



Skagit Watershed Council

2023 LEAD ENTITY PROGRAM GUIDE

FOR THE SKAGIT AND SAMISH WATERSHEDS

WRIAs 3 AND 4

2/7/2023

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Skagit Watershed Council 2023 Grant Process Timeline, v12.8.22

Date	Activity / Milestone	Sponsor	TRC	LECC
4-Feb.	2023 Request for Proposals released			
9-Mar.	Letters of Intent due to SWC	X		
17-Mar.	Draft applications invited			
10-Apr.	Draft SRFB applications submitted in PRISM	X		
17-Apr.	Draft applications available for TRC and LECC review		X	Optional
1-4-May	Project site visits/presentations in the field and/or via Zoom or in person TBD	X	X	Optional
10-May	TRC/LECC review comments due to SWC		X	Optional
15-May	Reviewer comments to sponsors	X		
24-May	Initial SRFB Review Panel comments and 'POC', 'NMI', or 'conditioned' status received			
6 or 7-Jun time TBD	Tentative date. Conference call with Review Panel	Optional		
7-Jun, 10:00-11:00 tentative	Brief presentations to SWC Council of Members. Sponsors available to answer questions	X	Optional	Optional
26-Jun, noon	Final SRFB applications due and submitted in PRISM along with response to comments in review module in PRISM	X		
30-Jun	Final applications available to TRC and LECC reviewers		X	X
13-Jul, 9am-noon	TRC technical review meeting. Sponsors are required to attend if they had critical comments.	Required if updates	X	Optional
13-Jul, 12-4pm	TRC technical scoring meeting		X	Optional
20-Jul	Final Review Panel comments received			
20-Jul, 9am-noon	LECC informational project workshop	Optional	3 reps	X
3-Aug, 9am-noon	LECC project ranking meeting		3 reps	X
4-Aug.	Lead Entity ranked list submitted			

TRC = Technical Review Committee

LECC = Lead Entity Citizens Committee

SWC = Skagit Watershed Council

INTRODUCTION TO THIS LEAD ENTITY PROGRAM GUIDE

The following is the Lead Entity Program Guide (Guide) that sets forth the procedures and processes the Skagit Watershed Council (Council) will use in soliciting, reviewing, ranking, approving, funding, administering, monitoring, and evaluating salmon recovery projects funded through the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) and Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Program (PSAR). This Guide serves as a reference that will assist all participants (project sponsors, committee members, staff, reviewers, community members, etc.) throughout the process, from project development to final presentation to the SRFB.

This Guide represents the cumulative policies from past decisions, along with long term practice, that, together, make the Skagit Watershed Council process as effective, efficient and transparent as possible. Also identified are those other lead entity program functions that support the SRFB funding process and the capital portion, i.e. habitat restoration and acquisition, of the Skagit Chinook Recovery Plan.

The Skagit Watershed Council lead entity grant process is divided into several phases, each with several steps that include both lead entity and project sponsor actions within the context of the state-wide grant application process. The timing and iterations in this process are established in Washington statute by the Legislature and in policy by the SRFB. This Guide describes each of these steps and what participants can expect.

The SRFB produces an updated Grants Manual ([Manual 18](#)) each year that outlines state-wide processes, which is an important companion to this Guide. In addition, several other manuals are both relevant and important, and it is the responsibility of the project sponsors to understand and follow all policies. These materials are available on the RCO website [here](#).

BACKGROUND OF THE LEAD ENTITY PROGRAM

In 1991, the federal government listed the first species of salmon in the Pacific Northwest under the federal Endangered Species Act. By the end of that decade, populations had dwindled so much that salmon and bull trout were listed as threatened or endangered in nearly three-fourths of Washington State waters. In response to those listings, a variety of measures were taken. One of those measures was the passage of Washington state salmon recovery legislation (RCW 77.85). That legislation spells out a process for the creation of local “lead entities” to identify local priorities for action to recover salmon in collaboration with tribes, local governments, conservation groups, and other stake holders in the watersheds. Currently, there are 25 local lead entities operating within Washington State.

Designated by a Skagit Council of Governments and a Skagit System Cooperative Resolution in mid-1998, the Skagit Watershed Council has since functioned as the lead entity for WRIAs 3 and 4, the Skagit and Samish Watersheds. While the Council is the fiscal agent and administrator of the lead entity grant and should be accountable for the process, the term lead entity more accurately relates to the role of the local committees that are responsible for developing a science-based habitat strategy (Technical Work Group), draft list of projects that are consistent with science and technical policies (Technical Review Committee), as well as the local community’s interests and values (Lead Entity Citizen Committee). RCW 77.85 also spells out the duties of lead entities. Those duties include encouraging qualifying local groups, (project sponsors), to propose actions to aid the recovery of salmon. Those actions can include habitat studies, habitat restoration projects, and acquisition of property and development rights to protect salmon habitat. In addition to encouraging local groups to develop and propose actions to aid salmon recovery, lead entities are charged with compiling lists of those proposed actions, reviewing those proposals, and prioritizing them for funding. Local lead entities are responsible for organizing and coordinating a technical advisory

group to serve technical and science-related needs as well as a committee of diverse salmon habitat and community interests which prioritizes the habitat project list. Each area’s local lead entity list is then submitted through the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board. The SRFB makes decisions about which actions receive funding from those lists, and then directs the RCO to issue contracts with the individual project sponsors.

SKAGIT WATERSHED COUNCIL LEAD ENTITY ORGANIZATION

To fulfill the requirements described above, the Skagit Watershed Council’s lead entity program is made up of several different components depicted in the draft figure below (Figure 1). They include a program coordination function (the SWC Board and executive director), a technical work and review function (TWG and TRC), and a project prioritization function (LECC). These components work to support the development, vetting, funding, implementation, and monitoring of salmon habitat protection and restoration projects.

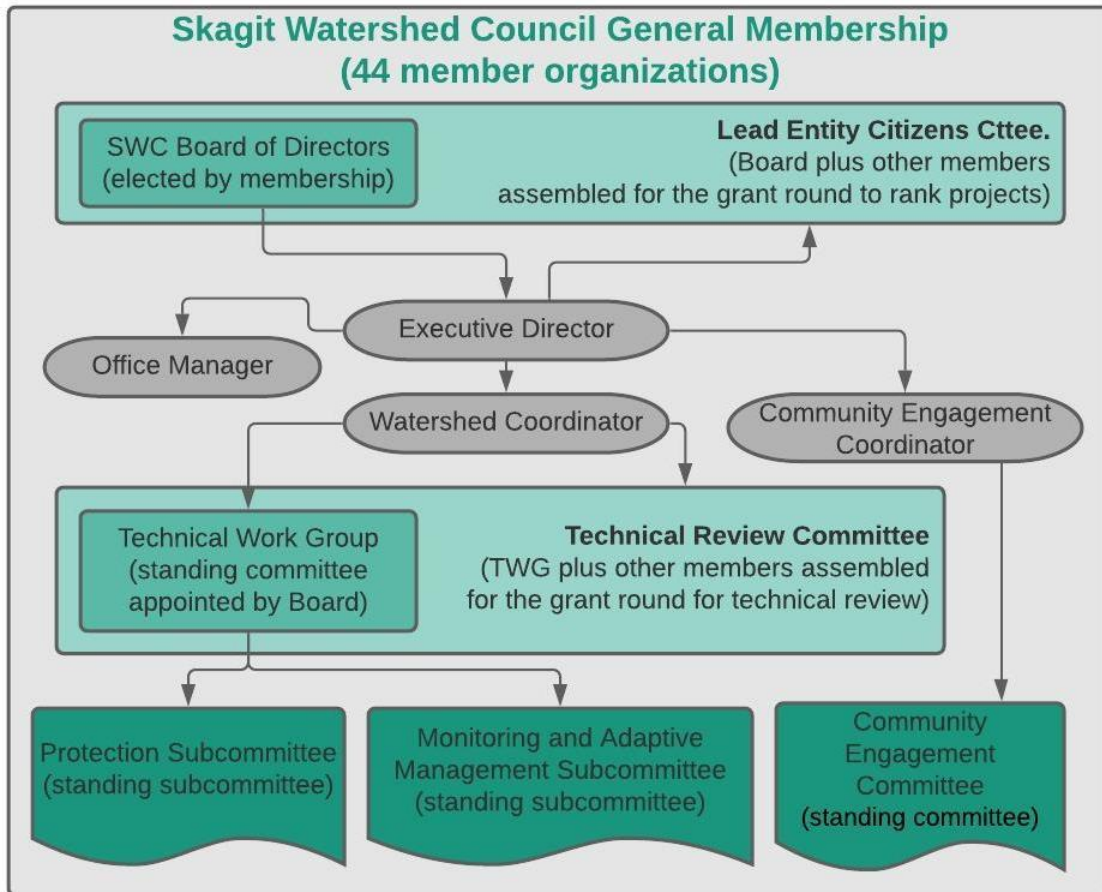


Figure 1. Skagit Watershed Council Organizational Structure, v12.17.2020 **DRAFT**.

TECHNICAL WORK GROUP

The Technical Work Group (TWG) is the primary, standing work group of the lead entity program, encompassing all other standing technical subcommittees except the Technical Review Committee (TRC). The TWG and its associated committees fulfill a variety of functions; chief among them is to advise the Council and external interests on the

technical aspects of salmon habitat recovery in the Skagit and Samish Watersheds. This includes but is not limited to technical habitat strategy development, project evaluation and ranking processes, project updates, project development and sequencing, and project vetting for funding recommendations that fall outside of the typical grant round (where that role is performed by the TRC). In addition to the SRFB annual project Technical Review Committee there are three other standing subcommittees: Monitoring and Adaptive Management Subcommittee, the Protection Subcommittee, and the Community Engagement Committee.

TWG members are drawn from the staff of tribal, federal, state and local government agencies, as well as NGOs and other groups engaged in salmon recovery. In general, expertise for the TWG is sought from the following disciplines: hydrology; geology; riparian forestry; water quality; fluvial geomorphology; fish biology; freshwater and estuarine ecology; restoration project implementation; protection project implementation; and engineering. Qualifications for TWG membership include the required expertise and the willingness to participate regularly.

