

FIP 2021-2023 Applicant Survey Results Summary

Pre-Application Consultation

Survey Question:

Provide comments on how to improve the FIP pre-application consultation, and if other information could be provided in the consultation that would have helped your partnership develop a FIP application.

Summary of Responses:

- 1) The concept of a full pre-application process was suggested that would weed out Partnerships that are not a good fit for the program or that are not ready.
- 2) There were comments around messaging on evaluation criteria, particularly around monitoring plans and budget requests.

Areas for Exploration:

- 1) A pre-application process that could include self-assessment of appropriateness for the FIP program.
- 2) Provide additional talking points and guidance on all evaluation criteria, with specific messaging around monitoring plans and budget requests.
- 3) Provide clearer guidance to review teams on what they should be evaluating related to monitoring and project tracking.

Application Size

Survey Question:

Provide comments on what changes you would like to see on the information requested in the FIP application.

Summary of Responses:

- 1) The majority of comments noted the duplication in application questions and the information provided in the SAP and that character limits should be made on application responses.
- 2) Comment that the work plan was challenging to develop.

Areas for Exploration:

- 1) Crosswalk the current FIP application with the SAP guidance to remove duplication and include only those questions where the information is not already provided in the SAP.
- 2) Consider developing guidance to clearly communicate elements that should be included in a workplan.

FIP Expert Review

Survey Question:

Provide comments on what changes you would like to see to improve the FIP expert review process.

Summary of Responses:

- 1) Primarily appeared to be concerns around process and review team composition and level of expertise. This seems largely due to a lack of communication and transparency about the process.

- 2) Comments that the expert review teams should make recommendations for funding similar to Open Solicitation.
- 3) Concern that multiple review teams (partnership and ecological) bring discontinuity to the process.

Areas for Exploration:

- 1) More clearly describe the two-step review team process in guidance, including the composition and type and representation of expertise on the teams.
- 2) Consider combining the Partnership and Ecological reviewers into a single review team to improve overall understanding and continuity of review.
- 3) Consider having the review team rank applications to provide OWEB staff with a ranked list of projects for funding that can be used as a funding recommendation to present to the Grants Committee.

Grant Committee Interview

Survey Question:

Provide comments on what changes you would like to see to improve the OWEB Board Grants Committee interview and recommendation process.

Summary of Responses:

- 1) The volume of application materials appeared to be too much for the Grants Committee to review, for example some of the questions asked to Partnerships was information that was provided in the applications.
- 2) The Grants Committee could have more board members participating.
- 3) The interviews included very few, if any, additional questions beyond what was provided to the applicants and there was very little follow-up discussion.

Areas for Exploration:

- 1) Note that some of these comments would be addressed by carrying out some of the considerations under application size.
- 2) Consider assigning a lead reviewer and backup reviewer for each application, similar to the expert review team process.
- 3) The FIP program rules state that the Grants Committee makes a funding recommendation to the full board. Consider what the role of the Grants Committee should be and clearly define and communicate that role.

Board Award

Survey Question:

Provide comments on what changes you would like to see to improve the OWEB Board process on awarding FIP initiatives.

Summary of Responses:

- 1) Some concern expressed about the Board not fully understand the FIP program and process. If there was greater understanding, there could have been less re-hashing of the program details and evaluation deliberations.
- 2) There were some concerns about board deliberation of funding decisions that made it clear that there is a misunderstanding about the role of the Board in awarding FIP funding.

Areas for Exploration:

- 1) Develop grants 101 session on the FIP program for the board to have an opportunity to learn the history, evolution, and nuances of the FIP program and the similarities and differences compared to other OWEB programs.
- 2) Similar to the Grants Committee role, clearly define and communicate the role of the OWEB Board in FIP funding awards.