

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION

Grant Administration Streamlining

DRAFT Scope of Work - 27 Feb 2015

Development Team: Tom Clingman (Ecology – Floodplains by Design), Jay Krienitz (WDFW – Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program), Tara Galuska (RCO – Salmon Program), Brian Abbott (GSRO), Michael Blanton (PSP – Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration), Facilitation: Paul Cereghino (NOAA)

This scope of work describes a sequence of tasks to create a coordinated grant administration system. This system is designed to: 1) reduce duplication of effort by grant programs and applicants, 2) maintain the native integrity of coordinated programs, and 3) increase the accountability of publically funded projects.

The February 27 draft is the write up of an initial 4 hour discussion by the development team.

Next steps

- 1) Consult with program data managers to identify opportunities and challenges from the proposed approach with a focus on PRISM (RCO) and EAGLE (Ecology)
- 2) Establish and consult with an applicant focus group to evaluate benefits or unintended consequences.
- 3) Identify specific program partners in administrative streamlining and increase the development team.
- 4) Develop lessons learned from JARPA development.
- 5) Develop draft deliverables for standardizing phasing, budget structure, and metrics.
- 6) Estimate task cost, and develop funding sources to support contractor resources to implement this scope.

Principles

This work is based on a set of assumptions about how to manage coordination in the context of Puget Sound and Washington state grant programs.

FRONT/BACK-END – All program processes can be described as either pre-decision or front-end or post-decision or back-end. Making this structure explicit is a useful tool for organizing work. Standardizing front-end information management is what will enable back-end coordination. Therefore we start with front-end standardization.

FOCUS ON WASTE REDUCTION – The goal of this effort is to develop a minimum of coordination necessary to achieve an improved economy of grant program management. We are not seeking a perfect integration, but rather to efficiently reduce waste.

NATIVE DATABASES - Native contracting databases will remain intact. To minimize cost and risk, coordination should involve a minimum of native data structure modification.

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INFORMATION MANAGEMENT - This project aims to develop a shared information management system that describes “projects”. Each program manages a similar body of information. Much of this information is identical, some information needs are similar, some are distinct. Where information needs are identical or similar, there are opportunities for streamlining information flow from applicants to native databases. To organize this range of information well will require attention to data management principles like ‘data normalization’ where complex information is broken down into discrete information packets that do not duplicate or overlap other information packets.

PRE-PROPOSAL/FULL PROPOSAL – The pre-proposal allows for an initial interaction between the Sponsor and our Streamlined Administration System. A minimum pre-proposal allows for low cost assessment and routing of projects, will minimize unnecessary application routing, and will clarify what elements need to be developed for a full application. Currently a variety of free standing documents as well as the Habitat Work Schedule are used for pre-proposals. A PDF-based “fillable form” approach is anticipated to provide a maximum efficiency in data handling, by avoiding changes to native data structure, while allowing easy writing, extraction, and distribution of application data.

CUSTOMER COLLABORATION – by changing an existing network of grant programs, we may have unintended effects on applicants, or miss opportunities. This reform should be supported by a focus group that represents the interests of grant recipients. This does not suggest that programs will delegate their fiduciary responsibilities.

Front-end Preparation Tasks:

1. Standard Phase Definitions

- a. **DELIVERABLE: Set of 5-10 standard project phases including a crosswalk between these phases and existing native data structures.**
- b. More specific program phases could nest within a more general and shared system.
- c. Defining the end of “feasibility” is critical for programs considering a portfolio approach.
- d. Phasing definitions will need to distinguish between project status and program record status.
- e. Phasing informs into budget structure.
- f. A reckoning of phasing requires consideration of whole project lifecycle, which might extend from acquisition through restoration and monitoring.

2. Standard Budget Structure

- a. **DELIVERABLE: The fields and values necessary to describe a project cost item in an application, which meets the needs of multiple programs.**
- b. Cost items should be fine enough resolution to allow budgets to be imported into native program databases.
- c. Whole project costs can be divided by phase (see above), object class (personnel, supplies, contractual), and source (in-kind, request, match, leverage)
- d. PHASE – associated with deliverables and milestones, and are used to establish special grant conditions that parse the availability of funds
- e. OBJECT CLASS – (e.g. personnel vs. contractual)

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3. Standard Metrics

- a. **DELIVERABLE:** Shared set of high level metrics, and cross walk between high level metrics and those used in native program data systems.
- b. Metrics involve area or length affected, economic value, or some other quantified aspect of performance
- c. Metrics typically describe benefits, while budget describes cost. Metrics are a basis for identifying a shared approach to verifying and evaluating project benefits.