Membership for the TWG will be affirmed and published annually. New members may be proposed during the year, subject to confirmation by the Board. Both the TWG and its subcommittees operate with a set membership of no specific number. Appendix A contains the current members of the TWG and its subcommittees.

The TWG operates under the direction of the Council's Board of Directors (Board) and makes recommendations to them for consideration, except where explicit decision-making authority has been granted to the TWG.

The Board appoints chairs based on recommendations from the membership, or on the Board's authority. The term of chair is confirmed annually, at the same time as membership. In certain circumstances the Board may appoint a chair and authorize the creation of an ad hoc committee to conduct a limited task. It is the responsibility of the chair and Executive Director to make sure that meetings are conducted in a transparent, systematic and fair manner.

LEAD ENTITY SRFB PROJECT TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

The lead entity SRFB Project Technical Review Committee (TRC) provides the technical review and ranking of project proposals for funding by the SRFB. Membership in the TRC will be drawn primarily from the TWG and supplemented when necessary for required and diverse technical expertise and to maintain an objective process. In general, membership requirements of the TRC are the same as the TWG, except that they are not required to be from the Council's membership.

Membership on the TRC is revisited annually prior to convening the committee for each grant round. The Lead Entity Coordinator will solicit participants, and the Board will review and appoint committee members. Membership may vary from year to year depending on the type and number of grant proposals received, expertise required for technical review, and to maintain an objective process. Because of the limited number of sources for technical expertise, and the fact that the agencies for which these staff work are often project applicants and sponsors, potential conflicts of interest are inevitable. To minimize this problem, we strive for a large membership of at least 10 qualified individuals with less than 50% of them with potential conflicts of interest on any single project in each grant round. Additionally, those members with conflicts of interest are not allowed to score or evaluate their own projects during ranking meetings.

The Lead Entity Coordinator or another appointed and qualified individual will facilitate the TRC meetings and field review, and ensure participants adhere to procedures outlined in this Guide. The facilitator does not score project applications as they must remain unbiased. Refer to the section below on Technical Review and Scoring for more information on the committee role in that process.

Because the grant schedule is published with the Request for Proposals (RFP) far in advance and has little room for delay, a quorum for purpose of the grant round is defined as those voting members in attendance at a scheduled and published meeting. Only members in good standing participate in decision-making, defined here as attending all scheduled committee meetings and field reviews, or informing the Lead Entity Coordinator of their absence prior to the scheduled meeting and having reviewed all project and meeting materials and provided the committee chair or convener with their scoring materials and/or comments as requested.

PROTECTION SUBCOMMITTEE

The Protection Subcommittee is another standing committee of the lead entity that functions to support the identification and acquisition of properties to protect salmon habitat. The primary responsibility of this committee is the application of the protection strategy and oversight of the selection and approval process by which grant funds are applied to acquisitions for habitat and floodplain protection. The current membership in this committee is listed in Appendix A.

MONITORING AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

This subcommittee's main function has been to develop an adaptive management & monitoring framework to augment the Skagit Chinook Salmon Recovery Plan (2005). The primary responsibility of this committee is to recommend and advance monitoring projects that inform salmon recovery and strategy adaptation. They report to the TWG. The current membership in this committee is listed in Appendix A.

LEAD ENTITY CITIZENS COMMITTEE

The Skagit Watershed Council Board of Directors will serve as the base constituency for populating the Lead Entity Citizens Committee making final habitat project priority decisions as required in RCW 77.85. We will strive for 50% of members able to vote on any given proposal while still fully implementing the potential conflicts of interest policies outlined below. If this is not possible, additional members will be recruited from Skagit Watershed Council member organizations or general citizens from the watershed as needed and approved by the Board. Refer to the section below on Habitat Project List Prioritization for more information on the committee role in that process. All LECC members will be provided a summary of their roles and responsibilities at the beginning of the grant round in order to optimize their awareness and participation. LECC members are required to attend both the information sharing workshop and the project prioritization meeting. If any member foresees missing one of these two meetings they should either propose a replacement committee member or not vote.

DECISION MAKING

Committee meetings are conducted using the procedures laid out in this document. Committee meetings are conducted to ensure that each member and project sponsor is heard in a systematic and fair manner. It is the responsibility of the committee chair and/or facilitator to make sure that proceedings are conducted in a transparent, systematic and fair manner.

Because the grant schedule is published with the RFP far in advance and has little room for delay a quorum, for purposes of the lead entity program is defined as those voting TRC and LECC members in attendance at a scheduled and published meeting. Though members may have multiple representatives on committees, each member organization has only one vote, which will be established at the beginning of the grant round.

The preferred mode of decision-making is by consensus or general agreement. It is the responsibility of each member to educate themselves on the projects at hand by reviewing the project information provided, being familiar

with evaluation criteria and guiding documents, seeking information, and networking with each other in hopes of finding agreement in a timely way. If general agreement is not achieved the preferred mode is to continue to seek agreement, within a reasonable timeframe set by the group. For our SRFB process, this time frame is dictated by the established grant round timeline. A vote will be taken only when it becomes clear that general agreement is unlikely to occur within the reasonable time frame set by the group. At that point the chair may call for a vote, with the majority constituting two-thirds of the set members qualified to vote (i.e. potential conflict of interest). Each organization has one vote only.

Only members in good standing participate in decision-making, defined here as attending all scheduled committee meetings and field reviews, or informing the Lead Entity Coordinator of their absence prior to the scheduled meeting and having reviewed all project and meeting materials and provided input as requested.

Voting by proxy is not allowed for any Watershed Council committees except the full Council of Members. Further, questions presented by proxy must be provided in writing in advance of each opportunity to share input to both the Lead Entity Coordinator and the project sponsor before being allowed into the record and project dialogue.

POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

This potential conflict of interest policy is intended to supplement but not replace any applicable state and federal laws governing conflict of interest. This policy applies equally to all members of the lead entity SRFB committees and support staff engaged in the SRFB review process. Our goal is to be objective in our acceptance, evaluation, and advancing of habitat project proposals, and to reach conclusions that advance salmon recovery in the watershed, hence the need for a policy to ensure our awareness of and sensitivity to potential conflicts of interest.

A potential conflict of interest may exist when a participant responsible for acting in the best interests of the lead entity and SRFB grant program has another interest or loyalty that could influence or impair, or may appear to influence or impair, the individual's ability to act in the best interests of the lead entity. A potential conflict of interest exists where a lead entity SRFB committee member or member's organization directly or indirectly benefits financially, sits on the applicant's Board of Directors, or has a family relation who is, and/or is themselves significantly involved in the development of a project. Employees of project sponsoring organizations, their financial partnering individuals and organizations, and landowners are defined as such. Prior knowledge of the proposal or prior contact with the applicant does not constitute a potential conflict of interest, as long as none of these criteria apply to the reviewer.

The term "potential conflict of interest" includes:

- actual or direct conflicts of interest as defined above
- potential future conflicts of interest (situations that could become actual conflicts in the future based upon foreseeable events or the passage of time); and
- perceived conflicts of interest (situations that others could reasonably perceive to be, or that have the appearance of, a conflict of interest)

The Lead Entity Coordinator will conduct conflict of interest policy training with participants by reviewing these policies at the beginning of each evaluation and ranking meeting. TRC and LECC members are required to recuse themselves from scoring or ranking any grant applications where a potential conflict of interest as defined above exists. In the event a lead entity SRFB committee rules upon an issue in which a member has unavoidable potential conflict of interest, that member will be asked to recuse themselves from the deliberation and voting on the project, though they may stay in the room for basic information-sharing purposes. If a participant has any concerns or

questions about whether their relationship with an applicant or proposal warrants recusal, the participant will explain their situation to the other members of the committee at the meeting. The committee will decide jointly whether it constitutes a potential conflict of interest.

All potential conflict of interest must be documented in meeting or process notes, and how it was addressed.

This Program Guide provides for corrective action procedures that must be followed to deal effectively with conflict-of-interest violations if they occur. Specifically, if a violation is undiscovered during the grant round but determined later, the Board of Directors will document the occurrence, reasons, and potential implications of the action, and make a specific resolution to correct the implications and adjust policies to keep it from happening again. If there is a violation of these policies that occurs during the grant round, the Executive Director will immediately act to remove the offender from the committee and refer the offense to the Board of Directors for the actions outlined immediately above.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

The Skagit Watershed Council is a registered non-profit organization and as such is not subject to Washington State's Open Public Meetings and Public Disclosure Acts. However, given the trust and public funding provided to us by the general public, our membership, and Washington State, the Council has decided that we will implement the lead entity program consistent with the Open Public Meetings and Public Disclosure Acts. Basic components of this policy include training regarding public meetings, announcing public meetings on our organizational calendar, welcoming members of the public to relevant meetings, documenting decisions and associated information in meeting notes, and making relevant materials available to the general public upon request. The Lead Entity Coordinator or designee will be responsible for implementing these components and is the primary contact person for any related public disclosure requests. Meetings that are held virtually will be open to the public as well. Links to virtual meetings are provided upon request to the Lead Entity Coordinator, as stated in the meeting announcement.

LEAD ENTITY STAFF FUNCTIONS IN SRFB FUNDING ROUND

The Lead Entity Coordinator is a resource to project proponents throughout the grant application process and is staff to the Technical Review Committee and the Lead Entity Citizens Committee.

In addition to the functions and responsibilities assigned to the Lead Entity Coordinator and described above, the Lead Entity Coordinator will help facilitate the movement of proposals through the review process. This includes assuring that the TRC and LECC receive review copies of project proposals at appropriate times.

The Lead Entity Coordinator and the project sponsor have responsibility, per Manual 18, to ensure each application is complete, free of mathematical errors, contains all required attachments, has a valid match, meets lead entity grant program criteria and guidelines, is consistent with the lead entity habitat strategy and other documents, is technically sound and complete, and meets SRFB eligibility requirements.

