



January 9, 2024

Board of Supervisors
County of Ventura
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

SUBJECT: Ratification of the Planning Division's Submission of a Grant Application to the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) for the Sustainable Communities Program – Civic Engagement, Equity and Environmental Justice for Phases 4 and 5 of the Ventura County Farmworker Housing Study and Action Plan, in an Amount up to \$499,990; and Authorization for the Resource Management Agency Director or Designee to Enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SCAG and *House Farm Workers!* to Receive Funding Support for the Project and to Make Minor Modifications to the MOU as Necessary, Subject to the Review and Approval of County Counsel.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

1. **RATIFY** the Planning Division's submission of a grant application to the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) for the Sustainable Communities Program - Civic Engagement, Equity and Environmental Justice (SCP CEEJ) for Phases 4 and 5 of the Ventura County Farmworker Housing Study (Study) and Action Plan, in an amount up to \$499,990 (Exhibit 1).
2. **AUTHORIZE** the Resource Management Agency (RMA) Director, or designee, upon the review and approval of the County Executive Office and County Counsel, to enter into an MOU with SCAG and *House Farm Workers!* to receive funding support for Phases 4 and 5 of the Study and Action Plan, and to make minor modifications to the terms of the MOU as necessary, subject to review and approval by County Counsel as to form.

FISCAL IMPACTS/MANDATES:

Mandated:	No
Source of Funding:	Grant from SCAG for the SCP CEEJ
Funding Match Required:	None required, but a voluntary in-kind match of \$90,000 for Planning staff time is included from the Planning Division budget.
Impact on Other Departments:	None

There are no additional County costs associated with this Board action at this time. The voluntary in-kind match for Planning staff time will utilize the approved Planning Division budget allocated to Housing and State Mandates staff for implementing Housing Element Programs for a period of 1.5 years. Additionally, there are sufficient appropriations in the FY 2023-24 Planning Division Budget to execute a memorandum of understanding with SCAG for this project. Phases 4 and 5, once initiated, will be covered by existing staff and within the FY 2024-2025 Planning Division Budget allocation.

Current FY 2023-24 Budget Projection for RMA Planning - Division 2910				
	Adopted Budget	Adjusted Budget	Projected Actual	Estimated Savings/Deficit
Appropriations	\$ 10,415,656	\$ 11,014,918	\$ 11,014,918	\$ -
Revenue	\$ 4,371,381	\$ 4,371,381	\$ 4,371,381	\$ -
Net Cost	\$ 6,044,275	\$ 6,643,537	\$ 6,643,537	\$ -

Strategic Plan:

This project supports the County Strategic Plan Priority – *Reliable Infrastructure and Sustainability* because the completed Study and Action Plan will facilitate the development of much needed farmworker housing and will ensure it is available to all types of farmworkers countywide along with the required social services for the community, while preserving our agricultural land and natural environment. The program also supports Strategic Plan Priority – *Fiscal Responsibility and Economic Vitality* by increasing the workforce housing that will sustain the County’s agricultural industries and local economy.

DISCUSSION:

On October 12, 2021, your Board adopted the County of Ventura 2021-2029 Housing Element, which was later certified by the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) in December 2021¹. During the Housing Element update process, a

¹ County of Ventura Housing Element, adopted October 12, 2021, certified December 23, 2021, available at <https://vcrma.org/housing-element-update>

need for an updated countywide study to provide an overview of the housing needs of farmworkers based on current Ventura agricultural trends and demographics was identified. The adopted and certified Housing Element includes the following Program HE-E, tentatively scheduled to be completed by 2024:

"The County, working with advocacy groups, agricultural organizations and Ventura County cities, will: (1) take on a coordinating role to seek funding for, and to implement, a countywide survey of farmworkers, employers, and housing providers to further define housing conditions, needs and barriers to farmworker housing; and, (2) utilize the survey results to develop targeted programs and strategies to address the identified housing needs of farmworkers and to support agricultural businesses with a stable and healthy workforce.

