MEMORANDUM

TO: OWEB Grants Committee, June 15, 2023
FROM: Courtney Shaff, Monitoring and Reporting Program Manager
              Brian Wolcott, Water Acquisitions Coordinator
SUBJECT: Watershed Council Operating Capacity Staff Funding Recommendation

I.   Background

For more than 20 years, OWEB has provided operating capacity grants to watershed councils. The council capacity application and review process include an eligibility determination and initial and secondary merit reviews (Attachment A). Merit criteria (Attachment B) evaluate councils for performance and progress including how the council addresses challenges. Fifty-two Councils did satisfy the merit criteria review. Councils that do not meet all the merit criteria during the initial review participate in the secondary review process, which includes an interview with a technical review team.

II.   Results of the secondary review process

Five watershed councils were interviewed as a part of the secondary review process. OWEB staff develop a funding recommendation after the secondary review with consideration of 1) the council capacity application materials; 2) supplemental materials provided by the council as part of the secondary review process; 2) reviewers' assessment of the council against the merit criteria, 3) OWEB staff input; and 4) the interview with council staff and board. Brief summaries are provided below for each council that was part of the secondary review process. The full evaluations will be provided to the board and the watershed councils ahead of the July Board meeting.

A. Full Funding

Two watershed councils, Elk Creek WC and Tillamook Bay WC, demonstrated they met all the merit criteria and are recommended for full funding.

B. Reduced Funding

Two watershed councils, Greater Yamhill WC and Umatilla Basin WC, demonstrated they met some, but not all the merit criteria. Since the councils did not meet all of the merit criteria they are recommended for reduced funding, in addition, because OWEB staff are concerned about the trajectory of the councils, staff recommend the board fund the councils for one year with specific benchmarks each council needs to meet in order to receive the second year of funding.

Greater Yamhill Watershed Council struggled with meeting OWEB reporting requirements throughout the last two biennia. The council has hired a new coordinator but needs to develop a governance and management structure that provides adequate staff oversight. The council has not pursued its own restoration projects and has completed limited stakeholder engagement

projects. It is not clear what the council's niche is in the watershed for restoration and stakeholder engagement.