Mandatory conditions placed on projects by the TRC/LECC will be forwarded to the RCO-SRFB grants manager and incorporated into the final grant agreements. The Lead Entity Coordinator will complete both lead entity and Regional Area submittal packets that list Skagit projects in rank order, summarize the nature of the projects submitted to the SRFB from the lead entity, and address the project lists' fit to the salmon recovery plans. The Lead Entity Coordinator will prepare presentations on the project list for the SRFB, SRFB Review Panel, Council of Members, Puget Sound Partnership, and any other regional bodies based on their specific interests and policies. .

ANNUAL SRFB GRANT ROUND PROCESS

REVIEW AND UPDATE OF GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES AND GRANT MATERIALS

Published grant materials for the current grant round include:

- this Program Guide,
- the Request for Proposals (Appendix B),
- current technical and prioritization criteria (Appendix C),
- current grant timeline (Appendix H),
- [the SWC 2022 Strategic Approach](#),
- [the 2016 Interim Steelhead Strategy](#), and
- the Council's [4-year work plan](#).

The updating of any critical grant materials will occur prior to release of the Request for Proposals for the current grant round. These are all available to project sponsors, project reviewers, and the public on our website or via the above links.

Changes to the local SRFB grant process (i.e. this Guide) will only occur during the process with the intent to update or revise the process as necessary for clarification or to meet new regulatory or contract requirements. The lead entity's Technical Work Group (TWG) will participate in the review and update of this Grant Program Guide and the technical criteria and submit their recommendations to the Board of Directors for approval. All active committee members are requested to attend these meetings so that consensus can be reached on process documentation and the associated grant materials for the upcoming SRFB grant round. The Council shall strive to complete any Program Guide updates at least 2 weeks in advance of launching the next grant round.

DEVELOPING THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The Request for Proposals (RFP) is a formal announcement and solicitation for project proposals issued at the beginning of the annual SRFB grant round (sample RFP in Appendix B). The Lead Entity Coordinator will develop a draft RFP for review by the Technical Work Group and acceptance by the policy body based on the target areas and priority objectives identified in the Skagit Watershed Council Strategic Approach, the current habitat strategy, consistent with the Skagit Watershed Council Habitat Protection and Restoration Strategy (SWC 1998); the funding needs of existing projects; need for development of new projects, potential funding available, and other priorities and objectives as directed by the Board of Directors. The RFP is issued as a document separate from this Guide. The RFP will be announced via wide, electronic distribution and the SWC website. It will remain open at least two weeks. Any organization that has expressed interest in proposing projects will be included in the electronic distribution list upon request and included as a potential sponsor in the 4 year work plan.

ESTABLISHING TECHNICAL PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA AND SCORING

The lead entity has established technical criteria for the TRC to evaluate and initially score the project proposals. The technical criteria (Appendix C) were updated in 2011 based on the SRFB's Guide for Lead Entity Project Evaluation benefit to fish and certainty of project success criteria and from local priorities for implementation of the Skagit Chinook Recovery Plan as adopted in the Skagit Watershed Council Year 2015 Strategic Approach. These criteria were revised again in 2015 to address projects in overlapping target areas and to incorporate interim steelhead priorities, again in 2016 to improve evaluation of cost effectiveness and again in 2021 to address new criteria for riparian projects and pocket estuary projects based on the updated 2022 Strategic Approach. The lead

entity may revise its criteria periodically to better address technical issues and project types, to incorporate new technical data or approaches, or to ensure compatibility with evaluation criteria adopted by the SRFB. The TWG will review the Project Evaluation Criteria and submit recommended revisions to the Board of Directors for approval.

ESTABLISHING LECC PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA,

The project list produced by the TRC will provide the basis for LECC final prioritization. The LECC will use a qualitative process to arrive at the final list for submittal to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board. The prioritization process evaluation and ranking criteria are presented in Appendix D, and additional information on this process is found in the section below on Habitat Project List Prioritization.

GRANT TIMELINE IMPLEMENTATION

It is important to establish a timeline early in a funding process. This is primarily a lead entity administrative function. The grant timeline takes into consideration adequate time for all the process steps described herein along with requirements of both the Puget Sound Partnership (PSP, our regional salmon recovery organization) and the published SRFB schedule. Every effort will be made to make the grant application process as short as possible while still providing sufficient public notice and sponsor opportunity to respond. The grant timeline is available on page iii and in Appendix H.

A firm commitment to grant timelines and deliverables will be strictly followed. A timeline and checklist of grant application requirements has been established (see Appendix H and Appendix I) and will track sponsor obligations and provide a summary to project reviewers and easy access to available documents. Lead entity staff will maintain this checklist for all submitted projects and make it available to all committee members. For unavoidable circumstances, a project sponsor may appeal a Lead Entity Coordinator determination of non-compliance to the SWC Board of Directors and/or Lead Entity Citizens Committee, via the Lead Entity Coordinator.

Where foreseeable and appropriate, Council staff and committee members are responsible for alerting other participants in the project review process as early as possible to any anticipated or problematic areas of the project so that sufficient time and opportunity is available to thoroughly vet and address potential project weaknesses.

GRANT APPLICATION STEPS

STEP ONE: LETTER OF INTENT SUBMITTAL

Project sponsors are required to first submit a Letter of Intent for a project proposal to the lead entity as outlined in the issuing RFP. A Letter of Intent is required from each project proponent requesting funds from the SRFB. Proposed projects must be either referenced in the most recent Skagit Watershed Council 4 Year Work Plan or deemed to be consistent with it. Potential project proponents are encouraged to contact the Lead Entity Coordinator to discuss the proposed project and confirm eligibility for funding. Refer to SRFB Manual 18 for a list of eligible applicants and project types. Letters of Intent are due to the Lead Entity Coordinator on the date established in the timeline made available in the Request for Proposals. The Letter of Intent form (Appendix E) is to be submitted as an email attachment as specified in the RFP, along with a project summary (up to 2 pages), and project site and vicinity maps. See Appendix I of this Program Guide for a checklist of requirements for the LOI.

This pre-grant application requirement helps proponents in a number of ways. First, it is an opportunity for the project proponent to think through the details of a potential project early in the funding process. It is also an opportunity for the project proponent to identify areas where technical assistance may be needed to ultimately develop a strong final proposal, or to invest less time in the application process if a proposal is not accepted for further consideration in the grant round for any reason.

The Letters of Intent provide an indication of how close the watershed is to meeting the target allocation of funds from the SRFB and other funding sources. It is also an early opportunity to identify additional cost-share programs that most effectively leverage the resources needed to implement projects. For these reasons, no exceptions will be made for considering a new proposal after the Letter of Intent phase.

Although not required by the granting agency, a standardized naming convention for your proposal is important for tracking projects in PRISM and the Salmon Recovery Portal database, and for project reviewers. The use of landowner names in proposals should be avoided to protect landowner privacy. Proposal names should include the following elements:

- Geographic link (e.g., stream reach name, estuary, nearshore area)
- An indication of project type (acquisition, restoration, assessment, etc.)
- Project phase (feasibility, preliminary or final design, construction, etc.)

The Lead Entity Coordinator will review all Letters of Intent received by the date due and accept those that meet the criteria specified in the RFP, SRFB Manual 18, and this Guide. The Lead Entity Coordinator will communicate to the submitting sponsors the rationale for rejection of their proposed projects or acceptance for further consideration in the grant round. Those accepted will be invited to submit a SRFB application for further evaluation in the grant round, and, if not already included, they will be added to the 4 year work plan. Acceptance of a project proposal at this stage in the grant process does not guarantee successful final acceptance or funding.

A proposal may be rejected because it does not meet the qualifications of the RFP or due to lack of sufficient information to determine qualification. A sponsor whose proposal was rejected may appeal to the Council's Board of Directors within one week of receiving notification of rejection. An effort will be made to resolve the appeal prior to the next grant application deadline.

Where qualification against the RFP criteria is uncertain the Lead Entity Coordinator will forward to the Technical Work Group and/or the Council's Board of Directors for review depending on the technical or policy nature of the uncertainty. A proposal may also be invited to proceed with the caveat that qualification is yet unresolved and will be determined at a later date following more deliberation and review by the TWG and/or Board. Caveated projects may be disqualified at any time after the Letter of Intent is submitted, depending on when a final qualification determination is made. This contingency allows projects to continue through the process and not miss process deadlines while more complex issues of qualification are determined on a parallel track. The project sponsor proceeds at their own risk that the project may be disqualified. During any point in the grant application process the project can be withdrawn by the project sponsor.

The Lead Entity Coordinator will create a Salmon Recovery Portal (SRP) page (formerly Habitat Work Schedule) for the accepted proposed projects and generate a PRISM contract number. PRISM and SRP databases are connected and communicate with each other. When a sponsor receives the PRISM contract number via email, they may proceed with the SRFB application process in PRISM (see next section). Project sponsors are not responsible for inputting initial application information into SRP but are responsible for all SRFB application data entry in PRISM as well as post-grant award project updates in SRP (see section on Post-Grant Award and Implementation Reporting below). Sponsors should be aware that both PRISM and SRP have public-facing interfaces and are used by other agencies for reporting on salmon recovery progress and for communicating with legislators. Use of these databases is required of sponsors and Lead Entities by RCO and PSP. The Lead Entity Coordinator can assist sponsors in setting up and maintaining their database information.

LARGE-SCALE AND COMPLEX PROJECTS

The SRFB encourages completing acquisition, restoration or acquisition/restoration projects in 3 years. Large-scale, complex projects may take substantially longer. Recognizing that many projects require years for completion, applicants should consider phasing the project and grant proposals over several grant cycles rather than requesting a large grant covering multiple years and phases. To provide the lead entity with greater flexibility in funding projects, applicants are also urged to break down their draft applications and budgets into discrete elements that can be implemented independently. Project applicants may propose large, multiple year projects; however the Lead Entity may approve only partial funding in order to allow the funding of additional project proposals. Applicants should also consider requesting feasibility or design-only grant funds for complex projects with significant scale, technical, and/or budget uncertainties. Addressing critical uncertainties through a feasibility or design-only project could significantly enhance the likelihood of implementation funding and project success.

