

Meeting: Regional Waste Advisory Committee (RWAC) Meeting  
Date: Thursday, January 18, 2024  
Time: 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 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 the implementation of the 2030 Regional Waste Plan.*

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**Members in Attendance:**

Marta McGuire, Metro  
Alondra Flores-Aviña, Trash for Peace  
Sharetta Butcher, North by Northeast Community Health Center (NxNE)  
Jackie Kirouac-Fram, Rebuilding Center  
Teresa Gaddy  
Christa McDermott, Community Environmental Services, PSU  
Audrey O'Brien, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)  
Beth Vargas Duncan, Oregon Refuse and Recycling Association (ORRA)  
Ryan Largura, City of Troutdale  
Kathy Folsom, Washington County  
Eben Polk, City of Portland

**1. CALL TO ORDER & MEETING OVERVIEW****2. Working Agreements**

Marta McGuire (Metro) reviewed the proposed revisions to the group working agreements.

Proposed changes included:

Adding guidance for participating in virtual meetings, including keeping cameras on and understanding that when using the chat attendees cannot view the chat. Beth Vargas Duncan, ORRA, requested that guidance be added to direct the facilitator to read chats out loud during the meeting.

Adding an opportunity for all committee members to review the previous year serving on RWAC.

Confirming voting mechanisms, using the red, yellow, and green methods.

Committee Members supported these changes.

**3. Investment and Innovation Grant Program Update**

Marta McGuire introduced Suzanne Piluso from Metro.

*Key points of the presentation included:*

The presentation reviewed the history of the Investment and Innovation (I&I) Grants Program. It was created to invest in private-sector strategies to reduce waste. Five funding cycles have been completed to date, awarding nearly \$13 million to private businesses and nonprofit organizations. The program is proposing an update for the following reasons: the original scope is too broad for the current diversity and volume of proposals; new research, policy and funding opportunities have arisen since the program was initiated; and the program has never been fully assessed since its launch. The proposed assessment includes engaging stakeholders

to assess the needs and opportunities for investment in the private sector, followed by updates to the funding priorities, grant criteria, and process improvements. Any changes to the program must be approved by Council. The next funding cycle is estimated to launch in fall 2025. During the assessment, staff will continue to manage the nearly 40 open grants.

*Member Discussion:*

Kathy Folsom, Washington County, asked if grants will not be awarded is Metro still collecting funds for the grants this year? Ms. McGuire replied that grant funding carries over fiscal years because funds are dispersed at different times. Funds for 2024 were used to purchase the new RID building.

Ryan Largura, City of Troutdale, suggested including where the funding for I&I fits into the larger budget visually.

Jackie Kirouac-Fram, Rebuilding Center, stated it seems that the program is meant to support community but most of the benefit appears to have supported private sector infrastructure. There needs to be clarification on the program's priorities. She recommends there are ways to provide more long term consistent funding for the non-profit sector because nonprofits struggle with coming up with something new to receive funding as it comes available instead of being funded for ongoing successful programs.

Christa McDermott, Portland State, supports Ms. Kirouac-Fram's comments. She also suggested that if this program could be offered on a longer cycle, then proposals could be submitted over longer periods. This is less work for Metro and more supportive of nonprofits.

Alondra Flores Avina, Trash for Peace, asked has there been any harm to grantees because of this pause? Has Metro been supporting the grantees? Ms. Piluso replied that Metro does not want to minimize the effect on organizations of not having a grant cycle this year. However, the original intent of the funding was not to fund organizations year over year Metro is trying to keep the pause as short as possible.

In response to Ms. Kirouac-Fram's earlier comments, Ms. Vargas Duncan, wanted to share that those companies that have franchises have rates of returns that are regulated, and their capital improvements come from those funds. Ms. Kirouac-Fram asked if these entities could acquire small business loans, and Ms. Vargas Duncan replied that they may be able to.

Ms. Vargas Duncan suggested that there be additional clarity to ensure grant recipients are using funds for legal and compliant projects. Ms. Piluso replied that applicants are reviewed for compliance throughout the process but agreed that there is always more due diligence that could be done.

Eben Polk, City of Portland, asked if the two-step application process was still in place. Ms. Piluso replied that it was still in use, and one of the benefits is that it allows more time for the due diligence Ms. Vargas Duncan referenced

Mr. Polk suggested there is inherent tension in the name of the grant program; investing in the system where there is a known need, versus investing in potentially risky but innovative new technology. Will the program be okay including "innovative" projects, or will the program name change to exclude some future projects? Ms. Piluso replied that this question is the center of what the evaluation is considering for the program. Metro needs to decide what is the most strategic direction for the program.

Ms. McDermott asked if money was coming through for Metro capital improvements or should this money be used for capital projects instead. Ms. McGuire replied that in the Systems Facilities Plan there is no new capital funding. Metro's capital funding is currently only for renewal and replacement. New funding mechanisms would be approved by Council to utilize for new capital investments.

**4. Consideration of meeting minutes**

The December meeting minutes were approved.

**5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

There were no public comments.

**Final RemarksMEETING ADJOURNED at 10:30 a.m.**