The Umatilla Basin WC has consistently missed reporting deadlines throughout the last two biennia. The council struggled to have a quorum at board meetings and has not consistently kept meeting minutes. The council completed no restoration work during the 2021-2023 biennium, and it is not clear what the restoration niche is of the council or how it is identifying and prioritizing its restoration work or stakeholder engagement work.
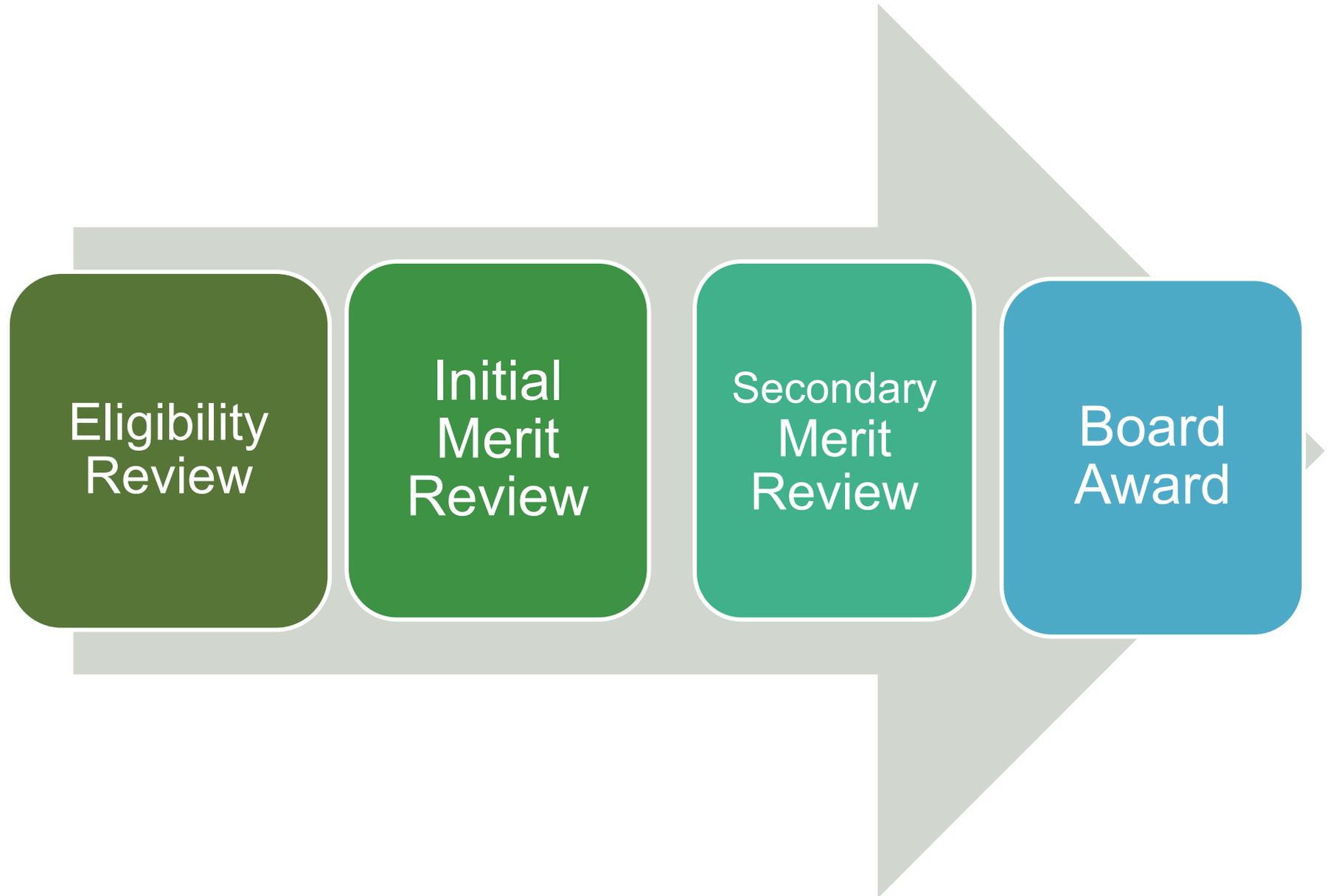
C. Do Not Fund

One watershed council, Lower Columbia River WC, demonstrated inadequate performance across all merit criteria and is not recommended for funding.

The council board has recently lost several members and has not been able to identify members to run for chair of vice chair in the upcoming officer elections. The council has not demonstrated effective management of staff or coordination with the SWCD, who is the official employer of the council coordinator. The council has not implemented any restoration or stakeholder engagement projects in the last two years, and it is not clear what the council's niche is in the watershed for restoration and stakeholder engagement.

V. Next Steps

Staff are seeking feedback from the OWEB Board Grants Committee, specifically if there are questions staff can answer around these recommendations so we can be prepared for the July Board meeting.

Review and Award Process

Eligibility Review

Initial Merit Review

Secondary Merit Review

Board Award

OWEB

Merit Evaluation

OWEB

Operate according to council's bylaws

Management of staff according to council policies and procedures

Council working toward continuous improvement of council operations and management.

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

PROGRESS IN PLANNING

Council projects are linked to council identified priorities.

Council engaging stakeholders in planning its work.

Council's work is prioritized in consideration of council resources.

FULL FUNDING

Restoration activities are linked to watershed limiting factors.

Council is working on and making progress on restoration projects.

PROGRESS IN ON THE GROUND RESTORATION

PROGRESS IN STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Council is working on community engagement activities

Council demonstrates progress toward completion of community engagement activities

The council represents a balance of persons within the watershed.