While optional in the SRFB requirements specified in Manual 18, Appendix D, the Skagit Lead Entity requires that sponsors conduct a stakeholder review during the feasibility and preliminary design process and explain in the project report how comments from stakeholders were addressed. In conducting a stakeholder review, the sponsor should include parties with a substantial interest in the project. Depending on the scope, nature, and complexity of the proposed project this could include the landowner of the project site, adjacent landowners, and relevant federal, tribal, state, and local agencies.

The Skagit Lead Entity also requires that previously funded deliverables related to the current proposed project be sufficiently completed at the time the applications are due. These requirements are to ensure the technical and stakeholder support information necessary to adequately inform the next phase of a project funding request is available for review. For example, a feasibility report must be complete before the project can advance to design or construction; a smaller scale project may require a lesser level of design work to facilitate technical review than a large-scale project. We are also trying to avoid what would constitute a change in scope between what was reviewed and then subsequently contracted. Technical reviewers will determine if the project is sufficiently developed to proceed at the same time as the Step Three proposal presentations.

All projects submitted through the lead entity process should seek to contain their costs. Large scale projects over \$1 million dollars in construction costs should incorporate third party review for this purpose in order to be considered for high technical scores.

STEP TWO: DRAFT APPLICATION SUBMITTAL

Following acceptance of a Letter of Intent, draft SRFB applications are due in the state's on-line grant management database (PRISM) by the date in the grant timeline. To equitably evaluate all proposed projects in a grant cycle, the SRFB requires the following minimum level of information for draft applications before they will schedule their required site visits with the lead entity (SRFB Salmon Recovery Grant Manual 18, Section 3 and this Program Guide Appendix I):

- A project location or vicinity map entered using the PRISM or SRP mapping tool, including latitude and longitude for a point representing the project location (i.e. a centroid for a project area. For acquisitions, the map should depict the project site as well as lands in the vicinity held by the public or having protection status)
- A more detailed site or parcel map including metrics (i.e. acres planted, number of logjams, etc.)
- Site or aerial photos (at least 2)
- Design plans or sketches that convey the intent of proposed restoration projects. Applicants should provide all available, relevant design information (detailed construction plans, specifications, planting plans, and design

reports). Sponsors with minimal available information should include example photos, designs, and conceptual sketches to convey their intent.

- Draft Detailed Cost Estimate to supplement the general cost information required by PRISM. This cost estimate will include enough detail to support the proposed budget. Clearly label the attachment in PRISM “Cost Estimate.” See SRFB Manual 18 for instructions.
- A completed project proposal questionnaire. Every SRFB applicant must answer project proposal questions in PRISM.
- A 300-character project summary in SRP/PRISM that includes major project goals and metrics.
- Verbal declaration to RCO and Council staff as to whether the proposed project should be considered for inclusion in the Intensively Monitored Watershed Program

In addition, the Skagit Lead Entity also requires that sponsors:

- Include an ‘area of potential effect’ map
- Include in the project proposal a quantification of the benefit to fish if and where good information exists. For feasibility or design projects, if and where good information exists, provide a range based on the alternatives proposed.
- Complete previously funded deliverables related to the current proposed project sufficiently by the time the draft applications are due, with a limited exception for Large Capital PSAR.
- Enter work site project metrics in PRISM/SRP.
- Answer supplemental questions for the Lead Entity Citizen Committee. This form is available in Appendix E of the Guide.
- For Tier 2 projects, if not already available to the lead entity, provide evidence that proposed projects in Tier 2 tributaries are within documented Chinook and/or steelhead areas as well as within eligible floodplain habitats.

See Appendix I of this guide for a checklist of items to include in the draft application. Draft applications are available for review by the TRC and SRFB Review Panel two weeks before the site visits.

STEP THREE: SPONSOR PRESENTATIONS AND SITE VISITS

Project proponents are required to present their project proposals to the lead entity Committees (TRC and LECC) and SRFB reviewers. The intent is for the project proponents to introduce and present their respective project proposals and to provide additional details to increase understanding of the project. This is also an opportunity for the lead entity to clarify expectations of the grant round and to provide information and resources to sponsors that will strengthen proposals and partnerships. Sponsor presentations of their projects will be scheduled to occur either in the field during the project site visits, or if more appropriate, in the office just prior to the project site visits. Site visits may best be held in the virtual format using drone or other video footage, maps, and photos. Sponsors can choose the best format for conveying the breadth and scope of their projects to reviewers.

Project proponents are encouraged to share any refined or additional information and materials during the site visit. The need for a project site visit will be determined by the Lead Entity Coordinator, in consultation with the TRC and SRFB Review Panel, if necessary. Some project proposals may not require a site visit (e.g., assessments, feasibility studies, inaccessible sites, or project sites previously visited in other grant rounds), although sponsors may request one regardless.

Once the portfolio of potential projects is finalized and the need for field review established, the Lead Entity Coordinator will finalize an agenda and itinerary for a field tour. The TRC, Lead Entity Coordinator, SRFB Review Panel members, and RCO-SRFB grant manager are required to attend, while the LECC is encouraged to attend. Each attendee’s role will be identified visually with colored name tags. Project presentations (Step 3) and site visits (Step

4) may be scheduled together for efficient presentations and use of time. All TRC members are required to attend the presentations and site visits, while LECC members are encouraged to attend. A discussion of the project evaluation criteria among the TRC and LECC members will also be held at this time to ensure a common understanding and application. For projects with previously funded deliverables, TRC members will determine if those deliverables are sufficiently completed for the proposal to advance to review.

Virtual site visits may be recorded if sponsors wish and other participants agree. SRFB Review Panel members have requested that recordings be made available to them if possible. Any recordings made will be posted to a secure Box site for Review Panel members to view only and given to sponsors. SWC will delete the recordings following the grant round process and will not keep them on file.

Following each site visit, the group will circle up, aggregate by role, and introduce themselves and their role (e.g. sponsor, TRC, LECC, SRFB Review Panel, staff). An open round of questions and answers from the group will be facilitated by the Lead Entity Coordinator following each site visit, keeping each role clear. Questions or comments that cannot be easily addressed in the field, that would require or benefit from changes to the grant application, or that need to be documented to avoid them coming back up again in different venues at a later date, will be documented as TRC or LECC comments. The Lead Entity Coordinator will ensure that each TRC reviewer has specified whether their comments are editorial (i.e., suggested) or critical. **Critical comments are required to be addressed by the sponsor in final applications** or the application can be rejected by the TRC. Additionally, LECC members present will be asked to raise questions or comments so they can also be documented and shared with the project sponsors, though they will only be editorial comments from the perspective of the individual LECC member and won't represent the perspective of the entire LECC (since they likely won't all be present).

STEP FOUR: DRAFT APPLICATION REVISION

Following receipt of lead entity and SRFB Review Panel review comments, sponsors will refine their proposals to appropriately address comments and update and/or complete the PRISM application and required attachments (SRFB Manual 18). There are two parallel tracks for review: one for the Lead Entity and one for the SRFB Review Panel.

LEAD ENTITY REVIEW PROCESS

Council staff will compile all lead entity comments and subsequently circulate them to the TRC by email for their review and approval. No comments will be attributed to any individual. The Lead Entity Coordinator will provide final comments to the project sponsors via the PRISM database portal 'Review' module, usually one week following the site visit. If further discussion is necessary, an additional meeting may be called to review and finalize comments. The Lead Entity Coordinator may provide additional technical or administrative comments and instructions to grant applicants consistent with lead entity responsibilities itemized in SRFB Manual 18. These may be communicated formally or informally throughout the grant application process. Sponsors will document their responses to comments in the PRISM Review module and make necessary changes in their PRISM attachments and questionnaire responses. This step is the last chance to make significant changes to the project proposal unless requested to do so by the lead entity or SRFB later in the process. The term "significant" means changes that would substantively alter the proposed goals/objectives, scope of activities, geographic location, outcomes or budget totals.

By the deadline for revised final applications, sponsors should verify that all required data fields in PRISM are complete by "verifying" their applications in the "Submit" tab. Once complete, notify the Lead Entity Coordinator that the SRFB application is complete and available in PRISM. Submit the application at this time, which will end the pre-application status and edit capability. Grant applications will be returned and then formally re-submitted to the

RCO per the published grant timeline to accommodate any additional requests for changes by the SRFB Review Panel or lead entity.

SRFB REVIEW PANEL PROCESS

The SRFB Review Panel will be responsible for documenting their own comments or questions in PRISM separately. Sponsors are required to document their responses to comments in PRISM and make changes to their PRISM application. Applicants will receive SRFB Review Panel comments identifying projects as “Clear,” “Conditioned,” “Needs More Information,” or “Project of Concern.” RCO staff accepts “Clear” applications and returns “Conditioned,” “Needs More Information,” and “Project of Concern” applications so applicants may update and respond to comments. An optional conference call with SRFB reviewers is available for sponsors to discuss first round comments on projects that were not cleared. The Skagit Lead Entity is allotted only one hour for all projects in the conference call. The Lead Entity Coordinator will prioritize how that hour is best spent between conditioned projects. Final responses to comments are due on the final application deadline date.

After comment and responses, final applications are due two weeks before the final technical review. See Appendix I of this guide for a checklist of items to include in the final application.

STEP FIVE: PRESENTATION TO THE COUNCIL OF MEMBERS

Each project sponsor shall work with SWC staff to provide information about their proposal to the full Council of Members at a formal meeting. Each sponsor will provide the location; goals/objectives; fish species benefited; relation to SWC Strategic Approach; and budget and funding request at a minimum and be available for questions and answers. This may be in the format of a panel question and answer session, or whatever format seems most effective and efficient for the given slate of projects. LECC members are encouraged to attend this presentation, though absences may be excused. Project sponsors should anticipate a broad audience to be in attendance at this formal meeting.

