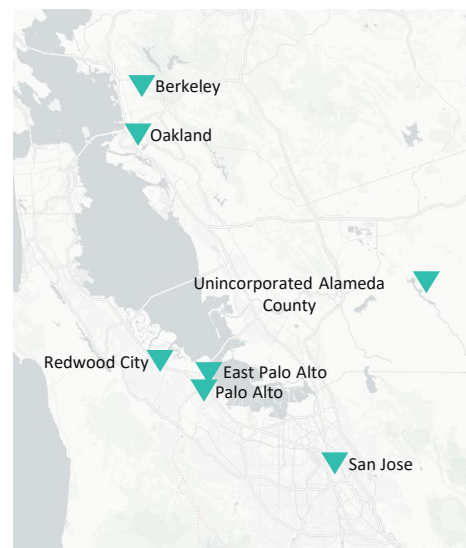# Partnership for the Bay's Future
Challenge Grant: 2020 Insights

The Partnership for the Bay's Future's inaugural grant program, the **Challenge Grants for Protection and Preservation,** is an innovative model of government and community collaboration for equitable policy change. Communities across the Bay Area form teams to pass and implement policies that protect vulnerable tenants and preserve existing affordable housing. The Challenge Grant cohort is made up of seven teams from across the Bay Area.

The Partnership for the Bay's Future worked with Informing Change, a Bay Area-based strategic learning firm, to explore how these partnerships are furthering policy change and deepening collaboration between government and community. Given the pilot nature of the Challenge Grant, the evolving needs of policy change efforts, and the variety of contexts and approaches across teams, we took a developmental evaluation (DE) approach to this work, which is particularly suited to learning for real-time adaptations in complex environments. This is a snapshot of those learnings after the first year of collaboration.

CHALLENGE GRANTS: A UNIQUE COLLABORATIVE MODEL & A PROMISING APPROACH FOR MOVING HOUSING PROTECTION & PRESERVATION FORWARD
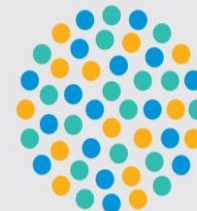
The Challenge Grants facilitates collaboration and community engagement in policy-making by:

| Placing a dynamic, mission-driven fellow within local governments | Funding community partners to work with local government to engage and activate the local community | Supporting peer learning and cross-team insights through a cohort model |

Each Challenge Grant team includes government staff, leaders from community-based organizations, and a Challenge Grant fellow working within local government.

▶ **Fellows** are strong relationship builders and project managers, adding much-needed staff capacity for advancing housing policies and acting as a key bridge between government and community partners. At the same time, city staff help fellows and community partners navigate city structures; having a "guide on the inside" supports more efficient processes so fellows and community partners know how and where to focus their time and engagement with the city.

▶ **Community partners** are deeply enmeshed in their communities and often bring needed technical know-how, such as expertise in legal, policy, and community mobilization spaces, as well as having a strong connection to the communities impacted by affordable housing protection and preservation.

▶ **The cohort model** bolsters the knowledge and capacities of fellows and offers a venue to share knowledge and brainstorm solutions.

By bringing local jurisdictions and community partners to the same table, fellows help teams align policy priorities, agree on how to move the work forward, and coordinate across each partner's strengths. This structure facilitates the necessary "push-pull" tension between the needs of the community and those of the local government to inform a more robust, effective, and equitable policy.

CHALLENGE GRANT SITE POLICY PRIORITIES

Site	2020 Vision	Approaches
Alameda	Build a strong community voice and infrastructure for renter support long-term.	• Code enforcement for older rental stock • Funding for Eden CLT
Berkeley	Leverage their work for regional impact and longer-term support for housing preservation.	• Tenant Opportunity To Purchase Act (TOPA) • Local Housing Preference Policy
East Palo Alto	For residents to feel agency/control over their housing and have long-term affordable housing options in EPA.	• Tenant or Community Opportunity To Purchase Act (TOPA/COPA) • Launch a CLT
Oakland	Incorporate additional financial resources to support housing work.	• Racial equity impact analysis of existing housing programs
Palo Alto	Identify a specific policy that will work locally. Develop a rent registry.	• Explore and adjust renter protections • Explore housing policy to pursue
Redwood City	Strengthen the relationship between city and CBO even after the term of the grant.	• Explore sustainable housing preservation program (possibly COPA) • Enforce/enhance relocation assistance/no fault evictions
San Jose	Inform and empower communities. Shift hearts and minds regarding home ownership models. Build deeper relationships between different entities working on housing.	• Local preservation initiative (COPA as priority) • Assess feasibility of CLT • Tenant preferences on affordable housing

BRINGING EQUITY TO THE FOREFRONT OF HOUSING POLICY

Challenge Grant work maintains an equity foundation through its focus on anti-displacement, preservation, protection, and tenant rights. Via thoughtful community engagement processes, fellows lean on community partners to bring community-based priorities to policy discussions and build grassroots support for proposed policies.

Through the Challenge Grant partnerships, teams are more effectively integrating racial and economic equity into housing policy and community engagements. For instance, by revisiting existing housing policies though an equity lens, several teams are exploring how policy changes will expand power to residents of color, broaden inclusion, and reduce disenfranchisement.

HELPING COMMUNITIES ADAPT TO CHALLENGING CONTEXTS

Flexibility within the Challenge Grants has allowed teams to continue building the foundations for policy progress while responding to the disruptions of Covid-19. For example, having to pivot to online interactions created hurdles for reaching out to communities during the pandemic. Some teams used Challenge Grant support to pilot creative new approaches to engagement during this time.

Although the time to adapt and respond to contextual changes can challenge progress on policy goals, the benefits for engaging with communities have been invaluable to moving the Challenge Grant work forward.

NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY THE CHALLENGE GRANT COHORT

▶ Housing status, income inequality, and power disparities can inhibit progress on tenant-centered housing policies. A key example is that landlords often hold more power and political clout than renters, a dynamic teams must factor into the community engagement and policymaking processes.

▶ Policy work would benefit from more local, disaggregated data. These include demographic data, socioeconomic data, and data on renters, homeowners, and evictions. Some teams noted the challenge of obtaining city-level data on evictions, especially for small cities as is the case for several of the participating jurisdictions.

> **❝** The funding of this inside/outside strategy that the Partnership for the Bay did by funding community partners alongside a jurisdiction—I do feel like is exactly the [right] kind of [model]. I think only funding organizing, or only funding government policy, wasn't going to cut it. That part has been very successful. **❞**
>
> **– Community Partner**

The progress to-date of the Challenge Grant is remarkable, given that its early implementation coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic and the beginning of shelter-in-place orders in the Bay Area. But the pandemic caused teams to shift priorities in the short-term. As one Fellow explains, "It felt tone-deaf to start talking about a policy that might not necessarily address the immediate needs of the residents, [such as buying a home]." Instead, they pivoted towards increasing access to information and legal services for tenants.

The Challenge Grant program will end in 2022. The Partnership for the Bay's Future will continue to iterate on this model of community-centered policy. For more information, visit baysfuture.org.

Informing CHANGE