

January 24-25, 2007 OWEB Board Meeting Executive Director Update #C3: 2006 Council Support Applications

Background

Watershed council support grant applications are processed on a two-year grant cycle to coincide with OWEB's biennial budget. The applications are received in December of the second year of the biennium. They are evaluated for merit over a period of several months and grant awards are made by the Board in May prior to the start of the new biennium.

Starting in February 2006, in preparation of the 2007-2009 council support grant cycle, staff worked to make improvements to the council support grant process. The improvement effort focused on the application form, evaluation criteria and the merit review process.

In addition, at the May 2006 Board meeting, the Board directed staff and a Board subcommittee to explore some of the larger policy issues related to performance thresholds and incentives for councils to consolidate operations. This will assist the Board in making deliberate funding decisions for the upcoming council support grant cycle.

Improvements to the Council Support Grant Process

Improvements to the council support grant process were completed in November. The most significant changes are:

- The application was streamlined and resulted in an average application size of 20 pages. In 2005-2007, the applications were from 30-90 pages in length.
- The evaluation criteria were clarified to make the link between the review criteria and the questions in the application more transparent.
- The review process was revised to include consensus scoring and other quality control measures to reduce variation among reviewers.

Status of Council Support Grant Applications

On December 15, 2006, OWEB received 60 applications for council support grants. The total amount requested was \$7.9 million. Reviewers will consider the applications to determine pre-discussion scores for each application between January 1 and February 8, 2007. During the week of February 12, 2007, OWEB will hold consensus scoring sessions to derive the merit scores for each application. The merit score distribution will be evaluated by staff and the council support Board subcommittee to develop a proposed funding recommendation based on what is known of the budget at that time. The proposed funding recommendation will be presented at the May Board meeting.

Policy Issues

In preparation of the May funding decision, the Board subcommittee will evaluate policy issues related to council support. These include opportunities to provide incentives for councils to consolidate operations and establish performance thresholds.

If you have questions or need additional information about the 2007-2009 council support grant cycle, please contact Lori Warner-Dickason at lori.warner-dickason@state.or.us or 503-986-0046.