STEP SIX: TRC FINAL TECHNICAL REVIEW AND PROJECT SCORING

After final project proposals have been completed, the Lead Entity Coordinator will convene the TRC for a final technical review and scoring virtually or in person. Prior to the meeting, members will receive the revised final grant application materials for review, an individual scoring form to fill out and return, and a draft conflict of interest matrix. The TRC members score proposals based on the grant application materials and sponsor response to technical comments. The technical review criteria for scoring projects are included as Attachment C. If there are any corrections to be made to the draft conflict of interest matrix, those should be provided to the Lead Entity Coordinator when individual scores are submitted and thus before scores are compiled for the scoring meeting.

The final technical review will be completed in the first half of the TRC meeting by inviting all project sponsors to review each project’s changes. The TRC should collectively determine if critical comments have been satisfactorily addressed for each individual project. If the TRC feels the critical comments have not been addressed they can recommend to the LECC that the project be dropped. If agreement cannot be reached the majority/minority report will be advanced to the LECC for resolution. This will serve to equitably inform the TRC and clarify any lingering technical questions. The second half of the TRC meeting will be the project scoring meeting that must follow potential conflict of interest policies as outlined above.

Individual reviewer’s scores will be averaged by the Lead Entity Coordinator to present an initial ranking of projects for the TRC to use as a basis for their discussions at the formal scoring meeting. Depending on the scoring distribution, scores will be reported as either normalized scores or the arithmetic mean where the coefficient of variation (the standard deviation of the scores divided by the mean score) for all projects is less than 20%. Where

the coefficient of variation is 20% or greater for any project using the arithmetic mean, scores will be reported using the median values. The scoring process and outcomes are shared with the TRC at the start of the scoring meeting. Individual reviewers' project scores are shared without reviewer names. Comments are considered at the meeting only from those TRC members who are eligible and who scored a project (see potential conflict of interest above).

The TRC will begin their deliberations with a review of the technical criteria to ensure a common application among members. The TRC will then discuss the merits of each project and how the sponsor has responded to their earlier comments, followed by the draft list of scored projects in its entirety. During deliberations, reviewers have the option of revising their scores based only on technical criteria outlined in Appendix C. At the end of the meeting, the TRC will determine a final list of projects based on the technical ratings, to be forwarded to the LECC for their consideration and prioritization. The TRC may also relay to the LECC for their consideration where the project rankings derived from technical scores did not reflect the TRC's qualitative assessment of priority order. The TRC may make recommendations (elective) and/or conditions (mandatory if approved by LECC) on the projects based on the sponsor responses to comments or other issues not able to be resolved prior to the end of the grant round. These will be included in the meeting summary.

The TRC can remove any project from consideration for funding for the following reasons:

1. if through the proposal development process the project no longer meets the criteria in the RFP,
2. if it scored so low that the proposal would likely never move forward without major revisions,
3. if it did not address critical comments sufficiently, or
4. if it is insufficiently developed by the scoring meeting.

The TRC may also develop and forward to the LECC recommendations on fine-tuning project components relative to the target funding allocation given to our area. LECC members are welcome to attend the TRC's technical evaluation and ranking meeting.

STEP SEVEN: LECC HABITAT PROJECT LIST PRIORITIZATION

The project list produced through the technical scoring and recommendations by the TRC shall provide the basis for prioritization. The Lead Entity Citizen Committee prioritization process follows the two meeting rule in this step, with a first meeting for information sharing and a second meeting at least 2 weeks later for decision-making where no new information can be presented without full consent of the group. Two or 3 members of the TRC shall be present at the LECC meetings to improve information sharing between committees. Members of the LECC shall bring forward any new information or concerns at the first meeting so that project sponsors have a clear understanding of those concerns and adequate and equitable opportunities for addressing them before final decision-making. These concerns, information requests, or comments should be finalized by the LECC after their first meeting and shared with the project sponsors as soon as possible. LECC members are required to attend both the information sharing workshop and the project prioritization meeting. If any member foresees missing one of these two meetings, they should either propose a replacement committee member or not vote.

The following steps guide the LECC in its second meeting for deliberations and decision-making to develop the final prioritized list for the Skagit Lead Entity.

1. An LECC member may make a motion to move a particular project up or down on the list or adopt a recommendation by the TRC.
2. The LECC member making such a request must include rationale based on the prioritization criteria in Appendix D.

3. The Committee will then engage in discussion regarding the motion to move a project on the list or condition a project.
4. After discussion, the Committee will seek consensus on the recommendation.
5. If consensus is not achieved, the Committee will vote – approve, oppose, abstain – on the motion to move the project on the list.
6. The motion will carry upon a two-thirds majority of the eligible Committee members present (excluding “abstain” votes).

The LECC has the authority to remove any project from consideration of funding for the following reasons:

1. if, through the proposal development process, the project no longer meets the criteria in the RFP,
2. if it did not address LECC comments from their information-sharing meeting or criteria sufficiently,
3. if it is insufficiently developed by the ranking meeting, or
4. if insufficient funding is available to meet requests of projects ranked low in the list.

The result of this decision-making meeting is the final recommended and prioritized list of projects submitted to the SRFB for consideration for funding. The LECC may impose conditions on the contract. Any mandatory conditions placed on projects by the LECC will be formally incorporated into the sponsors’ final funding contract.

At this time the LECC may also adjust funding requests relative to the target funding allocation given to our area, as well as recommend which projects are funded by SRFB and/or Puget Sound Acquisition & Restoration (PSAR). Similar to previous grant rounds, the Skagit lead entity is required to forward habitat project lists that meet precisely the allocation funding target provided for our region. This step in the process will be discussed by the committees and will be finalized administratively through discussions between the Lead Entity Coordinator and affected project sponsors should available funding fall short of a request. Affected project sponsors will be required at this time to go back to PRISM to update their final project applications to reflect any and all financial and/or design changes resulting from the review process or shortage of funds.

Alternate projects exceeding our target allocation may be included on the list in the event a funded project is withdrawn before contracted or needs fewer dollars. Alternate projects need to have gone through the entire SRFB review process to receive funding at a later date during this grant round.

The final prioritized list is due to the SRFB by the date published for the current grant round. The final technical scoring and final prioritized project list will be distributed to TRC and LECC members and project sponsors and made available on the lead entity website.

SRFB REVIEW AND FUNDING

In the final phase of the funding process, the SRFB Review Panel will meet during July to review all of the project applications across the state. The SRFB Review Panel will conduct a “project of concern” review and determination. The Lead Entity Coordinator, committee members, and sponsors will present project information to the SRFB Review Panel, regional recovery organization (Puget Sound Partnership), and SRFB as needed to answer any clarifying questions or address requests for more information. Final project scopes may need to be altered again during this phase.

The SRFB Review Panel will develop a draft State Technical Review Panel report of its findings, by region, and distribute that for review and comment to the SRFB. The SRFB Review Panel will consider comments and additional materials submitted during the comment period and finalize its report of recommendations for funding to the SRFB

in late August. Project sponsors and Lead Entity Coordinator will respond as appropriate to proposals remaining as “Projects of Concern” at this point by the SRFB Review Panel; however, projects labeled as such may not be forwarded on the final ranked list by the lead entity.

The SRFB will meet in September to make its final funding decisions for the current grant round. SRFB grant funds are available for contract in September while PSAR grant funds, if provided by the legislature, would not be available for contracting until July of the following year. The SRFB may or may not choose to fund projects identified as “Projects of Concern.” For projects that are not under contract within the requisite 180-day window, the SRFB allows regions and lead entities to allocate those funds to the next available project alternate on that lead entity’s ranked list.

OTHER LEAD ENTITY PROGRAM FUNCTIONS

In addition to the annual SRFB funding process the Skagit lead entity is responsible for other duties that support the SRFB funding process and the habitat restoration and protection portion of the Skagit Chinook Recovery Plan. These duties include: maintaining a standing Technical Work Group; updating and refining a habitat restoration and protection strategy; processing Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR) Funds; working with project sponsors and RCO staff as needed to review and recommend contract amendments and changes to active grants; and maintaining/updating the RCO Salmon Recovery Portal and the Puget Sound Partnership and the Council’s 4 Year Work Plan.

HABITAT RESTORATION AND PROTECTION STRATEGY

Consistent with salmon recovery legislation and the current lead entity grant agreement, the Skagit lead entity is responsible for the development of a habitat restoration strategy to guide the selection and ranking of salmon recovery projects. For the Skagit Watershed Council, this includes the Habitat Restoration and Protection Strategy (1998), Application of the Strategy (2000), SWC 2022 Strategic Approach, and the 2016 Interim Steelhead Strategy. The strategy prioritizes geographic areas and types of restoration and protection actions, and identifies salmon species’ needs as well as other factors, such as social, economic and cultural, that might affect salmon recovery. The strategy is updated as new information is available.

SKAGIT WATERSHED COUNCIL MONITORING AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT PROJECTS

A comprehensive monitoring and adaptive management (M&AM) program is essential to an effective salmon recovery program. It allows recovery partners to track recovery progress, assess the effectiveness of recovery-related actions and programs, adjust strategies and actions when necessary, and effectively allocate resources.

Project-level adaptive management and monitoring continues to be essential. SWC strongly encourages that sponsors work with their advisory committees and stakeholders to develop robust monitoring and adaptive management programs that consider each of the project’s goals and objectives. SWC is in the process of developing project-level adaptive response policies and procedures to support funding for projects that are not meeting their objectives and working with funding agencies to support that.

