



Meeting minutes

Meeting: Regional Waste Advisory Committee (RWAC) Meeting
Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021
Time: 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.
Place: Zoom meeting
Purpose: *The purpose of the Regional Waste Advisory Committee is to provide input on certain policies, programs, and projects that implement actions in the 2030 Regional Waste Plan, as well as to provide input on certain legislative and administrative actions that the Metro Council or Chief Operating Officer will consider related to implementation of the 2030 Regional Waste Plan.*

Members in Attendance:

Roy Brower, Metro
Sharetta Butcher, North by Northeast Community Health Center (NxNE)
Marilou Carrera, Portland Resident
Thomas Egleston, Washington County
Alondra Flores Aviña, Student
Jill Kolek, City of Portland
Shannon Martin, City of Gresham
Christa McDermott, Community Environmental Services, PSU (PSU)
Audrey O'Brien, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
Eben Polk, Clackamas County
Jenny Slepian, City of Lake Oswego
Beth Vargas Duncan, Oregon Refuse and Recycling Association (ORRA)

1. CALL TO ORDER & MEETING OVERVIEW

Roy Brower (Metro) brought the virtual meeting to order at 8:32 am and previewed the agenda.

2. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT GRANTS

Reed Brodersen (Metro) shared information about Metro's new Civic Engagement Capacity Building Grants. As Metro's work has grown in the region, Metro is relying a lot on culturally specific and multicultural community based organizations. Metro is asking them to bring their communities into spaces and into decision-making and Metro works with many of the same groups consistently/continually without really resourcing them to help them grow alongside Metro. The vision for the program is to help Metro invest in long-term relationship and trust building and civic skill building in communities of color across the region. A few of the other main program objectives are: 1) to invest in underserved geographic areas of the region; 2) to make sure that staff are bringing folks into Metro processes and supporting equitable decision-making; and 3) to build civic capacity for black indigenous communities of color.

Mr. Brodersen explained that the grant program consists of \$400,000 per year and it is a three-year grant cycle. Five community based organizations will be selected and funded at \$60-100,000 per year for three years. Applicants should be 501(c) (3) registered organizations or folks with a fiscal sponsor. It is recommended that organizations who apply should have one or more full-time staff and a budget of at least \$80,000.

This is a grant for community organizing and community visioning and skill building. Some eligible uses would be hiring engagement staff and organizing staff, training and education, leadership development, member recruitment and engagement, and general operations that apply to civic infrastructure or civic engagement. Metro is using a broad definition of civic engagement here. The program has a specific track for garbage and recycling system decision-making: two of the five grants are going to partners who are ready to inform decision making in the garbage and recycling system and build a scope of work around bringing new leaders into the decision-making processes around garbage and recycling. Three of the grants then will be more general and will allow folks to engage in any of Metro's programmatic areas of interests.

Mr. Brodersen explained that there is a two-step application process: 1) Letter of interest and grant application is due March 31st; 2) Recommendations will be made by the advisory group to who advances to the finalist round (10 to 15 organizations) who will then fill out a more formal grant application. The advisory group is made up of a couple of Metro staff, community leaders with expertise in civic engagement and grant making and capacity building, as well as some of Metro's community advisory members. Metro will be inviting a member or two from the Committee on Racial Equity as well as the Regional Waste Advisory Committee. Metro is hoping to build a cohort that meets a lot of different needs: geographic representation, demographic representation, and to meet Metro's broad programmatic goals.

Sharetta Butcher (NxNE) asked for clarification on the geographic areas where the grants were to be focused.

Mr. Brodersen clarified with Clackamas County, Washington County, or east Multnomah County. It can be homegrown organizations who are already there doing the work, or it can be organizations who might be growing into those areas and working with new communities in those areas.

Thomas Egleston (Washington County) commented that Washington County is revising its Solid Waste Advisory Committee to include some racial equity criteria for membership. He asked to stay connected on this process and maybe having the opportunity to pipeline some decision-making opportunities to these organizations, so they can help share opportunities like these and help us bring communities into the advisory bodies at local government level as well.

Mr. Brodersen appreciated Mr. Egleston's comments and plans to come back to this committee with updates on the grants. He supported the idea of facilitating a relationship with grantees and this body.