4. Standard “Whole Project” Application [PDF]

- a. **DELIVERABLE:** A base PDF application which integrates sponsor information, basic project descriptions, phasing, budget, and metrics, and coordination of the information requests that reflect distinct program information needs.
- b. Standard application content will contain all identical information, and similar information where standardization has occurred (for example: phases, budget, and metrics).
- c. Additional distinct pieces of information then become additional questions that relate to specific programs rules or criteria.
- d. Consider potential future links between standard project data and permit applications like the JARPA.

5. Standard Pre-proposal [PDF]

- a. **DELIVERABLE:** Development of minimal PDF Form to acquire data necessary for preliminary determination of project cost/benefit and status, and coordination of site visits.
- b. Pre-proposal and whole project proposals are likely not separate documents. The pre-proposal could be a partial completion of a full project proposal document.
- c. The primary functions of a pre-proposal needs to be clearly defined:
 - i. Define the “project” (site, extent, duration, purpose)
 - ii. Define the intended benefits, and thereby the interested funders.
 - iii. Identify the sponsor
 - iv. Allow for some level of initial review and information exchange (site visit?) that meets program needs.

Back-end Preparation Tasks

6. Coordinated Fiscal Manuals

- a. **DELIVERABLE:** Synopsis for grant managers and applications of how different program funding rules will be applied to the phasing and budget format found in the Standard “Whole Project” Application
- b. These issues include: allowable costs, eligible applicants, property and project assurances, matching requirements, audit requirements, federal requirements, project documentation requirements, reporting schedule and requirements.

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7. Aggregated Contract Method

- a. **DELIVERABLE – A rule set that determines who will issue a contract for a given project with more than one funding source, and how the interests of funding parties will be met through coordinated terms and conditions**
- b. This will take the information described in program fiscal manuals and turn it into a modular set of terms and conditions. Where terms and conditions are identical or very similar they can be standardized. Where they are specific to a funder or funding source, they can result in special terms.
- c. Contract terms determine the award schedule, reporting requirements, and deliverables.
- d. Each program has procedures and rules for altering the terms of an agreement that will need to be clarified in grant manager protocols.
- e. Each program has terms related to reimbursement, cash advance, cost documentation, and audit requirements.

8. Coordinated Report Method

- a. **DELIVERABLE – A mechanism by which a contract recipient can provide a single report on progress and expenses that meets the needs of all contract partners.**
- b. Reimbursement coordination is likely to be the most difficult challenge, standardization of budget structure, and definition of program specific funding targets within that budget structure will be vital.

9. Interagency Agreements

- a. **DELIVERABLE – A multi-party MOU that defines the terms of coordination would describe the movement of information, the movement of funds and the distribution of responsibility between parties.**

Implementation Tasks

A. Application Routing System

- a. **DELIVERABLE – A web-based application that can receive PDF forms and 1) distribute them to multiple programs, 2) display projects through a web-service, 3) can translate between standard application language and native data structure to create native database applications.**

B. Coordinated Timeline

- a. **DELIVERABLE – a coordinated application and site visit schedule in preparation for the 2017-19 state biennial budget.**
- b. An ideal schedule will include opportunities for federal partners to identify potential funding targets, and for applicants to express interest in federal funding. FFY2016 funding may be distributed among state funders using cooperative agreements, or FFY2017 funding could be direct funded based on state applications.
- c. This process will need to be in place in winter of 2016 in preparation for that years project selection processes—with pre-applications in spring, site visits in summer, and decisions in fall.

