

Local Integrating Organization

Establishment and Operating Principles

Version: February 14, 2018

Introduction

Local ecosystem recovery efforts are critical to Puget Sound recovery. The technical experts, the implementation of on-the-ground projects, and the relationships with partners that Local Integrating Organizations (LIO) bring are essential to gaining public support and improving ecosystem conditions, both locally and regionally. The Puget Sound Partnership (Partnership) helps to integrate, synthesize and build up local priorities into regional paths forward, integrating management and coordination processes, and shared learning systems. The Partnership elevates local voices and secures funding for implementation of recovery actions on a broader scale.

As the backbone organization for Puget Sound recovery, the Partnership coordinates the overall LIO Program. When considering changes in the LIO structure and composition across Puget Sound, the Partnership is responsible for articulating to the Leadership Council how a change in one part of the system will influence and impact the rest of the system.

The Partnership is tasked by law with helping to create and maintain an efficient coordination and management system and make the most effective use of public dollars for recovery. The addition, merging, and splitting of entities impacts resources, staffing and the overall recovery and protection effort in direct and indirect ways. It is important that our systems are not fractured, redundant, or inefficient. It is for these reasons that the Partnership closely analyzes proposed changes to the Puget Sound recovery system.

This document provides an overview of the role of LIOs, expectations for operation, and guidelines for establishing new LIOs. The Partnership will periodically review and update this document as it learns more, as the LIO and coordination and management system needs evolve, and as funding changes.

1. HISTORY AND OVERVIEW OF LOCAL INTEGRATING ORGANIZATIONS (GOALS AND FUNCTIONS):

The Partnership established LIOs with the goal of developing sub-regional building blocks for participation and engagement in the Puget Sound recovery process. Given the expansive geography of the Puget Sound Basin and the variety of environmental issues, human cultures, and economies in the region, the Partnership believes that locally composed governance bodies are best suited for developing local and sub-regional needs, and then working with the Management Conference¹ to integrate these needs into the development of shared regional plans in a collective impact model of recovery.

¹ Under the National Estuary Program (NEP), a Management Conference is used to guide and direct the overall program of respective NEP organizations. For the purpose of the Puget Sound NEP the Management Conference includes the Partnership, Leadership Council, Ecosystem Coordination Board, and Science Panel; and the broader partnership encompassing the caucuses

The basic functions of LIOs are (1) to integrate local and tribal jurisdictions and interests to develop and implement Puget Sound recovery strategies, and (2) to identify local priority Puget Sound protection and restoration projects and programs to include in the Action Agenda as Near Term Actions (NTAs). Existing LIOs have each developed local Ecosystem Recovery Plans (Plan) and implemented local Action Agenda priorities, and many have expanded their roles to address related topics of interest to their memberships.

There are currently nine LIOs in Puget Sound, representing the seven Action Areas (Skagit is currently not represented through a LIO). The nine LIOs were formed through agreement of the local jurisdictions and tribes, with approval by the Leadership Council. Each LIO comprises the local jurisdictions (counties, cities) and tribes, and may invite other partners or stakeholders as appropriate (state or federal agencies, non-profits, citizen members, etc.). LIOs determine the appropriate composition of committees and decision-making bodies to meet the tasks as outlined in their scope of work with the Partnership and to meet the needs of their membership.

Should an existing LIO choose to sub-divide or should a new LIO desire to form, there are specific requirements that must be met and procedures followed to receive recognition by the Leadership Council. **Section 3** describes the process for forming a new LIO. To be considered as a new LIO, LIO proponents submit an application to the Partnership in the form attached as Exhibit A. After review of the application by the Partnership staff, Partnership staff make a recommendation to the Leadership Council, which must approve the formation or splitting of LIOs. **Section 4** describes the process for dissolving an existing LIO. To dissolve, the LIO gives formal notice to the Partnership and Leadership Council. The rest of the document describes the relationship between the LIOs and Partnership and funding opportunities for LIOs.

2. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIOs AND THE PARTNERSHIP:

2.1 The Partnership's Expectations of LIOs

LIOs are expected to work with their members, partners, community groups and citizens to provide a public forum for the following activities: develop and prioritize local actions for the Action Area (as specified in statute); foster collaboration and leverage efforts within their area to increase efficiencies and reduce duplication; evaluate and advance work based on the best scientific information available; develop funding strategies for local implementation; advise and make recommendations to the Partnership on local Action Agenda priorities; and participate in regional forums including the Ecosystem Coordination Board and LIO Coordination meetings. The views expressed by LIOs do not necessarily reflect those of the Partnership or EPA. Each LIO's work is grounded in its Plan. The Partnership pulls local priorities from the Plans for the regional priority setting process of the Action Agenda.

Each LIO undertakes the following responsibilities:

1. It is responsible for organizing and supporting a committee of representative Action Agenda planning and implementation interests. The LIO must demonstrate good governance, transparency, and inclusiveness in its engagement of committees. The LIO shall maintain sufficient administration, facilitation, and coordination capacity to support the ongoing goals

related to the ECB, SRC, Tribes, formal and informal interest groups, watershed groups, individual local governments, and representatives from Canadian agencies and organizations.

and objectives of the LIO. A representative of the LIO shall attend a minimum of four in-person LIO coordinator meetings per year and four web-based meetings per year.

2. It serves an important role in coordinating local implementation of priorities identified in the Puget Sound Action Agenda and are an essential element on the Puget Sound National Estuary Program (NEP) funding model. Each LIO is responsible for identifying and reviewing local, high priority near-term actions (NTA) that align with the priorities of its Plan as well as a process to allocate NEP direct funding for local NTA(s). LIOs may choose to participate in the review and evaluation of region-wide NTAs (NTAs that impact 3 or more LIO geographies).
3. The LIO Plan describes the foundation for local implementation priorities as well as support needs. The staff and committees of the LIO develop and adaptively manage the LIO Plan in collaboration with the local partners. Adaptively managing and communicating the LIO Plan engenders confidence in local and regional decision makers that there are well-defined problems in Puget Sound at the LIO scale, that LIOs know what to do to address those problems, and that the work at the LIO level is well integrated into an overall strategy for Puget Sound Recovery. The LIO Plans should also serve as a longer-term, more durable strategic framework from which local NTAs can be developed. LIO staff and committees develop the Plans consistent with the *Guidance for Development of Local Integrating Organization Ecosystem Recovery Plans* available from the Partnership; the Plan's content (goals, strategies, pressures) is housed in Miradi using the Partnership's taxonomy. The Miradi database and regional taxonomy enable the Partnership to pull content from the Plans and integrate into regional planning processes. Miradi capacity is built within the LIO, with Partnership staff providing Miradi training as capacity allows.
4. It acts as a local ambassador for Puget Sound recovery. Through NTA development and implementation of the local Plans, LIOs regularly communicate regional recovery effort needs, priorities and opportunities for engagement to their partners and the communities they serve.
5. It is fully integrated with or has a direct relationship with the local lead entities with overlapping geographies in order to streamline priorities, processes and capacity. "Direct relationship" is defined as: close coordination between lead entity (ies) and LIO staff (minimum of quarterly check-ins); structural integration or overlap of LIO and lead entity committees (technical, policy, decision-making, etc.); and integration or alignment of the priorities articulated with the local Plans and salmon recovery plan(s). All LIOs should strive towards developing the direct relationship with their lead entity (ies) if it does not currently exist. Advantages to close alignment between the LIO and lead entity (ies) include: reduced redundancy in meetings, strategy development and implementation, and people overlap; improved engagement of local officials; leveraging of financial and personnel resources; and increased effectiveness in ecosystem recovery through alignment of priorities and funding sources rather than remaining in program silos.

LIOS that receive funding through the Partnership have additional responsibilities outlined in their negotiated scope of work contracts.