Shannon Martin (City of Gresham) echoed Mr. Egleston's comments and wanted the opportunity to meet with Mr. Brodersen and Metro and figure out where local governments are part of this process. Because these are folks in local communities and it'd be great to find those synergies and work together.

Jill Kolek (City of Portland) Echoed Mr. Egleston's comments. She asked if this is the first year of this program.

Mr. Brodersen responded that this particular iteration is brand new and in its first year. But it's building on a long evolution of Metro's partnership work that has increasingly moves toward a capacity-building mindset.

Beth Vargas Duncan (ORRA) expressed it was an exciting opportunity and that the hauling industry would like to work and partner with others in this area. She asked how the program will this be funded. Will Metro use general funds, regional system fees?

Mr. Brodersen responded that it's about half of general fund and half regional system fee.

Mr. Brower confirmed that that's his understanding as well.

Eben Polk (Clackamas County) asked if the grants are available for nonprofits who are working within the Metro boundary or is it the entirety of the waste shed? That would influence how local governments would message or share the grant opportunity. And then you mentioned that the garbage and recycling, the materials management track. He asked if any of the grants had been decided yet.

Mr. Brodersen answered that none of the grants have been decided yet. With regard to geographic location, organizations will be required to do the work with this money within the Metro boundary. That's the funding restriction.

Alondra Flores Aviña asked about the outreach for the grant program and access to the application.

Mr. Brodersen shared that Metro curates an increasingly long list of community-based organizations who partner with Metro. We send out for things about our Committee on Racial Equity recruitments, and other opportunities to that list. It also went to all of the grant makers across the agency to send to their past applicants. Metro also partnered with the Coalition of Communities of Color to send it out to their network and they've been supporting us in outreach. There has been a little bit of word of mouth too. The list is not comprehensive at all, but Metro is trying to get it out through the networks.

Marilou Carrera (Portland resident) asked about non-profits and the limits between 501(c)(3) versus 501(c)(4) and if it was limited to the 501(c)(3) organizations.

Mr. Brodersen responded that this is limited to the 501(c)(3) in part because 501(c)(4) organizations sometimes promote political candidates or ballot initiatives.

Jenny Slepian (City of Lake Oswego) shared that Lake Oswego is definitely a city where they rely on a couple organizations to do all of the work around diversity, equity, and inclusion. She wondered if the funding could be used to help these organizations find a full-time staff person? Or do they need to have that in place ahead of time?

Mr. Brodersen responded that they don't have to have it in place ahead of time. It is a preferred qualification, not a requirement. If folks can demonstrate that they have the infrastructure to build and grow, and if they have a history in that area, if they have community network volunteer network, that's really active, there is some flexibility here. Folks can and probably will use this money for staff capacity. But this is really more of an accelerator program. It's to latch onto and grow work that's already started. Metro is not quite ready to be an incubator program and does not have the expertise in house at Metro yet.

3. INVESTMENT & INNOVATION GRANTS PILOT EVALUATION AND THE FUTURE OF THE PROGRAM (part 1)

Matt Korot (Metro) introduced the topic and shared some of the program history. He shared that this program, like others, is intended to help achieve Metro's two overarching objectives, related to environmental and human health and racial equity. The program's original objectives within that overall overarching framework were twofold: to first create, expand, preserve, and diversify efforts to advance waste prevention, reuse, recycling, and energy recovery in the region. And the second was to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in the solid waste system. The program's genesis was in April 2017 when Metro Council directed staff to explore the feasibility of implementing a new grant program in response to three primary drivers. The first was the region had and has a complex solid waste system, with roles for the public and private sectors and a lot of different private sector service providers. Metro observed, and were told, that at times new expanded or innovative services, technologies and actions that would benefit the public and the environment were not pursued by private organizations because of the financial risk associated with doing so. The Metro Council was interested in trying to help fill gaps in financing in order to reduce that risk.

The second driver was that Metro Councilors and members of the solid waste department frequently received one-off requests for funding from companies or organizations operating in the waste reduction world. Providing such funding on a one-off basis was not part of Metro's portfolio at that time. And, as a public agency, Metro couldn't consider those requests in the absence of a structured and transparent program that would be accessible to a range of potentially interested participants. The third driver for the program was, that prior to the completion of the 2030 Regional Waste Plan (RWP), the department was looking for additional tools to help the agency meet its racial equity goals. Metro did a significant amount of research and solicited input to create a broad outline. In December 2017, Council enacted an ordinance that created the program and directed staff to draft and share detailed program guidelines. In early 2018, staff developed those guidelines and put them out for public comment. In April of that year, Council reviewed, discussed and gave us input, and then gave us the final blessing. In June 2018, Metro launched the first grant cycle of what Council established as a three year pilot program.

