

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 972 (Maienschein)

As Amended May 18, 2023

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to convene a statewide, cross-agency Local Assistance and Grant Program Streamlining Workgroup (workgroup).

Major Provisions

- 1) Requires OPR, in consultation with the League of California Cities, to convene the workgroup no later than January 1, 2025.
- 2) Provides that the purpose of the workgroup is to centralize local assistance and develop a coordinated system to manage available state and federal funding to deliver the maximum number of projects as efficiently as possible in order to confront the effects of fragmented, decentralized state funding opportunities and in recognition of the importance of state and local partnerships.
- 3) Requires the workgroup to prioritize the unique needs of underresourced and disadvantaged communities and to take into consideration achieving more equitable distribution of funding.
- 4) Requires workgroup members to be appointed by OPR and serve without compensation, and specifies the composition of the workgroup.
- 5) Disbands the workgroup as of June 30, 2026.
- 6) Provides that the workgroup shall consider, but is not limited to, developing plans and recommendations that accomplish any of the following:
 - a) Creation, coordination, and implementation of an integrated, statewide, centralized program for assistance and training to local governments in grant application development, project management, implementation, and monitoring.
 - b) Identify substantially similar state climate resiliency and other environmental or natural resources programs to enable the state to implement a single application, with aligned scoring criteria and deadlines, for making coordinated awards under all programs, pursuant to the timeline specified in 7), below.
 - c) Identify information technology solutions to improve processes, support uniform applications, and manage data.
- 7) Requires the workgroup to develop a report that includes the workgroup's findings, plans, and recommendations no later than June 30, 2026. The report shall include all of the following:
 - a) Short-term solutions that can be accomplished by January 31, 2027.
 - b) Medium-term solutions that can be accomplished by July 1, 2027.

- c) Long-term solutions that can be accomplished by July 1, 2028
- 8) Requires the workgroup to post the report on OPR's internet website and provide the report to the Department of Finance (DOF) and relevant policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature.
- 9) Requires, subject to appropriation by the Legislature, OPR and any other relevant state entities to implement the workgroup's recommendations pursuant to the deadlines specified in 7), above.

COMMENTS

AB 2252 (Limón), Chapter 318, Statutes of 2018, enacted the Grant Information Act of 2018, and required the California State Library (Library) to create a funding opportunities Internet Web portal (Portal) that provides a centralized location for grant seekers to find state grant opportunities. The bill required the Portal to include an interactive website that includes, at minimum, information identifying every grant administered by the state and any incentive opportunities allocated by statute or in the annual budget that will provide local assistance funds.

The bill required the website to be accessible and provide helpful information to a diverse set of potential applicants and other entities that are working to support and benefit disadvantaged and low-income communities. It also required each state agency, on or before July 1, 2020, to register every grant the state agency administers with the Library before commencing a solicitation or award process for distribution of the grant.

Each state agency must provide information regarding each grant that assists the Library with cataloging the distribution of grants and provides potential applicants with understandable and consistent information about available funding opportunities. Each state agency must provide a link to the Library's Portal on their Internet Web sites, and must provide for the acceptance of electronic proposals for any grant administered by the agency.

AB 434 (Daly), Chapter 192, Statutes of 2020, aligned six rental housing programs with the Multifamily Housing Program, to enable the state Department of Housing and Community Development to implement a single application and scoring system for making coordinated awards under all seven programs.

According to the Author

At the state level, local assistance efforts are largely conducted by individual grant programs, and, although centrally located via the California State Library's Grants Portal, nearly all state grant programs have unique and widely varied procedures for application and scoring. Further, although best practices for local assistance have been developed and published by the Strategic Growth Council, local assistance efforts are not uniformly conducted across state departments, offices, boards, commissions, and agencies.

Local municipalities often lack the resources, staff capacity, implementation experience, and technical expertise to apply for and secure competitive statewide targeted grant funding. Additionally, like other sectors, California cities are facing staffing shortages, a wave of early retirement, and other workforce stressors on existing municipal staff. Streamlined application processes and robust, uniform local assistance from the state is crucial for cities to effectively access state funding opportunities.

Arguments in Support

The League of California Cities, sponsor of this measure, writes, "At the state level, local assistance efforts are largely conducted by individual grant programs, and, although centrally located via the California State Library's Grants Portal, nearly all state grant programs have unique and widely varied procedures for application and scoring. Further, although best practices for local assistance have been developed and published by the Strategic Growth Council, local assistance efforts are not uniformly conducted across state departments, offices, boards, commissions, and agencies.

"Local municipalities often lack the resources, staff capacity, implementation experience, and technical expertise to apply for and secure competitive statewide targeted grant funding. Additionally, like other sectors, California cities are facing staffing shortages, a wave of early retirement, and other workforce stressors on existing municipal staff. Streamlined application processes and robust, uniform local assistance from the state is crucial for cities to effectively access state funding opportunities.

"Climate resiliency, natural resources, and environmental quality programs are nearly always funding with a combination of federal, state, and local resources. Cities are left to compete for scarce funding and stack various grant opportunities which increases the complexity and decreases the likelihood of successfully securing grant program funding. By aligning procedures of the financing programs under the purview of the California Natural Resources Agency and the California Environmental Protection Agency, AB 972 will help stretch limited funding as far as possible and bolster efforts to address shared state and local climate resiliency goals."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 1) OPR estimates one-time General Fund (GF) costs of \$481,000 for two positions to organize and facilitate the workgroup and to produce the report, including recommendations, to the Legislature.
- 2) Costs of an unknown amount, likely minor, to the California Natural Resources Agency, CalEPA, DOF, and the Department of Technology to participate in the workgroup.
- 3) Ongoing GF cost pressures of an unknown amount, likely minor, to implement the workgroup's recommendations, pursuant to the deadlines in the bill.

VOTES

ASM LOCAL GOVERNMENT: 8-0-0

YES: Aguiar-Curry, Dixon, Boerner, Pacheco, Ramos, Robert Rivas, Waldron, Wilson

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-0-5

YES: Holden, Bryan, Calderon, Wendy Carrillo, Mike Fong, Hart, Lowenthal, Papan, Pellerin, Weber, Ortega

ABS, ABST OR NV: Megan Dahle, Dixon, Mathis, Robert Rivas, Sanchez

UPDATED

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