If a LIO receives funding through the Partnership and fails to meet the expectations described above and in the Statement of Work, Exhibit B, of the agreement, Partnership staff will alert the LIO staff to concerns and set up a meeting to discuss how to improve performance. If the LIO continues to fall short of meeting expectations, the Partnership will send a letter to both the LIO Chair and Fiscal/Administrative Lead identifying concerns and performance expectations that must be met to ensure there is not a breach of contract. If concerns remain unresolved, the Partnership will consider ending the contract early.

If the LIO is recognized by the Leadership Council, but does not currently receive funding directly through the Partnership, Partnership staff will alert the LIO staff to concerns and set up a meeting to discuss how to improve performance. If the LIO continues to fall short of meeting expectations, the Partnership will send a letter to the LIO Chair identifying concerns and performance expectations that must be met to continue to receive LIO recognition. If expectations continue to fall short, Partnership staff will make a recommendation to the Leadership Council to remove recognition of the LIO.

2.2 Partnership Support to LIOs

The Partnership provides technical assistance to LIOs through lending expert knowledge on Action Agenda content and process, Open Standards and Adaptive Management, Miradi and MiradiShare, and the Puget Sound Pressures Assessment. Each LIO receives support from a Partnership Ecosystem Recovery Coordinator (ERC). The amount of time allocated to each LIO and the topics supported outside of those listed above depends on the number of LIOs and ERC capacity. The ERC assigned to the LIO can facilitate conversations around LIO membership, provide timely communication on regional process and relevant information, and voice the needs and interests of the LIO in regional forums such as the ECB. Scope of work and contracts are negotiated between the Partnership and LIO on an annual basis, with input and final approval of the content from EPA.²

2.3 Board Engagement

Each Action Area, defined by statute, holds a representative seat on the Ecosystem Coordination Board (ECB). Where there are multiple LIOs within a single Action Area, the LIOs collectively nominate a representative to the Ecosystem Coordination Board. The LIOs in the Action Area caucus when items come to a vote.

Leadership Council meetings take place across the Action Areas. LIOs are invited to engage in Leadership Council meetings in their area by, for example, presenting to the Leadership Council, inviting Leadership Council members to relevant meetings, or participating in project tours.

LIO members are encouraged to participate in other aspects of the Management Conference and Action Agenda processes, boards and bodies.

² As of January 2018, each of the existing nine LIOs receives annual capacity funding in the amount of \$75,000 from the Partnership as part of the Partnership's negotiated Cooperative Agreement with EPA and as well as \$100,000 on an annual basis through the Strategic Initiative Leads via pass through funding from EPA for NTA implementation.

3. LIO FORMATION GUIDELINES:

When forming a new LIO or modifying the structure of an existing LIO, the Partnership requires an integrated LIO and relevant lead entity (ies) structure. If integration is not possible, the reasoning supporting that request must be provided to the Partnership by the LIO proponent.

Additional process steps and requirements for forming a new LIO are outlined in Exhibit A.

As described in the Introduction, the Partnership is responsible for articulating to the Leadership Council how a change in one part of the system will influence and impact the rest of the system. The Partnership must closely analyze proposed changes to the Puget Sound recovery system to ensure we are making the most effective use of public dollars for recovery, ensuring our systems are not fractured, redundant or inefficient.

It is for this reason that an analysis must also be completed by Partnership staff to identify if a shift in LIO structure impacts the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan and/or the Partnership's Base Grant Work Plan. If the Partnership identifies impacts through the analysis, the Partnership and the LIO will develop a plan to address impacts and seek any appropriate approvals of that revised plan, including any needed from EPA.