Suzanne Piluso (Metro) shared that throughout all three years of the grant cycle, Metro had two grants types: program grants up to \$75,000 that funded personnel and operations equipment, and capital grants up to \$750,000 that were for large equipment and facility infrastructure improvements. There was a large response of interested applications. The eligible entities focused on the private sector, and included nonprofit organizations and for-profit businesses. Over the three years, Metro received 146 proposals totaling over \$30 million in requests for \$9.5 million available. Ms. Piluso shared that Metro awarded 42 grants at about \$8.8 million.

Ms. Piluso noted that staff are evaluating:

1. What did this money do on the ground?
2. What impact did it have specifically on reducing waste and improving the environment and improving racial equity in the region?

Ms. Piluso shared some specifics about some of the grant awards, focusing on environmental and equity outcomes. She noted that there is a lot of information on the metrics in the full evaluation report.

Staff found that this program, as a whole, is advancing Regional Waste Plan goals related to racial equity. The extent to which that's true varied by grant. Generally, these impacts fell within a few categories: funding businesses or organizations owned by or directly serving Black, Indigenous and people of color capacity-building projects, job creation, expanding services into underserved areas, and also increasing capacity of businesses and nonprofit organizations to advance racial equity at their workplaces. She highlighted a couple of grants to demonstrate what that could look like.

Ms. Piluso shared that Metro made its best effort to reach beyond the traditional players and try to connect with organizations that directly serve Black, indigenous, people of color populations to get more applications for funding to go to those organizations, but that relationship-building takes time, and staff can do more work in that arena if this program is to continue.

In summary, the program advanced waste reduction and equity, and Metro funded projects that wouldn't have happened otherwise (which staff heard from multiple grantees). Metro strengthened relationships and built new relationships. There are a lot of opportunities for improvement: As is appropriate for a pilot, staff learned many lessons that were captured through the evaluation. If this program continues beyond the pilot phase, staff have a lot of ideas for strengthening various aspects of the program.

Ms. Piluso shared five potential options for the future of the program, including areas of emphasis if the program continues:

1. Continue with current scope
2. Continue the program, prioritize projects with highest racial equity benefits.
3. Continue the program, prioritize the projects with the highest environmental benefits.
4. Continue the program, prioritize recycling infrastructure projects.
5. Discontinue the program.

Ms. Butcher noted that she toured Pioneer Recycling and one of the issues she noticed was the large number of temporary employees. And a lot of the employees were Hispanic, English-as-a-second-language folks. She took issue with the idea of "living wage and benefits" because temporary workers don't necessarily have access to most benefits. She wasn't intending to single out Pioneer, but she felt this needs to be discussed/flushed out.

Mr. Korot shared that there are actions in the Regional Waste Plan that will more directly address that. Metro is doing some baseline work now on wages and benefits to help inform where we can go in the future with addressing exactly what Ms. Butcher described. Metro knows segments of the sector are particularly hot points for that issue of temporary employees without benefits, and the recycling facilities are among those. He shared that Ms. Butcher identified a system-wide issue because for that company and those industries, their business model is really tied to the temporary-employee pool now. That's going to be a longer path, but it's one that Metro feels strongly about, starting with Metro-owned facilities and leading up to those private-sector ones.

Ms. Piluso added that this is exactly the kind of thing that emerged in the evaluation. There were conversations with applicants about how to advance racial equity, but Metro wasn't very directive about it in the pilot. We let applicants tell Metro what they proposed, and then the committee decided whether they thought that was good enough to recommend funding. In the future, if this program is to continue, one of the recommendations that evolved in the evaluation is to develop more advanced criteria specific to capital grants to address this very thing.

Ms. McDermott asked for more information on the other improvements that Metro is considering doing regardless of the different options that might be pursued.

