

January 26-27, 2016 OWEB Board Meeting Executive Director Update #P-1: Long-Term Investment Strategy Update

In 2013, the Board adopted its Long-Term Investment Strategy for Conservation (LTIS), which included approval of a framework for grant investments and direction for the LTIS. This report updates the Board on two tasks associated with the LTIS: Online Grant Applications/Grant Agreement System and Continuous Improvement.

Background

As a result of the passage of Ballot Measure 76 in 2010, OWEB's primary source of funding was no longer time-limited in the Oregon Constitution. Since then, OWEB has been reviewing and updating its priorities, policies, programs and practices to position the agency as an effective and successful long-term funder of conservation in Oregon.

In June of 2013, the OWEB Board approved its Long-Term Investment Strategy Framework with four major areas of investment: Operating Capacity, Open Solicitation, Focused Investments, and Effectiveness Monitoring. The LTIS is nested within the agency's mission and strategic plan goals, and touches on nearly all aspects of OWEB's responsibilities.

The LTIS items listed below involve a considerable amount of work for OWEB staff beyond the typical workload. Staff's goal is to carry out these efforts without diminishing the quality of services our stakeholders expect from the agency. Therefore, OWEB is utilizing internal cross-sectional teams for many of these tasks to inform agency direction on policies and processes.

Status of Work Items

The following lists the status of two priority work items—Online Grant Applications/Grant Agreement System and Continuous Improvement—during the 2013-15 biennium:

Develop online grant applications and grant agreements. OWEB's target is to launch an online grant application/agreement web interface during the 2015-17 biennium. The goal is to improve effectiveness and efficiency of the agency's grant-making processes for applicants, grantees and OWEB staff. Online versions of three application types -- Restoration, Technical Assistance (TA) and Monitoring -- are in development. All three were 'streamlined' prior to developing the online applications to ensure these applications gather the key information necessary to review applications and support the grant-making process. The current version of the Outreach application will also be web-enabled. However, streamlining for this grant application will be delayed until a future date, following an assessment of OWEB's funding approach for outreach grants.

Early iterations, of restoration, TA and monitoring applications have been tested by both an external group of testers (i.e., grantees and reviewers) and an internal group of OWEB staff. Refinements to the system resulted from this testing. In late January of 2016, testing of all three application types will occur with a larger set of external and internal testers. In addition to planning for future rounds of testing, staff are preparing for outreach to OWEB applicants about the online grant application system, including demos of the system. Staff are looking into opportunities for outreach at upcoming meetings and gatherings (e.g., CONNECT 2016).

As part of the online system development, staff built an automated grant agreement (GA) tool, which was pilot tested with a subset of OWEB grant awards (both Open Solicitation grants and transition funding for Special Investment Partnerships [SIP]) made in Fall of 2015. This tool greatly reduces data entry and manual formatting by staff. Improvements to the tool were made based on the pilot testing, and the automated GA tool will continue to be refined as awards are made in 2016. The automated GA process will be launched as part of OWEB's online grant application/grant agreement system.

Continuous Improvement. The OWEB Executive Team has adopted a Continuous Improvement (CI) approach to create adaptive, human-centered, and high performance service excellence.

Since the last CI report, staff continue developing and testing improvements to the Regional Review Process to achieve the following target: “People submit high quality applications to get money for measurable watershed improvements....OWEB consistently and rigorously reviews and evaluates each application/project.” Improvements include:

- Incorporating new facilitation techniques and tools into Regional Review Team (RRT) meetings to support consistent discussion for each project;
- Developing visual aids that effectively display information requested by RRT members to support a consistent review process; and
- Developing pre-application process steps to provide applicant support and further refine the review process.

To effectively identify and prioritize agency processes needing improvements, OWEB will implement techniques for **Measuring Our Mission** that facilitate learning and improvement based on measured results. Measuring Our Mission is found in Attachment B and has two distinct components. The first, **Measuring Mission Progress**, assesses how OWEB’s business processes are aligned in support of OWEB’s mission. Action measures will monitor process inputs and outputs to support an ongoing, methodical approach to improving process through evidence-based decision making, continuous organizational learning and focus on aligning community needs with agency process results.

