



MEMORANDUM

EUGENE WATER & ELECTRIC BOARD

Rely on us.

TO: Commissioners McRae, Barofsky, Schlossberg, Brown, and Carlson
FROM: Julie McGaughey, Chief Customer Officer; Jennifer Connors, Communications
and Marketing Supervisor
DATE: December 03, 2024
SUBJECT: Education Grants
OBJECTIVE: Direction

Issue

The EWEB Education Grant Program provides funding for water and energy education in four local school districts within EWEB’s service and operational territories: Eugene 4J, Bethel, Springfield, and McKenzie. The current five (5) year Inter-Governmental Agreements (IGAs) with each school district are set to expire in August 2025. This memorandum notifies the board of proposed changes to the education grant program.

Background

EWEB has a long-standing track record of providing direct support to area schools dating back to the 1940s. While the funding structure and amounts have changed over the years, the commitment to youth education focused on the responsible use of energy and water resources has endured and is a prime example of how public power benefits the community.

Proposed Changes to the Education Grant Program

As we prepare for a future with increasingly complex challenges related to water and energy resources, staff recommend a continued evolution of the education grant program to promote responsible stewardship. The changes are proposed in two phases:

Phase I: Extend the current framework for two more years, with a slight adjustment to long-standing educational priorities (outlined below).

Phase II: Refresh educational priorities and consult with grant coordinators to discuss how lessons could be better tailored to local challenges for the next five-year grant term starting in 2027.

Phase I: Educational Priorities and Implementation Plan

Consistent with the 2020-2025 framework, EWEB will release a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the truncated 2025-2027 grant cycle. School districts will be asked to develop or source lessons that align with the long-standing educational priorities outlined below. To ensure transparency and maximize the value of these resources, school districts will continue to be required to make education materials publicly accessible, enabling all educators and students to benefit from the materials selected through this process.

- **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.

Plus, a new/renewed focus on:

- **Safety & Emergency Preparedness:** Educate kids on electrical safety and staying away from downed power lines. Talk about Emergency Water Stations and other elements of personal preparedness for large-scale disruptions.
- **EV Challenge:** Learn the differences between electric and gas-powered cars. Participate in an engineering challenge that teaches the effects of friction, drag, inertia, speed, momentum, and gravity on car performance, as well as the importance of design and precision of craftsmanship.

The RFP will be released in January and IGAs will be brought to the Board for review and approval in late spring of 2025.

Phase II: Educational Priorities and Implementation Plan

Staff will work both internally and with external grant coordinators to develop a refreshed list of educational priorities starting in late 2025. Staff will then work with grant coordinators to discuss how lessons could be sourced or developed to meet educational priorities, comply with district requirements, and be tailored to local concerns. This will also give the team a chance to standardize education materials across school districts to the extent possible so that all participating schools and students have access to the same resources. Phase II work will be completed in parallel with the truncated grant cycle with the goal of launching a new grant framework in 2027.

Discussion

This phased approach is meant to provide essential continuity to participating schools in the short term while optimizing education grant funding for the future. We look forward to the next successful iteration of the education grant program and as we continue to empower students to become informed stewards of local natural resources.

Requested Board Action

Seeking direction or agreement with proposed priorities and approach.