Ms. Piluso responded that Metro would like to work with other grant programs at Metro to do more advanced training of the review committee members in terms of how to apply the racial equity criteria and getting more advanced, shared understanding of what we mean by "advancing racial equity" through these grants. Also, there are ways that Metro can put more effort into developing grant scopes of work that are more rigorous, and monitoring those scopes a little bit earlier on in the process so contracting moves easier. Some of the grant criteria could be revisited around the

capital grants, especially. They might need their own equity criteria that are a more directive, more specific and tailored for those kinds of grants than the more general and open-ended criteria that the nonprofits really ran with and demonstrated successfully.

Ms. McDermott noted that if part of the goal is supporting innovation, that may require a model a little more akin to what Mr. Brodersen presented, as an accelerator kind of funding, or a longer term. So more something that a non-profit could use for operating funds instead of having to submit a specific project or purchase that is limited. She thought that could really go a long way and could be a good use of funds. She also hoped that the criteria opens up eligibility for universities and others.

Ms. Piluso shared that should the program continue, Metro will be looking at whether eligibility should broaden to include universities.

Mr. Egleston noted that the scope of the program is a challenging question, considering the amount of funds available varied year over year. He also wanted to think about the outcomes compared to, say, the food scraps policy and the work to get a collection system and a mandate and funding for diverting those materials. How would those outcomes compare to some other work that's been funded through the I&I grant.

Audrey O'Brien asked if are there any evaluation results from the pilot program that Metro is considering applying to other aspects of the RWP, and Metro's efforts in general. It seems like there's a wonderful opportunity to take some of the results from the pilot and apply it more broadly.

Ms. Piluso responded that during this evaluation Metro connected with the department's Equity Change Team and the larger equity group at Metro, to look for those connections and to get their read on how well this program is doing in terms of advancing the RWP's equity goals.

4. 3-YEAR REGIONAL WORK PLAN – ACTIVITIES FOR SHARED ACTIONS

Holly Stirnkorb (Metro) shared that Metro has been working collaboratively with local governments to develop the three-year work plan, to support implementation of the 2030 Regional Waste Plan (RWP). She walked through the project's phases over the past year. The focus for her presentation was on the shared priority actions (co-led by Metro and all the cities and counties for the first three years of the plan). Ms. Stirnkorb's primary questions to the committee were:

1. As the committee looks at the activities for the shared priority actions, what activities were not included that should be, and why?
2. What things do you think should be, or things that were included that shouldn't be?

Ms. Stirnkorb reminded the committee that responsibility for implementing the RWP is shared by Metro and local governments in the region. Metro is responsible for coordinating implementation of the plan and assessing plan performance, but actual implementation of the actions in the regional waste plan are shared between local governments and Metro. And to assist with implementation and accountability, the regional waste plan identified lead agencies for each action. She shared some examples of work and priorities that are led by local governments, priority actions that were co-led, and individual actions for which different jurisdictions have prioritized.

Ms. Stirnkorb noted that there is a new action in the work plan: local governments also prioritized action 14.4 which is to implement a low-income rate assistance program for residential collection services.

Ms. Vargas Duncan shared that these actions and activities are very important to the industry and a number of these things they've already been employing. She reminded the committee that the Clackamas County Refuse and Recycling Association funds a position within Clackamas County that goes into schools and helps to eliminate wasted food in schools and do other education in partnership with Clackamas County. Ms. Vargas Duncan noted that she likes to be well prepared for most things and she found it difficult/nearly impossible to be as adequately prepared as she would like. Meaning that there's a lot of material here. She thinks it's important to find a way for industry to also be more directly involved in the communications. She noted that industry does work closely with local government partners, but that it is important that there be a structure in place that specifically puts industry in alignment here on the communications with that.

Mr. Brower responded that Metro is having internal discussions about how to better accommodate those needs with industry.

Ms. Slepian commented that she was excited to see a goal that included youth leadership. They are starting to see youth take a much bigger role in climate action and more interested in solid waste and all of that.

Mr. Polk asked a bit about the RWAC pre-meeting with community members and some of the questions that came up there.

Ms. Stirnkorb shared one of those questions: wanting more information about how things are implemented and how to get some of these things on the ground.

Ms. McDermott elaborated that around implementation, some of the goals seem to take a really long time, or there's a lot of planning and design.