In implementing this program, the County shall strive to affirmatively further fair housing by providing housing opportunities (farmworker units or complexes) under the County's RHNA obligation and for both County and cities to provide services for the farmworker population throughout the County."

Overall, the Study will be instrumental in assisting cities and the County to identify the housing needs of farmworkers in their jurisdiction and better align their local ordinances with the intent of Government code section 65583(a), which identifies farmworkers as having special housing needs that warrant additional consideration.

Project Background and Status:

The County's Planning Division, in partnership with the local nonprofit *House Farm Workers!*, commenced work on the project in Fall 2021, outlining the following five phases for this multi-year project and launched a project website²:

- Phase 1: Advisory Council Formation
- Phase 2: Farmworker Housing Survey Design
- Phase 3: Survey Implementation
- Phase 4: Farmworker Housing Study and Action Plan
- Phase 5: Community engagement in implementing the Action Plan

For Phase 1 (from November 2021 to October 2022), County Planning Staff and *House Farm Workers!* worked together to convene a 40-member Advisory Council which includes key stakeholders and agency staff representing local cities, transportation, agriculture, nonprofit organizations, healthcare groups, small and large agricultural employers, housing advocacy groups, affordable housing developers, and farmworkers; and circulated a request for proposals for a survey consultant to conduct the survey of farmworkers, stakeholders, and employers in Ventura County (Phases 2 and 3) in February 2022. A joint consultant team was selected to complete these two phases, which

² Ventura County Farmworker Housing Study and Action Plan, Project page, available at <https://vcрма.org/vc-farmworker-housing-study>

included BAE Urban Economics, the County's Farmworker Resource Program from the Human Services Agency, together with Gabrielle Vignone from *House Farm Workers!* as Project Manager.

Phases 2 and 3 were completed from November 2022 to December 2023, wherein the Planning Division, along with *House Farm Workers!*, the selected consultant team, and with advisement from the Advisory Council, developed a survey methodology; a communications plan for surveying the County's farmworkers and agricultural employers; and designed the farmworker and employer surveys (including translations). While BAE conducted one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders and an online survey of the County's agricultural employers, staff from the Farmworker Resource Program administered a countywide survey of the farmworkers in the county. These two phases were funded by the Local Early Action Planning (LEAP) grant funds awarded to the Planning Division, proportional contributions from all ten Ventura County cities, and the County's General Fund. Overall, Phase 3 included implementation of 40 employer surveys, 418 farmworker surveys, and 8 stakeholder interviews which gathered input on the County's housing and community needs. In addition, a farmworker focus group outreach meeting was conducted in October 2023 with additional funding received from the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC). This focus group meeting gathered responses on additional questions related to housing, transportation and social services from 34 farmworkers from all over the County. Currently, BAE is in the process of preparing a summary report highlighting the major findings of the survey, which will be included in the Study.

Funding for Phases 4 and 5:

In April 2023, the Planning Division was notified of the SCP CEEJ grant opportunity available through SCAG, which is funded by a combination of two sources including \$3 million from the California Regional Early Action Planning Grant Program of 2021 (REAP 2.0) and \$2 million from Senate Bill 1 (SB 1), for a total budget of approximately \$5 million. Upon reviewing the grant guidelines, Planning staff submitted an application for Phases 4 and 5 of the Study project under the Housing and Land Use Strategies category (funded with REAP 2.0 funding), which had a maximum award of \$500,000. Due to the short deadline for the submittal period, Planning staff submitted the grant application by June 5, with *House Farm Workers!* as co-applicants, and is before your Board today to seek ratification of the submittal. The Study project was selected to receive \$499,991, which was approved by the SCAG Regional Council on October 5, 2023³. The grant work must be completed by December 31, 2025.