The Council is committed to supporting recovery partners in design, development, and implementation of project, watershed and regional monitoring programs in the Skagit Watershed and Puget Sound. These efforts are guided by:

- Puget Sound and Skagit Chinook/Salmon Recovery Plans (2005, 2007)

- Puget Sound Common Framework for Monitoring and Adaptive Management (In Progress)
- Various federal guidance documents and programs such as The Guidance for Monitoring Recovery of Pacific Northwest Salmon & Steelhead listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (NOAA 2010)
- [Skagit Watershed Monitoring and Adaptive Management Report \(2020\)](#)

The basic elements of this monitoring program include biological monitoring of Viable Salmonid Population (VSP) parameters; habitat status and trends; implementation/compliance monitoring; effectiveness monitoring; project-level adaptive management monitoring, and validation monitoring via the Intensively Monitored Watershed Program. Proposed monitoring projects must specify regional and state significance of monitoring activities proposed. Statewide monitoring project policies are documented in RCO Manual 18 while the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council has adopted consistent policies also available online. These generally call for SRFB project proposals to address high priority information needs or data gaps identified within recovery plans and more recently Puget Sound M&AM Phase 1 and 2 reports. In Puget Sound, lead entities are encouraged to consider proposals that would focus on regional indicators and consistent protocols, demonstrate coordination with regional programs such as NOAA's habitat status and trends program, and seek out collaborations within each Major Population Group (e.g. Whidbey Basin). The state set aside for monitoring is typically \$350,000, \$50,000 per region. Allocation of these funds is determined by the regions for all monitoring projects submitted across the state. Dollars allocated come out of each lead entity's SRFB funding.

At the beginning of each SRFB round, the Council will announce in its Request for Proposals (RFP) whether funding will be made available for monitoring activities and, if so, the amount of funding allocated for such activities. If no appropriate projects are proposed, or the amount of a proposal(s) does not require the full set aside, the balance will be available for other restoration projects on the final ranked list.

If the Council's RFP sets aside funding for a non-competitive process for this type of project, potential project concepts should be developed early and vetted through the M&AM Subcommittee to determine consistency with the RFP and referenced plans, importance of proposed outcomes, and coordination of data collection and analysis methods. While one or many concepts may be proposed, each must be recommended by the Subcommittee to SWC staff before draft applications are submitted to PRISM. The Subcommittee may also choose to provide project recommendations to sponsors at this stage.

The project sponsor will follow the requirements outlined in RCO Manual 18 and this Program Guide to complete draft and final application submittals to SWC. The M&AM Subcommittee retains primary responsibility for reviewing and commenting on the draft application and recommending the final application for funding to Puget Sound Partnership (our regional organization). The sponsor, Subcommittee and SWC staff will share these reviews and outcomes with the TRC and LECC to improve understanding of the project's role in adaptive management. Projects approved by the M&AM Subcommittee will be submitted to the Region for the state-wide process of selecting monitoring projects to fund. The state-wide process includes presentation of the project to the PSEMP Salmon Work Group and review by the SRFB Monitoring Panel. These steps take the place of site visits and the review process with the Lead Entity.

PUGET SOUND ACQUISITION AND RESTORATION (PSAR) FUNDS

Since 2007 the state capital budget has included funds to accelerate implementation of the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan. The SRFB in coordination with the Puget Sound Partnership distributes these funds to each Puget Sound watershed based on an allocation formula adopted by the Puget Sound Partnership Leadership Council. There is some discretion available to Lead Entities in allocating these funds through a process different from state or federal

SRFB funds. It is the intent of the State of Washington and the Council that these funds be expended as quickly and effectively as prudent; delays in allocation and expenditure may cause funds to be rescinded. Lead Entities work with the Puget Sound Partnership in the process of allocating PSAR funds outside of their annual SRFB grant round.

If an approved Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR) project cannot be implemented due to a change in circumstances or is completed under budget, unused funds are considered to be returned funds and remain within the watershed for up to 4 years as opposed to returning to Puget Sound-wide accounts. The lead entity may request that these funds be applied to cost increases associated with another PSAR project in its lead entity area. Any cost increase requests must adhere to the SRFB amendment process. See SRFB Manual 18 Appendix B. Return funds also may be used by the lead entity in the next grant cycle for another approved PSAR project.

All funds must be expended within four years after the funds were appropriated. If an approved PSAR project cannot be implemented due to a change in circumstances or is completed under budget within the 4-year window (follows state biennial fiscal years), return funds will be:

- Awarded to another project within the lead entity if it can be expended within the 4-year window.
- Awarded to another lead entity needing funds to complete an approved PSAR project if it can be implemented within the 4-year window.
- If the return funds cannot be used within the 4-year window, these funds may be pooled into a regional fund to address cost increases for PSAR projects in areas where lead entities have no PSAR funds available to complete the project. These funds will be limited to completing projects within their existing scope.

Beginning in 2013, the Partnership's Salmon Recovery Council created an additional funding category called the Large Capital PSAR program. Generally, it is a funding vehicle for regionally important salmon habitat projects typically larger than those able to be completed given an individual watershed's needs versus resources. For each biennial Large Capital PSAR grant request (occurring every other year), the Council will expand the RFP to include these larger projects, evaluating and ranking them in a manner similar to other projects. However, they will then be submitted with answers for supplemental questions to the Partnership in August to compete regionally. If successful, they will be proposed to the Legislature for funding in the appropriate biennium. It is recognized that these large projects proposed at least one year earlier than funding is available may have less specific and certain details than other projects. Which projects are most appropriate for this funding source and how the process may need to be amended to complete the local ranking process will be determined by the TRC, TWG, and the LECC, with the latter acting as the final decision body locally.

Beginning in 2016, the Partnership altered the grant cycle and moved the PSAR grant round up one year so that a final, vetted list of typical and large PSAR projects would be available to propose to the Legislature for consideration of funding. Thus all projects proposed for PSAR funding wouldn't be awarded funds until the beginning of the subsequent biennium in July. This presents significant uncertainty into the process, which is mostly outside of the control of the Skagit Watershed Council and state agencies.

CHANGES TO ACTIVE GRANTS

After projects move from proposed to funded it is not uncommon that projects evolve and the outcomes become different than what was proposed in the application process. SRFB Manual 18 outlines the process for SRFB approval of contract amendments. Most project amendments require consultation with the Lead Entity, which involve the Technical Work Group and Board. Once contracted with the RCO, changes to the scope, location, or cost of a project different than originally reviewed and approved by the lead entity require the sponsor to obtain a decision from the Lead Entity, prior to submitting the amendment request to the RCO-SRFB for consideration. Sponsors are to submit

grant amendment requests to the Lead Entity Coordinator in the current format used by RCO (Appendix G or Manual 18). No grant amendment requests will be accepted after the grant expiration date.

If the amendment is for a cost increase less than 20% of total project cost and less than \$50,000, with no change in scope, then the Lead Entity Coordinator can approve the change, prior to submittal to the RCO-SRFB for consideration. All other amendments are processed by the Lead Entity Coordinator working with the Technical Work Group and Board. The process is for the TWG to review the request and make recommendations to the Board for its decision. This can occur via email or a meeting if further clarification is required. The lead entity decision is forwarded to the RCO-SRFB.

SALMON RECOVERY PORTAL REPORTING

The Salmon Recovery Portal (SRP, formerly Habitat Work Schedule (HWS)) database is a state-wide on-line mapping and project tracking tool that allows Lead Entities to share their habitat protection and restoration projects with the public. By mapping projects, linking them to each other and recovery goals, and making it all available on the web, the SRP system makes salmon recovery more accessible to partners, potential funders, and the public.

Our database of salmon projects primarily contains completed, active, and planned activities in the Skagit River supporting the recovery of ESA-listed Chinook salmon. This database has a public-facing interface and is used by many agencies, including RCO, PSP, and GSRO. Data entered in the database is also downloaded and presented to legislators to advocate for funding. Therefore, maintaining accurate and appealing information in SRP is important.

At the beginning of each grant round the Lead Entity Coordinator creates a page in the SRP for accepted proposed projects, which also generates a record in the RCO's PRISM contract management database. As project data are updated in PRISM some of these updates are translated into SRP as well.

Project sponsors are responsible for updating their proposed, active and recently completed SRFB projects in the SRP database on no less than an annual basis by March 1st. At a minimum, mandatory data fields are required to be updated. Additional information, goals, progress toward goals, maps and photos can also be shared to help communicate and support the project. Sponsors will notify the Lead Entity Coordinator when required project updates in SRP have been completed. Updating active projects in SRP is a reimbursable expense under RCO contracts.

Sponsor training and support in the SRP is available and arranged by the Lead Entity Coordinator. The Skagit SRP has been configured to support implementation tracking of the Skagit Chinook Recovery Plan.

FOUR YEAR WORK PLAN

All Lead Entities within Puget Sound began developing a Four Year Work Plan in 2006 following adoption of the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan with the intent to: improve efficiencies with implementing a large capital improvement program over several years, increase the strategic focus of our proposed projects, and facilitate multiple levels of review which occur in this process. This move from an annual project review process towards a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) approach allows us to more fully integrate priorities, sequencing, phasing, life history modeling, and H-integration (Habitat, Harvest, Hatchery and Hydropower).

Annual updates to the Skagit Four Year Work Plan are coordinated by lead entity staff working with the TWG before final adoption by the SWC Board of Directors. New habitat projects implementing the 2022 Strategic Approach are usually proposed and accepted before the beginning of the new grant round and are added to the list at the

discretion of the Watershed Council. Also, the status and funding needs of currently active and proposed projects are updated with information provided by project sponsors. Updates for other program areas of the Four-Year Work Plan are provided from those holding that information.

The Four-Year Work Plan is generated from records in the SRP database, maintained by the Lead Entity Coordinator with input from project sponsors. Data entry into the SRP is a reimbursable expense.

TRANSFERRING FUNDS BETWEEN LEAD ENTITIES

The Skagit Watershed Council may, in some grant years, have the option of borrowing money from other lead entities for a short duration to meet pressing funding needs in the current grant round. The decision to borrow funds is made by the LECC based on a recommendation from the TRC as to the time sensitivity and salmon benefit of funding a project. If the TRC identifies that a proposed project that would fall below the funding line is urgent to implement, the TRC can recommend to the LECC every effort be made to fund the project in the current grant round, in addition to higher ranked projects. The LECC can then explore options including borrowing from another lead entity. An urgent project is one for which:

1. the conditions to move forward will pass before the next grant round, or
2. future options for progress will foreclose at a certain deadline, or
3. the ecological benefit and technical score is ostensibly equal to higher ranked, high quality projects.