Local Ecosystem Recovery Team staff will develop a staff analysis of the proposal with recommendation for approval/rejection of the proposed LIO for review by the Executive Director or her/his designee. This analysis must include identification of potential impacts to the CCMP and the Partnership's Base Work Plan³. If approved by Partnership management, Partnership staff develop a recognition proposal memo to the Leadership Council and present to the Leadership Council at the earliest time the agenda allows. The Partnership then notifies National Estuary Program Partners (e.g. EPA, Strategic Initiative Leads) and the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office and Recreation and Conservation Office⁴ that it has received a LIO proposal and that the Leadership Council is considering the proposal for approval. If the LIO proposal is not approved by Partnership staff or the Leadership Council, Partnership staff prepare and send a written justification to the proposing body. The LIO proponent can submit appeals in writing to the Partnership for consideration by staff and the Leadership Council.

Recognition of LIO status by the Leadership Council does not equate to any assurance of funding. Funding for LIO capacity, ecosystem recovery planning and/or direct NTA funding must be negotiated by the LIO proponent with the LIO from which they are splitting or combining (if applicable), EPA, and Strategic Initiative Leads. As of January 2018, additional funding for capacity or ecosystem recovery planning is not available.

6. LIO DISSOLUTION

If the LIO proposes to dissolve, the LIO chair and fiscal agent must submit a letter to the Partnership staff with signatures or letters of support from each of the jurisdictions that make up the LIO within 30

³ For instance, if a shift in LIO structure is proposed during the NTA solicitation process or during an active capacity contract, Partnership staff should identify potential implications to funding, capacity and processes. If there are implications, there must be a detailed plan for how the LIO will perform its function in reviewing NTAs, distributing direct funds, and/or delivering on the terms of the contract (for example).

⁴ GSRO manages the lead entity contracts. Integration of lead entities and LIOs will need to be reflected in the lead entity contracts.

days prior to the date of dissolution. Partnership staff will alert the Leadership Council and other relevant entities (e.g. SI Leads, EPA). If the LIO is funded through the Partnership, once notice to dissolve is received by the Partnership, no additional funds may be spent on the LIO contract. Unspent funds are returned to the Partnership.

7. FUNDING

As stated above, recognition of LIO status by the Leadership Council does not equate to any assurance of funding. The Partnership has successfully negotiated with EPA in the past to provide LIO funding; however there is no guarantee that these funds will be available in the future or if new LIOs will be funded. Direct funding for NTA implementation must be negotiated between new LIOs, EPA and the SI Leads.

Exhibit A: Process Steps and Requirements for Forming a New LIO

To receive formal recognition of LIO status by the Leadership Council, the proposing entity (ies) must demonstrate all of the following qualities:

- Demonstrate that Partnership staff were consulted and participated in conversations and processes early and often related to the proposal to form a new LIO. (If early engagement did not occur, a meeting should be set up between Partnership staff and the proposing entity to ensure Partnership staff are brought up to speed and the proposing entity has a clear understanding of LIO roles and responsibilities.)
- Ability, authority and capacity (including funding) to execute the roles and responsibilities of the LIO, as described in section 2.1 above, and the role of a LIO in the Management Conference.
- A committee and decision-making structure that enables the proposing entity to meet the roles and responsibilities as described in section 2.1 above.
- Ability to receive and manage capacity funds (e.g., can act as a fiscal sponsor)

In addition, the LIO proponent must describe the following items in its proposal:

- Anticipated challenges (in terms of management, structure, capacity, etc.)
- Anticipated changes to the membership over time
- If modifying a pre-existing LIO, an explanation of why the current LIO structure doesn't work
- How the LIO will develop its own Ecosystem Recovery Plan (following the Partnership's guidance)
- How staff and committees will meet the requirements of the lead entity, as described in statute, while also assuming the LIO responsibilities

The LIO proponent should prepare and submit a proposal addressing the above elements to the Partnership's [Regional Managers](#) of the Local Ecosystem Recovery Team. The proposal should also include a mission statement, formation/membership policies, by-laws (if applicable), description of work focus, and staffing plan. Letters of support for formation and a commitment to participate must be submitted by the local lead entity (ies), as well as each of the local jurisdictions and tribes that would comprise the LIO.