Mr. Egleston responded that he appreciated the question and that it's frustrating for staff in the local governments and Metro. Some context is really important here. The way the systems are structured, Metro is regional planning, authority, responsible for collection standards, transportation and disposal. Metro operates transfer stations, manages contracts with landfills and disposal sites. Local governments are responsible for collection. A lot of this activity and a lot of the systems change is collection focused. That means local governments are the regulatory bodies that need to take action to do some of these things. And the multi-family is a perfect example of that or the business food scraps requirements. When there is a need to require service level minimums for multifamily properties, that's an action that has to happen at the local government level.

He went on to explain that now, instead of Metro and Metro Council of elected officials, there is Metro Council AND 26 local elected governments that have their own councils and their own priorities and their own politics that are local to themselves. So when Metro passes an ordinance that says local governments shall pass an ordinance, it takes a long time to convince 26 sets of elected officials, that it's a good idea, they should do it, they need to do it, when they should do it, and how they should do it. The process is challenging because it's a big lift and the approach that's taken changes the dynamics of those conversations.

In Washington County, there are 10 cities that pass these kinds of ordinances and adopt these things. When business food scraps rolled out, it was a pretty contentious rollout because there was a lot of question about why is Metro micromanaging. This is just an explanation for why it takes 10 years to fully implement multi-family recycling program system changes like that. Then at the same time, staff in local governments are managing collection through franchise agreements with solid waste, private solid waste collectors. It's a big chain of complexity that is quite interesting when you

really break down who's responsible for what and how a system like that changes at the regional level.

Ms. McDermott found the explanation helpful. She wondered if maybe this advisory group is a very small player in that whole large process, and what this committee can do, in terms of shaping the goals or the plan that could help the process speed along. And that maybe isn't always so clear.

Mr. Polk added that the speed of a process depends a lot on the level of collaboration required. Sometimes local governments, when doing something on their own, can get something done pretty quickly. Where processes are sometimes slow is when they're around policy development and especially if they're around policy development that requires close collaboration at the sort of like regional and local or state to regional the local level. Also, solid waste may not always to be a priority topic for local elected officials, to the extent that it's clear that community members are asking for different things and are hearing that directly from them.

Ms. Butcher emphasized the importance of engaging the community. It doesn't always need to be a formal process and community doesn't have the same level of bureaucracy that government has. Community groups may be better positioned to help make things happen. This can take time, but once you really get the community involved, some of this work could pick up momentum.

Mr. Brower added that the reason this three-year work plan is so important is because like the RWP itself, it really sets the agenda and framework for governments and industry for the next couple of years.

Ms. Stirnkorb shared that there will be an update in May and that this topic will be going before the Metro Council.

5. CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL OF ITEMS

Committee meeting minutes for February 18, 2021 were approved by the committee.

6. SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

Mr. Brower reviewed the coming months of topics for the committee.

7. CONSIDERING A PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD AT REGULAR RWAC MEETINGS

Mr. Brower asked if this group would like there to be a standing agenda item with about 10 minutes held for public comment at the start of the meeting.

Ms. Carrera asked what would be the protocol if a public comment is attacking, like mean spirited or offensive.

Mr. Martin noted that in the past, when this committee was a lot more industry on the committee and they had more of a voice. Public comment allows them that opportunity to have that voice that they no longer have on this committee, and he thought it should be something to consider.

Mr. Egleston advocated to include it. There are many stakeholders to consider and the public comment period could allow some space for that.

Ms. O'Brien shared that for DEQ public hearings, they lay out ground rules like be respectful, speak only for yourself, use respectful language. That could be something that's communicated as part of each meeting during a public comment period.

Mr. Polk noted that industry is mostly partners who are paid to take the time to come and share what they think, and that's not necessarily true for community members. It can be difficult in the middle of the day to participate. He wondered what the best practices might be for making it easy for as many folks as possible to provide comments.

Mr. Brower added that industry has very clear access to decision makers at both the local government and at the Metro level, and many people on this call don't necessarily have access to.

Ms. Vargas Duncan that she doesn't think it should be focused just on industry and that having more comment is always a good thing. It's important that everyone have a voice.

Mr. Brower concluded the meeting.

MEETING AJOURNED at 10:20 a.m.

Next meeting

April 15, 2021 8:30 am – 10:30 am (virtual meeting)