The LECC may also identify other reasons, agreed to by consensus, for expediting a project with borrowed funds. This decision must be weighed against the risk of obligating future funding to repay the loan. For instance, borrowing small amounts of funding from an adjacent watershed for high value salmon habitat recovery projects likely makes more sense than borrowing larger amounts for lower value projects considering the uncertainty of exactly which projects will be proposed in the following year.

In cases where SWC has more allocated funds than projects to fund, the LECC may choose to reallocate funds to other lead entities, starting with adjacent watersheds, until the following grant round when those funds would be repaid.

APPENDIX A TECHNICAL GROUP MEMBERSHIP

(to be updated in March of 2023)

Technical Work Group Members (2021):

Alison Studley, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, Chair
Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council
Bob Warinner, Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife
Colin Wahal, Skagit River System Cooperative
Jeff Fisher, Seattle City Light
Emily Derenne, Skagit County Natural Resources
Regina Wandler, Skagit Land Trust
Rick Hartson, Upper Skagit Indian Tribe
Taylor Scott, Skagit Conservation District

Technical Review Committee Member Invitees (2021):

Alison Studley, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group
Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council
Bob Warinner, Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife
Colin Wahal, Skagit River System Cooperative
Emily Derenne, Skagit County Water Resources
Jeff Fisher, Seattle City Light
Laurel Jennings, NOAA
Micah Wait, Wild Fish Conservancy
Regina Wandler, Skagit Land Trust
Rick Hartson, Upper Skagit Indian Tribe
Scott Bohling, WA Dept. of Ecology

Protection Subcommittee Members (2021):

Rick Hartson, Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, Chair
Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council
Kari Odden, Skagit Land Trust
Denise Krownbell, Seattle City Light
Scott Heller, Puget Sound Energy
CJ Jones, Skagit County

Monitoring and Adaptive Management Subcommittee Members (2021):

Rick Hartson, Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, Co-Chair
Mike LeMoine, Skagit River System Cooperative, Co-Chair
Greg Hood, Skagit River System Cooperative, Co-Chair
Richard Brocksmith, Skagit Watershed Council, Co-Chair
Aundrea McBride, Skagit Watershed Council
Erin Lowery (Alternate), Seattle City Light
Jeff Fisher, Seattle City Light
Jenn O'Neal, Natural Systems Design

APPENDIX B: REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Issued January 11, 2023, by the Skagit Watershed Council

Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) 2023 Grant Cycle and Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR) Fund Rollover Funds from 2022

The Skagit Watershed Council (Council or SWC), as lead entity for [Water Resource Inventory Areas \(WRIAs\) 3 and 4](#), is accepting proposals for salmon habitat recovery projects funded through the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) program and rolled over 2022 Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR) Program funds. The amount of funding available is not yet confirmed but will likely be approximately \$1,232,000 in SRFB funds plus \$2,630,000 in rolled over PSAR funds from 2022. SRFB and PSAR funds will be available September 2023.

Projects considered for funding:

- 1) Projects that address the priority objectives within the Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 2S Target Areas described in the [SWC 2022 Strategic Approach](#) for Chinook salmon recovery and the [2016 Interim Steelhead Strategy](#). Tier 3 Target Areas may be a secondary component of proposed projects for use as match.
- 2) A maximum of \$300,000 is dedicated to small-scale riparian and floodplain planting and stewardship projects within the Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 2S Target Areas as a non-competitive set aside. Proposals received for this category of project will compete amongst each other for these dedicated funds unless sponsors are able to work in advance to present a coordinated proposal. Riparian projects must meet riparian project criteria laid out in Manual 18 by the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) and in Appendix J of the Skagit Watershed Council's Program Guide.
- 3) A maximum of \$50,000 is dedicated to eligible monitoring projects as a non-competitive set aside. Proposals received for this category of project will compete amongst each other for these dedicated funds at the watershed level and at the regional level. Monitoring projects are advanced by the region, with lead entity support, for a state-wide process.

In addition to the criteria above, all proposals must meet SRFB eligibility criteria and be consistent with the Council's [1998 Habitat Protection and Restoration Strategy](#), the [Skagit Chinook Recovery Plan](#) (SRSC & WDFW 2005), 2022 4 Year Work Plan, and/or [SWC 2017 Protection Strategy](#), and, if located in the Middle Skagit, be consistent with the restoration strategies described in the [Plan for Habitat Protection and Restoration in the Middle Reach of the Skagit River](#) (SWC 2011).

Applicants should be aware that previously funded deliverables related to the current proposed project must be sufficiently completed at the time draft applications are due, as determined by the Board of Directors.

The Council's 2023 Lead Entity Program Guide including a SWC application process timeline, is available to guide sponsors, as is Washington Recreation and Conservation Office's [Manual 18](#) (updated January 2023).

Letters of Intent (LOI) to submit a proposal are due in electronic format by 5:00 pm on March 9th, 2023. [The LOI form is available for download here.](#) Late or incomplete submittals will not be accepted. Submit LOIs to [Aundrea McBride](#). Please contact Aundrea McBride for questions or assistance: office (360) 419-9326 or cell (360) 333-1829

APPENDIX C TECHNICAL PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA AND SCORING

Criteria	Lower Scoring	Medium	Higher Scoring	Score	Weight	Total
Target Area ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tier 3 – 1 point Steelhead-only areas identified in SWC 2015 Interim Steelhead Strategy – 2 points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tier 2 – nearshore pocket estuaries; single Chinook population in freshwater – 4 points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tier 1 – multiple Chinook populations – 5 points 	1,2,3,5	4	4-20
Watershed Processes and Habitat Features	Habitat creation ² or remediation; does not restore habitat-forming processes lowest scoring - not proven to address an important habitat condition; higher elevations relative to mainstem (REMs)	Addresses, protects or Improves habitat conditions but may not address the most important limiting factor; partial restoration ² of natural habitat-forming processes; moderate elevations relative to mainstem (REMs)	Addresses, protects or restores high priority habitat ³ and/or restores watershed processes that form and sustain salmon habitats; lower elevations relative to mainstem (REMs)	1 - 5	4	4-20
Scale/benefits	Localized or limited action or impact	Potential for moderate increase in restoration of habitat area or juvenile capacity relative to targets	Potential for large increase in restoration of habitat area or juvenile capacity relative to targets (e.g. >10%)			
Restoration						
Acquisitions for Protection	Has not been demonstrated to protect an important habitat; site too small and adjacent acquisitions unlikely or insufficient to achieve protection goal	40-60% of total project area is intact habitat with plans for restoration; site too small to accommodate protection goal but further acquisitions nearby possible	More than 60 % of total project area is intact habitat, or is a key parcel in larger assemblage of protection acquisitions; size is sufficient quantity to accommodate goal	1 - 5	3	3-15
Assessments	Addresses a lower priority action or geographic area; information insufficient to determine if addresses an important habitat condition or data gap	Will lead to new projects in moderate priority areas. Fills an identified data gap	Is directly relevant to project development or sequencing and will clearly lead to new projects in high priority areas. Fills important data gap			
Scope	Scope not well matched to project goals or target area objectives	Scope is appropriate to meet some or many of the project goals and relevant target area objectives	Scope is appropriate to meet clearly articulated project goals and relevant target area objectives			
Methods	Employs questionable treatments, methods, or practices or those not proven to be effective	Uses methods that may have been tested but results are incomplete; or employs experimental treatments or methods with well developed rationale and experimental design	Employs accepted or tested standards, methods, or practices	1 - 5	2	2-10

¹ Skagit Watershed Council Year 2022 Strategic Approach; ² Table 2 in Strategic Approach; ³ Table 3 in Strategic Approach

Sequence	May be in the wrong sequence with other protection and restoration actions	Is dependent on other actions being taken first that are outside the scope of this project but are being addressed	Appropriate phase of multi-phased project; Is in the correct sequence, or is independent of other actions			
Cost:Benefit	Costs are high relative to predicted benefit	Costs are reasonable relative to predicted benefit	Costs are low relative to predicted benefits	1 - 5	1	1-5
Cost Containment	Costs unsubstantiated or unrealistic	Appropriate costs included	Costs are well controlled. For larger projects (>~\$1M), 3 rd party review has been provided	1 - 5	1	1-5
Certainty of Success	Uncertain or limited design life of habitat benefit; uncertainties not acknowledged or addressed; no adaptive management, maintenance or contingencies proposed	Project may require some maintenance; habitat benefit on the order of decades; uncertainties acknowledged; includes contingency for adaptive management or maintenance of site	High likelihood of project being self-sustaining; long term habitat benefit; the significant uncertainties well described; contingency for adaptive mgmt or maintenance of site included as appropriate	1 - 5	2	2-10

* Projects in overlapping target areas are eligible and will be assigned target area points based on the proportion of project in each target area. In the case of acquisition projects where the target area may not be known in advance, 4.5 target area points will be assigned based the assumption that almost all purchases will be Tier 1. Historically all purchases have been Tier 1.

APPENDIX D LECC PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA

SKAGIT LEAD ENTITY

Skagit Project Prioritization Process

The Lead Entity Citizens Committee will rely on the technical review process conducted by the Council's Technical Review Committee. The list produced by the technical scoring will provide the basis for prioritization. The Lead Entity Citizens Committee will use a qualitative process, using the following questions, to arrive at the final list for submittal to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

- Are there projects that give you pause? Why?

COMMUNITY IMPACT & EDUCATION ISSUES

- Does the surrounding community support this project? Who is that community and how can you substantiate that support?
- Is there any community opposition to this project? Who is opposed and how will you address that opposition?
- Does this project have any educational value? Who is being educated, what are they being educated about, and how can you substantiate that? Will this project educate the public and raise their awareness about salmon and habitat protection/restoration issues?
- Will this project receive any publicity/visibility? How and whose attention will it gain? Will publicity be helpful to salmon recovery efforts?
- Will this project elicit more support in the future? From whom and how?