Paired with this process is the agency’s approach to measuring the impacts of our investments – **Measuring Mission Impact**. Results measures will assess outcomes and impact (i.e. what difference is made from OWEB investment) utilizing variety of tools such as effectiveness monitoring, accomplishments reporting, implementation monitoring and other approaches that measure accomplishments from OWEB investments. Together, **Measuring Mission Progress** and **Measuring Mission Impact** will provide a complete assessment of agency progress towards meeting legislative, stakeholder, staff and Board expectations in carrying out OWEB’s mission.

Staff Contact

If you have questions or need additional information, contact Renee Davis at renee.davis@state.or.us or 503-986-0203, or Liz Redon at liz.redon@state.or.us or 503-986-0028.

Attachments

- A. OWEB Strategic Direction & Principles
- B. Potential Measurement Framework



OWEB Strategic Direction and Principles

OWEB **OWEB's Mission:** To help protect and restore healthy watersheds and natural habitats that support thriving communities and strong economies.

Goals

Goals from OWEB's 2010 Strategic Plan

In 2010, the OWEB Board approved a strategic plan with five goals. With the passage of Constitutional Measure 76 and permanent Lottery funding, the Board continues to operate under the strategy.

Goal 1: Adaptive Investment

Restore and sustain resilient ecosystems through program and project investments that enhance watershed and ecosystem functions and processes and support community needs.

Goal 2: Local Infrastructure Development

Support an enduring, high capacity local infrastructure for conducting watershed and habitat restoration and conservation.

Goal 3: Public Awareness and Involvement

Provide information to help Oregonians understand the need for and engage in activities that support healthy watersheds.

Goal 4: Partnership Development

Build and maintain strong partnerships with local, state, tribal, and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private landowners for watershed and habitat restoration and conservation.

Goal 5: Efficient and Accountable Administration

Ensure efficient and accountable administration of all investments.

Long-Term Investment Strategy

OWEB's Framework for Grant Investments

In 2013, the Board adopted a Long-Term Investment Strategy that guides its investments of Lottery, federal and salmon plate funding. All of OWEB's investments in ecological outcomes also help build communities and support the local economy. The Board also approved a direction for the investments outlined below. They will continue operating capacity and open solicitation grants and continue focused investments with a gradual increase over time.

Operating Capacity

Operating Capacity Investments support the operating costs of effective watershed councils and soil and water conservation districts. Councils and districts are specifically identified in OWEB's statutes.

Open Solicitation

OWEB offers responsive grants across the state for competitive proposals based on local ecological priorities.

Focused Investments

OWEB helps landscape-scale collaborative partnerships achieve collaboratively prioritized ecological outcomes.

Effectiveness Monitoring

OWEB evaluates and reports on the progress and outcomes of watershed work it supports.



OWEB

Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles

As the Board developed the Investment Strategy, they did so under established principles for how any changes in OWEB's programs would operate.

Build on accomplishments. The commitment and work of our local partners have resulted in a nationally and internationally recognized approach with unmatched environmental accomplishments. OWEB will build on this foundation.

Effective communication. OWEB is committed to active, two-way communication of ideas, priorities, and results with its staff, partners, potential partners, and the public as a means for developing and maintaining a strong investment strategy and successful cooperative conservation.

Transparency. OWEB values transparency and develops its Long-Term Investment Strategy through an open, transparent process that involves input and dialogue with stakeholders and staff.

Maximize service, minimize disruption. The Board considers how OWEB's grant portfolio impacts partner organizations and staff resources to maximize effectiveness without adversely affecting service delivery.

Responsive. The Long-Term Investment Strategy will adjust to changes in revenue and be responsive to changes in ecological priorities from the Governor, Legislature, the Board, and local partners.

Adapt based on monitoring and evaluation. OWEB's staff and Board monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and implementation of the Long-Term Investment Strategy. The Board shall adapt and modify the strategy as needed to meet its desired goals and outcomes and to improve overall investment success.

Phase-in Change. OWEB's Long-Term Investment Strategy will guide future efforts, is designed to accommodate changes and adjustments made by stakeholders and OWEB staff, and will be periodically revisited.

Operating Principles

Operating Principles to Enhance OWEB Team Work

We will do all we can, individually and as a group, to:

- **Use Good communication--at all levels and in all directions;**
- **Operate with a Team approach;**
- **Follow through on conversations in order to build and maintain needed trust;**
- **Empower staff wherever it is appropriate to do so; and**
- **Have fun while doing important work!**

A POTENTIAL MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK:

