

Puget Sound Partnership
Leadership Council Management Brief

June 8, 2022 – Topic 3

TOPIC:

Snohomish/Stillaguamish Local Forum

MEMO STAFF CONTACT:

Kathleen Pozarycki, Snohomish/Stillaguamish LIO Coordinator, kathleen.pozarycki@snoco.org

PRESENTERS:

Staff: N/A

Dave Somers, Snohomish County, Snohomish County Executive

Ryan Miller, Tulalip Tribes, Director of Treaty Rights and Government Affairs

Kathleen Pozarycki, Snohomish County, Snohomish/Stillaguamish LIO Coordinator

Morgan Schneider- Ruff, Tulalip Tribes, Snohomish Basin Capital Projects Coordinator

Kristin Marshall- Snohomish Conservation District, Habitat Restoration and Floodplain Management
Program Director

Jason Griffith- Stillaguamish Tribe, Environmental Manager

TYPE OF PRESENTATION:

- Oral presentation for a decision
- Oral presentation for discussion
- Oral presentation for information only
- Written briefing only

ISSUE/QUESTION:

The Sno/Stilly LIO has identified a significant barrier in achieving ecosystem recovery and would like to request the assistance of the Leadership Council to discuss options and work to address this barrier. Local agencies have long struggled with an ever-increasing administrative burden and outdated policy requirements for a variety of state grant programs. It is not uncommon for large restoration projects to take decades and require 10-20 separate grants to complete the project. Various grants have caps on funding requests and match requirements that were created decades ago and limit the size and scale of large projects. We propose that the state grant process be streamlined and remove outdated requirements in order to leverage existing local staff capacity to complete projects more efficiently on a faster schedule and to better prepare for increased infrastructure funding. A streamlined grant system would increase efficiency, simplify reporting requirements, eliminate duplicative application and reporting portals, increase transparency, consolidate information on results and metrics, and allow local implementors to spend more time implementing recovery actions.

ALTERNATIVES:

We propose that the Leadership Council discuss, support, and work with appropriate partner entities to allocate resources for the recommended actions detailed in this memo. The recommended actions provided are intended as a starting point for discussions aimed at streamlining grant applications,

match, and reporting requirements between and among state agencies that support ecosystem recovery.

BACKGROUND AND KEY CONTEXT:

- Grant timeframes are too short and limit efficiency of long term projects and programs for many grants including RCO, LIO, MRC, PIC, NTA/SIL grants for example.
- Many programs lack long term funding sources for programs (For example, Pollution, Identification and Correction (PIC) programs) and require reapplication for funding every couple of years
- Duplicative application portals- most state grants currently have their own application and reporting platforms, each requires significant specialization, time, and effort to learn the program, gain permission and access to the portal, work with IT departments to load proprietary programs on government computers, and train staff on the system requirements.
- Grant match requirements at the sponsor level limit project effectiveness and underreport the amount of funds leveraged by local agencies. Conservation and restoration projects cannot be completed with only one grant funding source due to high land values and high construction costs. See problem statement from [Regional Fisheries Coalition](#).
- Grant match requirements pose a barrier to many organizations in securing funding to implement essential recovery projects. The match barrier results in a loss of project management and implementation capacity across the region to implement recovery work and therefore slows the pace of recovery. Additionally, match tracking and reporting creates financial risk (through audits and other compliance requirements), expenses, and require financial and staff resources long after the project has been completed.
- Grant reporting complexity- Project sponsors must report project results into multiple grant online databases on different time scales. Overlapping reporting can be complex and difficult; subsequent resulting metrics and results are then spread across different agencies.
- Outdated funding caps on Design-Build projects require sponsors to patch together dozens of different grants to obtain the funding needed to develop and implement large projects.
- Variety of state-sponsored database platforms like EAGL, PRISM, AA Tracker, and others create both application and reporting complexity and challenges for project sponsors and limits the accuracy of results. For example, one project to restore 300 acres of estuary has twenty grants combined to complete the project, so does each of the grants get to report that they funded a 300 acre restoration project?

ANALYSIS:

We are working during a unique and rare time with transformative funding for Puget Sound Recovery, however the piecemeal state grant funding systems creates significant, unintended complications and administrative burden that limits the speed of project implementation, increases costs, and creates inefficiencies in reporting and tracking results. In the Sno/Stilly LIO alone, we estimate a minimum of ~\$500,000 is spent on administrative grant management work like tracking and reporting grant match, preparing applications, billing and reporting. Due to the way staff time is tracked, project staff believe this is a low estimate and could be much higher. The Leadership Council and staff should work with the key state agencies to create efficiencies in the system to maximize new federal and state resources coming into the recovery world.

