ensures that Port funds are spent effectively. In addition, the program is completely administered by Port staff and none of the staff time is paid for by program dollars. All Community Grants Program funding goes towards funding community-based projects.

We know our dollars are making an impact where they are most needed. This map shows the dollars invested through our grant program and the area inside the Priority Zone, which experiences the greatest port-related impacts, has received the most funding. This area is also the most economically challenged and racially diverse part of Long Beach, and we are proud that we have been able to distribute funds in an equitable and lasting way.

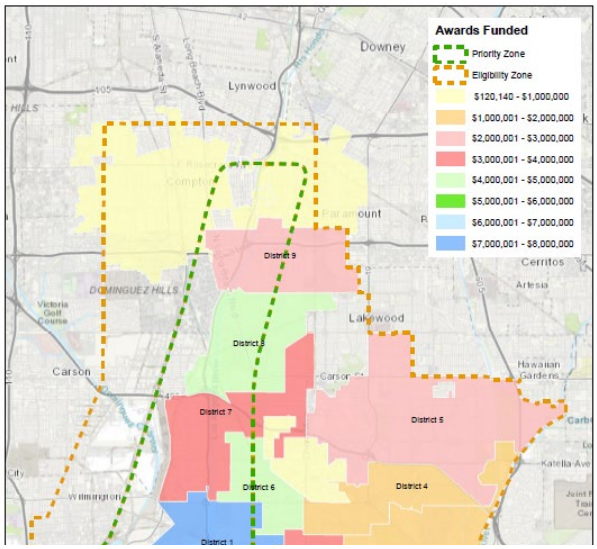

*Figure 6 Map of Port Investments to Date*


The Port also struck a balance between community choice and cost effectiveness. The Community Grants Program funds projects that are scientifically proven to reduce port impacts, such as air filters known to reduce indoor pollution at least 85% and stormwater projects proven to benefit water quality, which ensures that Port funds are spent effectively; however, organizations can apply for the specific projects that matter most to them, which elevates the community's power.

*Transferability*

The Community Grants Program is an innovative program that is the first of its kind which can be modeled by other seaports in a feasible and sustainable way. The program not only addresses environmental issues but does so in a way that promotes equity, empowerment of disempowered communities, and the flexibility to adapt as needed, with proven results in only 4 years' time.