PROJECT COST ISSUES

- Is this project expensive relative to other projects on the list? Is that expense justified? How did you determine the expense is justified?
- If this project is funded, will it bump other (or several other) good projects out of probable contention for funding, based on historical Skagit Lead Entity SRFB funding?
- Is this project appropriate for SRFB Partnership Salmon Funds?

PROGRESS TOWARDS SALMON HABITAT RECOVERY

- Is the cumulative effect of the list of projects moving us closer to Chinook recovery?

APPENDIX E LECC SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

For Salmon Habitat Project Proposals

1. List the stakeholders that will be affected by your project development and implementation.
2. What is your stakeholder outreach plan?
3. What is your education and/or publicity plan to tell the story of the project to the general community?
4. What community support and partners for the project are already in place?
5. What stakeholder/community concerns might lead to project opposition and how will they be addressed proactively?
6. What cost containment measures have you or will you employ to manage project costs relative to benefits?

APPENDIX F LETTER OF INTENT FORM

(A digital, fillable form is available [here](#). Download the form to fill it out—it cannot be filled out online.)

Letter of Intent for Lead Entity Grant Program

To submit a proposal for consideration in the Salmon Recovery Funding Board grant round, please provide the following information to SWC by the date requested in the issuing RFP.



Sponsor Information

PROJECT SPONSOR	ORGANIZATION	
MAILING ADDRESS	CITY/STATE	ZIP CODE
PHONE NUMBER ext.	EMAIL ADDRESS	

General Project Information

PROJECT NAME	
PROJECT LOCATION	
WATERBODY NAME (if applicable)	TRIBUTARY TO: (optional)
LAND OWNER(S)	CO-SPONSOR/PARTNER
PARTNER	PARTNER

Project Type (check all that apply)

- Acquisition Restoration
 Non-Capitol Combination
 Design Only
 IMW Regional Monitoring

Target Area Tier

- Tier 1 Tier 2
 Tier 2 Steelhead Only
 Multiple Tiers (please explain in narrative)

Estimated Project Costs

TOTAL PROJECT COST	TOTAL FUNDING REQUEST	MATCH	A&E (optional)
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Project Description and Attachments (maximum 5 pages)

Provide a brief description of the project (maximum 2 pages) that clearly describes the full project scope including its specific Chinook and/or steelhead benefits and the quantity and type of habitat to be restored/protected. Explain how the project meets the intent of the SWC strategic documents and other criteria as specified in the RFP. Include a project site map that explains the project and up to 2 additional pages (maps, photos, design drawings).

APPENDIX G SRFB GRANT AMENDMENT REQUEST FORM

**SKAGIT
SRFB AMENDMENT REQUEST**

Project Name:
Project Number:
Project Sponsor:
Lead Entity: Skagit Watershed Council
Lead Entity Ranking:
Source of Funding:

	<u>Current</u>	<u>Proposed (if proposing cost change)</u>
SRFB Funds:	\$ xxxx%	\$ xxxx %
Sponsor Match:	\$ xxxx%	\$ xxxx %
Project Total:	\$ xxxx	\$ xxxx

Request:

Background, justification, rationale:

LE Technical review recommendation:

LE Board Decision:

RCO Staff Recommendation:

SRFB Decision:

APPENDIX H SWC LEAD ENTITY GRANT TIMELINE FOR 2023

Date	Activity / Milestone	Sponsor	TRC	LECC
4-Feb.	2023 Request for Proposals released			
9-Mar.	Letters of Intent due to SWC	X		
17-Mar.	Draft applications invited			
10-Apr.	Draft SRFB applications submitted in PRISM	X		
17-Apr.	Draft applications available for TRC and LECC review		X	Optional
1-4-May	Project site visits/presentations in the field and/or via Zoom or in person TBD	X	X	Optional
10-May	TRC/LECC review comments due to SWC		X	Optional
15-May	Reviewer comments to sponsors	X		
24-May	Initial SRFB Review Panel comments and 'POC', 'NMI', or 'conditioned' status received			
6-7-Jun TBD	Tentative date. Conference call with Review Panel	Optional		
7-Jun, 10:00-11:00, tentative	Brief presentations to SWC Council of Members. Sponsors available to answer questions	X	Optional	Optional
26-Jun, noon	Final SRFB applications due and submitted in PRISM along with response to comments in review module in PRISM	X		
30-Jun	Final applications available to TRC and LECC reviewers		X	X
13-Jul, 9am-noon	TRC technical review meeting. Sponsors are required to attend if they had critical comments.	Required if updates	X	Optional
13-Jul, 12-4pm	TRC technical scoring meeting		X	Optional
20-Jul	Final Review Panel comments received			
20-Jul, 9am-noon	LECC informational project workshop	Optional	3 reps	X
3-Aug, 9am-noon	LECC project ranking meeting		3 reps	X
4-Aug.	Lead Entity ranked list submitted			

APPENDIX I SWC LEAD ENTITY GRANT SUBMITTAL CHECKLIST

Letter of Intent	
	Letter of Intent Form (SWC Program Guide App F)
	Project description (up to 2 pages) with fish benefits
	Project site map
	Project location map (can be inset of site map)
Draft Application	
	Work site project metrics and summary (300 character) in PRISM
	Completed draft project proposal questions in PRISM
	Project cost estimate template . (Manual 18 App C, Application Checklist)
	General vicinity map (point in PRISM map module)
	Site plan for restoration projects
	Parcel map for acquisition projects
	Area of potential effect map
	Design materials for restoration projects (varies by size)
	At least two photographs of "before" site conditions in .jpg file format
	Barrier Evaluation Form (barrier projects only) (Manual 18 App C)
	Correction Analysis Form (barrier projects only) (Manual 18 App C)
	Other materials: Waiver of Retroactivity, graphs, parcel maps, graphics, additional photos, letters of support, etc. (optional)
	Deliverables from previously funded projects
	LECC Supplemental Questions (SWC Program Guide App E)
	Initiate consultation with DNR re: State owned aquatic lands
	If necessary, evidence of fish and floodplain presence (Tier 2 projects)
	Verbal declaration to RCO and SWC staff for inclusion in IMW
	Skagit Watershed Council M&AM Subcommittee support letter for monitoring proposals
	Monitoring study plan (Manual 18 App C) (monitoring projects only)
Final Application (note not all draft app requirements repeated here)	
	Responses to Review Panel comments in review module in PRISM
	Responses to TRC and LECC critical comments in PRISM
	Final project cost estimate
	Any updated maps, site plans, photos, or parcel maps, etc.
	Any updated design materials or other graphics
	Landowner Acknowledgement Form (s) (Manual 18 App C)
	Project Partner Contribution Form (s) (Manual 18 App C)
	Intensively Monitored Watershed Cert (Region provides)
	Regional Monitoring Project Certification (Manual 18 App C)
	Other updated materials (optional)
	SRFB Application Resolution and Authorization (Manual 18 App C)
	RCO Fiscal Data Collection Sheet (Manual 18 App C)
Final Submittal	
	PRISM and attachment adjustments as required by LECC
	Verbal approval of LECC conditions
	Final submittal of PRISM application

APPENDIX J. RIPARIAN ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The Skagit Watershed Council adopted the [1998 Habitat Protection and Restoration Strategy](#) with the goal of assisting and encouraging the voluntary protection and restoration of natural landscape processes that form and sustain salmon habitats. The Strategy documented the methods used by SWC of evaluating proposed projects based on our best scientific understanding and in the context of watershed and reach-scale processes. Riparian habitat functional curves were used to establish SWC's requirement that voluntary planting projects be at least 40m wide to provide functioning habitat. The 2010 and [2022 SWC Strategic Approaches](#) further defined Chinook salmon and interim steelhead priority Target Areas and the need to protect and restore functioning riparian areas from floodplains down to pocket estuaries.

In 2020 the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife published [Riparian Ecosystems, Volume 1: Science Synthesis and Management Implications](#), as well as [Riparian Ecosystems, Volume 2: Management Recommendations](#). This review and synthesis of the best available science yielded recommendations of using site based, 200-year, site potential tree height (SPTH) as the standard for riparian restoration in forested ecoregions such as the Skagit Watershed. An [online mapping tool provided by WDFW](#) shows SPTH species and estimates by soil type polygons, ranging from ~85 feet to ~250 feet. However, WDFW also recommends no less than 100 feet to ensure pollution removal functions. The Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) adopted these recommendations into the 2022 salmon grant round in [Manual 18](#). As a result, SWC adopts SRFB's eligibility rules by default, except for maintaining SWC's minimum planting width of 40 meters (132 feet) at this time. Basic eligibility requirements and specific SWC clarifications include:

- Projects with a primary purpose of riparian planting must use the 200-year SPTH minimum width, but not less than 132 feet .
- Basic exceptions to this minimum width, as outlined in Manual 18, include:
 - landscape issues such as powerline corridors, dikes, structures, roadways, etc;
 - projects with a primary salmon habitat purpose other than riparian planting;
 - a review justifies that the proposal still achieves riparian functions; or
 - policy level support from a WDFW or Tribal biologist.
- 15% SRFB project match is waived except where a project doesn't meet the SRFB minimum width of 132 feet.
- Minimum width should be measured from ordinary high water mark (OHWM), with eligibility extending out to SPTH beyond the active floodplain. The project sponsor should document evidence of the active floodplain where relevant, including GIS polygons or recent field observations.
 - Any unvegetated gaps in the lateral continuity between salmon rearing habitat and the proposed planting project need to be justified by the project sponsor and will be subject to lead entity committee review.
 - Distance of proposed planting from salmon rearing habitat affects benefit for that habitat, so project reviewers should rank different projects according to relative value.
 - Unusual areas like active floodplains behind partial dikes should be case by case.
- For marine areas such as pocket estuaries, minimum width should be measured from mean higher high water (MHHW) and subject to the same basic exceptions listed in Manual 18.
- Buffer averaging can be used in non-303-listed water bodies for dissolved oxygen and temperature.