The awarded amount of \$499,991 includes funding solely for a consultant team and tasks completed by the co-applicant (*House Farm Workers!*). While there is no match required, time anticipated for completion of this project by the County's Planning staff has been identified as a voluntary in-kind matching amount of \$90,000 in the grant application, which can be absorbed by the current FY 2023-24 Planning Division budget. The grant

³ SCAG press release announcing project awardees, available at <https://scag.ca.gov/news/scag-awards-more-12-million-innovative-approaches-housing-and-climate-adaptation>

application is included as Exhibit 1. The proposed tasks which will be completed by the consultant team along with the co-applicant *House Farm Workers!* are summarized below:

1. Approximately 24 percent of the funding will be dedicated to **developing a Countywide Farmworker Housing Study** which will summarize survey data collected in Phase 3, as well as information from the various housing elements of the County and the ten cities in the County, to develop document chapters outlining current agricultural trends, labor patterns, farmworker housing needs and constraints to housing development; refine countywide sites inventory to identify suitable infill sites for farmworker housing; identify different housing types/alternatives; review land use and development regulations/policies for each jurisdiction as constraints or advantages to farmworker housing; and identify potential financing strategies/funding gaps;
2. Approximately 23 percent of the funding will be dedicated to **developing an Action Plan** with potential solutions and responsibilities in the short/medium/long term for the County and city governments, affordable housing providers, farmworker advocates, and other public and private sectors including healthcare, transportation, finance, and education; and may also include identification of potential policy updates or regulatory reforms countywide.
3. Approximately 36 percent of the funding will be dedicated to **conducting a robust community engagement**, including coordination with all cities in the county and community partners; farmworker/youth community engagement; and a countywide event to discuss the draft Action Plan with all jurisdictions, stakeholders, farmworkers, and interested parties. In addition, this task includes meetings conducted throughout the project with the 40-member Advisory Council convened in Phase 1 with representatives from key community organizations, agricultural businesses, farmworkers, and public agencies to ensure a cohesive and inclusive engagement; as well as education and engagement with city and County jurisdictions, decision makers and key stakeholders to initiate implementation of the Action Plan.
4. The remainder of the funds will be used for project coordination meetings, and administrative costs spent by *House Farm Workers!* to manage the grant.

The final Study and Action Plan will be presented to the Board of Supervisors and will be recommended that it be presented to the decision makers for the cities within the county, and implementation of the policies/programs in the Action Plan will encourage the cities/County to take action to facilitate development of farmworker housing countywide.

Memorandum of Understanding:

SCAG has indicated that an MOU will be required between the Primary Applicant (County), Co-Applicant (*House Farm Workers!*), and SCAG for the grant. The MOU will include the effective date for reimbursable program development work, which is subject to the MOU being executed by the parties, and terms and conditions for receiving funding,

including REAP 2.0 Guideline requirements, financial invoicing, performance reporting, and other legal requirements for subrecipients of the program.

Since the County will not be receiving any grant funding for this project, and all funding will go directly to the co-applicant and the technical consultant, there is no additional action required by the County other than to execute the MOU to address SCAG's requirements. Should your Board approve staff's recommended actions, Planning Division staff anticipates finalizing and executing an MOU with SCAG by February 2024. The project will be initiated only after the MOU has been fully executed by all parties.

This letter was reviewed by the County Executive Office, the Auditor-Controller's Office, and County Counsel's Office. If you have any questions regarding this item, please contact me at (805) 654-2481, or Ruchita Kadakia, Housing and State Mandates Planning Manager, at (805) 654-2414 or via email at Ruchita.Kadakia@ventura.org.



Dave Ward, AICP, Director
Ventura County Planning Division

ATTACHMENTS:

Exhibit 1: Application submitted by the Planning Division on June 5, 2023 to SCAG for SCP CEEEJ grant funding, up to \$499,990, for Phases 4 and 5 of the Ventura County Farmworker Housing Study and Action Plan.