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C. Coordinated Site Visit

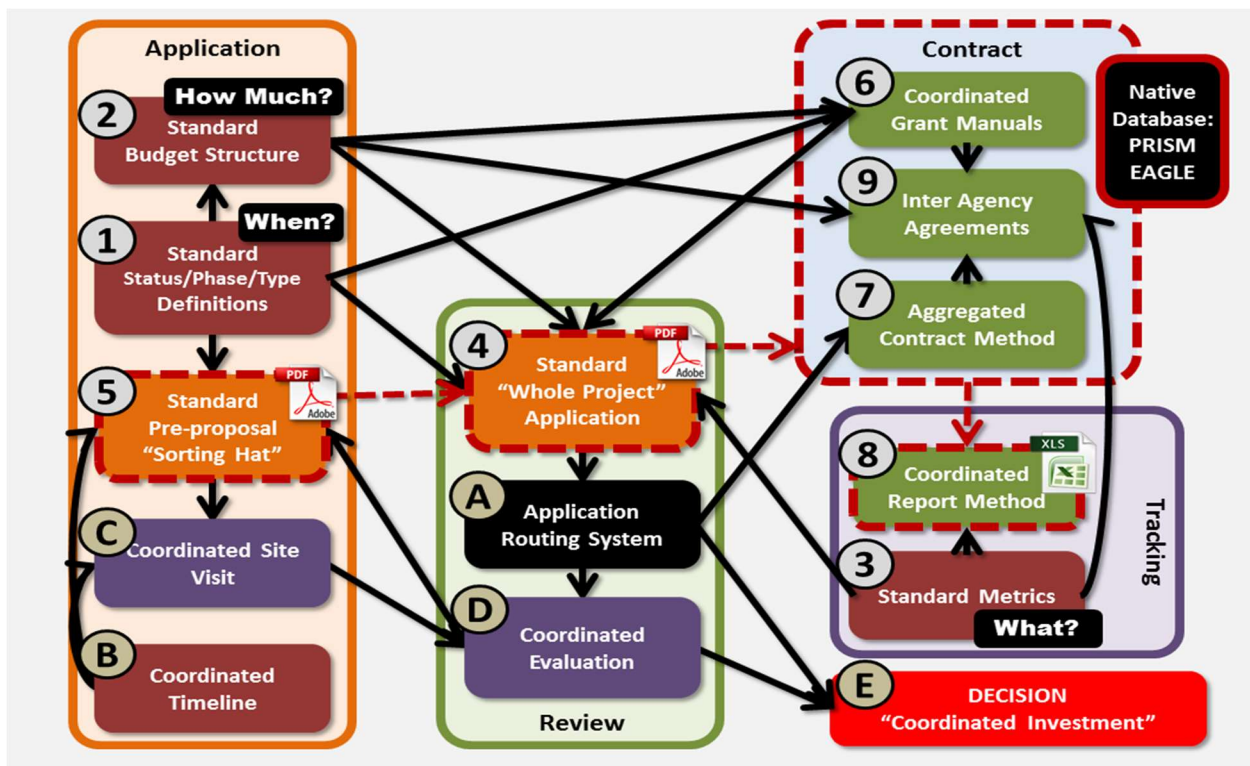
- a. **DELIVERABLE** – a schedule of site visit opportunities coordinated within watersheds or action areas that allows for the evaluation of projects by diverse technical reviewers with a minimum impact to project sponsor.
- b. Existing lead entity watershed tours are the best existing model.
- c. Capturing diverse information generated during site visits to inform funder decision-making could increase transparency for projects.
- d. Coordinated site visits create opportunities for interaction of technical staff or local citizens within a geography.

D. Coordinated Evaluation

- a. **DELIVERABLE** – a mechanism for the aggregation of project review notes developed by technical review teams to provide a more robust analysis of specific project issues.
- b. Different funding programs are differently equipped to provide information about project benefits or risks. Programs could specialize in developing mechanisms for evaluating specific project attributes, like flood risk reduction, salmon population recovery, agricultural land protection, or coastal resilience.

E. Decision – Coordinated Investment

- a. An important effect of grant coordination is for multiple funding sources to identify and provide coordinated funding for complex projects that achieve multiple benefits.



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Grant Program Issues Not Addressed

Match – While matching requirements often reflect legislative intent, they frequently increase administrative costs while not actually having the intended effect. Agency leadership should work with legislative and policy leaders to define the intent of matching requirements, and mechanisms for achieving those goals.

Coordination with Special Interests – Coordination with interest groups, such as agricultural producers, ports, districts, private land owners, and conservation groups, is an important part of building effective on-the-ground conservation efforts. The transparency offered by grant coordination provides opportunities to improve that coordination.

Portfolio Funding – Some programs have mechanisms for providing incremental funding for well-developed projects that meet certain criteria, without extensive re-review of project merits. This approach is not specifically addressed here, but standard phasing and whole budget disclosure will support these mechanisms.

Clarity of Targets and Priorities – The ability of programs to make good funding decisions depends on definition of conservation needs through robust local or regional analysis. This proposal does not address those

Permitting – Permitting does not pose a challenge for many project types. While not addressed here, there is the opportunity that pre-proposal or full project proposals as defined, combined with standard phasing, standard deliverables, and an application routing system may provide a mechanisms (like automated JARPA development) for further reducing permit administration.