



MEMORANDUM

EUGENE WATER & ELECTRIC BOARD

Rely on us.

TO: Commissioners Carlson, Mital, Helgeson, Schlossberg and Brown
FROM: Rene Gonzalez, Customer Solutions Manager; Jeannine Parisi, Customer Relationship Manager
DATE: June 21, 2019
SUBJECT: EWEB Education Grant Focus Area Update
OBJECTIVE: Action

Issue

The EWEB Education Grant Program provides funding for water and energy education in four area school districts: Eugene 4J, Bethel, Springfield and McKenzie. Through Inter-Governmental Agreements (IGAs), EWEB disperses almost \$400,000 in grants to the Districts each year. The current five-year IGAs expire in August 2020. The Board is asked to adopt updated educational program priorities for consistency with current EWEB strategic direction.

Background/Discussion

EWEB has a long-standing track record of direct support to area schools dating back to the 1940's. While the funding structure and amounts have changed over the years, the commitment to youth education focused on the development and responsible use of our energy and water resources has endured. EWEB's continued support for science curriculum and hands-on learning, particularly given school budget constraints, is a prime example of community benefits EWEB provides in addition to the delivery of safe, reliable water and power.

The current IGAs with each District were approved late in 2015, before the development and implementation of EWEB's current Strategic Plan. At the request of Commissioner Mital, the Board agreed to review the school district IGAs with an eye towards aligning grant-funded educational activities with EWEB's current strategic priorities.

Commissioner Mital presented the following proposed priority educational topic areas for discussion at the May 2019 EWEB Board meeting:

- Cascadia subduction earthquake and household-scale disaster planning and preparation
- Water: local sources, watershed protection, water quality, conservation
- Energy: Pacific Northwest power supply mix, options for the future, and pros and cons of different energy technologies
- Climate change: science, expected regional impacts, and carbon reduction strategies

Per the proposal, the Board would review and update these educational priorities every five years. In terms of the grant application submittal and reporting requirements, the process would be very similar, minimizing any additional administrative burden to the Districts:

- The year before expiration of the IGA (in this case Fall 2019) each District submits a grant proposal that details its plan for the types of programs and activities to be funded with EWEB grant dollars. These programs should directly relate to at least one of the Board adopted priority topic areas.
- Management will review the proposals for alignment with EWEB’s educational priorities before requesting Board action to approve the new five-year IGAs. Should Management determine that a proposal lacks clear alignment with EWEB educational priorities, the District will be notified and allowed to resubmit its proposal for reconsideration.
- The Board will continue to review and approve each District education grant IGA.
- School Districts will continue to submit annual reports that evaluate the prior school year’s grant-funded activities and document program expenditures.

Board member discussion related to the proposed priority topic areas was positive. Commissioners confirmed that updating the educational focus areas was timely and that EWEB should continue funding education grants at current levels.

School district grant coordinators have also had an opportunity to further discuss this proposal with Commissioners and staff, and are supportive of the proposed changes as outlined above. While it takes time to implement new curricula that meet current science standard requirements, coordinators believe that much of the existing grant-supported programming already aligns with proposed EWEB priorities and see future opportunities around climate change and emergency preparedness topics.

Recommendation

Management recommends supporting the updated priorities and process proposal. With Board consent, the EWEB Education Grant IGAs will be revised to reflect the new educational priority areas. Management would then request the Districts to submit their grant proposals by November 1, 2019, for review against these criteria, and request approval of new five-year IGAs at the December 2019 Board meeting.

Requested Board Action

Adopt the educational priority topic areas as the basis for review and approval of 2020 – 2025 EWEB Education Grant IGAs.