We have several areas that we would suggest as a starting point:

- Provide longer term stable grants- ~ 4-5 year timeline
 - Model funding around proven large grant systems like transportation grants where funding is provided for design, permitting and construction in one package.
 - Expand pilot projects like the ESRP Portfolio Projects, which aim to wholistically fund projects from start to finish including design, permitting, construction, monitoring.
- Work with state and federal agencies to eliminate grant matching requirements to increase the pace and magnitude of ecosystem restoration work.
- Adjust grant program policies to reduce project timelines and lag time between design funding and construction funding to enable accelerated implementation.
- Streamline state application and reporting databases between various platforms such as but not limited to PRISM, EAGL, Puget Sound Info, Action Agenda Tracker, and others to select one database moving forward.
- Action Agenda Explorer/Puget Sound Info team coordinates with all state grant agencies to streamline reporting requirements to report back to EPA/State agencies and Vital Sign Tracking.
- Support the ALIGN Grant Group with additional staff time to determine ways to add efficiency to the system (ALIGN program grant managers need support from Director Level to make the necessary changes) [Conservation Project Budget Standards - Salish Sea Wiki \(salishsearestoration.org\)](http://salishsearestoration.org)

FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE IMPACTS:

Effort will be required by a multiagency team to streamline grant applications, match requirements, and reporting; however, this effort will be well spent in the long term to create a more efficient, effective funding system. Significant costs are being incurred currently by project sponsors due to the administrative burden surrounding this important work.

It will require commitment at the highest levels to effect change in this complex system.

In the short term, dedicated staff time and capacity is needed to move next steps forward and engage interagency coordination. Staff time and resources from stakeholder organizations are needed to collaborate on system-wide changes and compromise on solutions that work for the benefit of recovery projects. Long-term, the compounding resources from agencies across the state currently used for redundant administrative burden will offset short-term capacity needed to collaborate on systemic change.

NEXT STEPS:

Today's forum is a starting point; continuing conversations and effort is needed to move this issue forward. Island LIO will be hosting a Local Forum this fall and plan to bring this topic to the Leadership Council as follow up.

The Leadership Council may want to convene a subcommittee to help move this work forward.

This topic fits within the Leadership Council's Current Workplan, Shared Priority #5: *Maintain, expand, and diversify funding for the recovery effort.*

Possibilities for additional staff time to support this effort include:

Snohomish/Stillaguamish Local Forum

June 8, 2022

Page 4

- Partnership Staff
- [ALIGN](#) Group Members (State Agency Staff)
- SILs
- LIO Staff and Committee members
- Additional LIO Forums

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Local forum draft agenda

Attachment 2: Letter of Support from NOAA, Paul Cereghino (in development)

DRAFT AGENDA

Snohomish-Stillaguamish LIO Leadership Council Forum

Wednesday June 8, 2022, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Port of Everett Blue Heron Room

Purpose: To facilitate a robust discussion on how the Leadership Council can help increase capacity of project sponsors by streamlining and reducing administrative burden of state grants

Time	Topic	Presenter/ Facilitator	Materials
10:00-10:15	Welcome, Introductions, and Goals for today <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome Introductions Goals 	Dave Somers, Snohomish County Executive Ryan Miller, Tulalip Tribes Kathleen Pozarycki, Sno/Stilly LIO Coordinator	Slides
10:15-10:25	Overview of Ecosystem Recovery Planning in Snohomish & Stillaguamish Watersheds	Kathleen Pozarycki, Sno/Stilly LIO Coordinator	Slides
10:25-10:35	Case Study: Snohomish Watershed Lead Entity	Morgan Schneidler-Ruff	Slides
10:35-10:40	Case Study: Snohomish Conservation District	Kristen Marshall	Slides

<p>10:40-10:50</p>	<p>Case Study: Stillaguamish Watershed Projects</p>	<p>Jason Griffith</p>	<p>Slides</p>
<p>10:50-11:00</p>	<p>Q & A</p>		
<p>11:00-11:55</p>	<p>Panel and Leadership Council Discussion</p> <p>Description: Ecosystem Recovery Implementors are working within a grant framework that exists between various state agencies. We are seeking ways to reduce administrative burden for project implementers, speed up projects, increase local capacity, and maximize the efficiency of incoming infrastructure funding</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please introduce yourself, your role, and your connection to the topic • From your perspective, what are the challenges to efficacy of the current grant funding system and what ideas do you have to improve the system? • What ideas do you have that would increase the pace of restoration and recovery projects? 	<p>Panel Moderator: Kathleen Pozarycki</p> <p>Panel Speakers: Ryan Miller, Morgan Schneider-Ruff, Jason Griffith Kristin Marshall</p>	
<p>11:55-12:00</p>	<p>Wrap Up & Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrap up and next steps • Island LIO Local Forum at Fall Leadership Council 	<p>All</p>	