SALMON RECOVERY FUNDING BOARD (SRFB) GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS

<u>Sponsors</u>

It is the responsibility of the Sponsor to understand and meet the requirements of the WRIA 1 process that is described in this document and the WRIA 1 annual grant schedule, and the RCO/SRFB process that is described in Manual 18 https://rco.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/SAL-Manual18.pdf.

<u>State or Regional Funding Sources</u>

In alternate years, the Puget Sound Partnership and/or the SRFB may run regional or statewide grant programs that coincide with the annual SRFB grant round that is administered at the lead entity level. The regional and statewide programs are the Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR) Large Capital Program for the Puget Sound region, the Targeted Investment, and SRFB Monitoring Program. The Sponsors applying for the regional or statewide funding programs should review the Lead Entity schedule for the elements that will apply to them. At a minimum, applicants to these programs will be required to submit a Letter of Intent to the WRIA 1 Lead Entity per the schedule. The regional programs with lead entity allocations that are part of the local review, evaluation, and ranking are PSAR, SRFB, and riparian funds.

<u>Letter of Intent Submittal</u>

Project sponsors are required to submit a Letter of Intent for a project proposal and cost increase going through the grant round to the Lead Entity Coordinator. Letters of Intent are due on the date established in the timeline made available in the Request for Projects; project proposals that have not submitted Letters of Intent will not be considered.

The Letter of Intent must be completed in full. The project description needs to address the information identified in the Letter of Intent form. The information provided in the Letter of Intent is used to confirm grant program eligibility and to create an entry in the Salmon Portal necessary to generate a PRISM number for the project sponsor. The PRISM number is needed for the sponsor to start and complete their project application. For cost increases, the original PRISM number for the active project is used; a new PRISM number is not assigned.

<u>Cost Increase Policy</u>

Project sponsors with active projects experiencing cost increases may request SRFB funds through the local grant round. Active projects are those submitted in a prior grant round that have already been reviewed, evaluated and funded.

The first avenue for addressing cost increases is through returned funds made available through RCO. If funds are requested through the grant round, the following policy applies:

- Level 1 Cost increases under $75,000

- The sponsor must prepare the required RCO cost increase documents, including a grant amendment and budget amendment, by the end of the first week of March (date is identified in WRIA 1 grant process timeline).
- Documentation must demonstrate that the increase is not related to a change in project scope.
- The LEC submits the documents to the WRIA 1 Combined Review Team for review, and then the WRIA 1 Management Team for approval.
- Approved increases are deducted from the SRFB allocation.
- The WRIA 1 Management Team may set limits on the number of requests or total dollar amount of cost increases granted each year, expressed as a percentage of the total SRFB allocation.
- The $75,000 threshold for this expedited process will be reviewed on a four-year cycle.

- Level 2 Cost increases over $75,000
  - The sponsor must complete a Letter of Intent for the cost increase. These requests are reviewed, evaluated and ranked along with new project applications.
  - The sponsor must also submit a local cost increase request form at the scheduled time for new project applications to be entered into PRISM (i.e., two weeks prior to site visits). Information provided on this form must explain:
    - The reason for the cost increase,
    - The implications if the funds are not received, and
    - The added benefit if the increased funds are received.
  - In addition to the local form, the sponsor must prepare the required RCO grant and budget amendment documents and submit them to the LEC at the same time.
  - These requests are then reviewed, evaluated and ranked along with other SRFB funding requests.

Optional Technical Discussion

Project sponsors can receive early technical input, guidance, and or feedback from the Lead Entity technical staff and/or technical members of the WRIA 1 Combined Review Team (CRT), which includes technical and community reviewers, on their project proposal prior to preparing a draft application. A date for the optional feedback is included on the annual grant timeline.

Applications

Complete applications are submitted in PRISM Online[1] by the date in the grant timeline, which is two weeks prior to the required site visits. PRISM numbers needed to begin the application

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[1] Refer to Manual 18 for setting up a PRISM account if you do not currently have one.

are provided by the Lead Entity Coordinator when the Letters of Intent are received. Complete applications include all attachments required for the project (e.g., designs, signed landowner acknowledgment forms, budgets, etc.). Per Manual 18, the only changes that are anticipated to be made after applications are submitted at this time are to respond to SRFB Review Panel comments. Dates for receiving comments are identified in the annual grant timeline.

Site Visits and Presentations

Site visits are a required element of the SRFB grant process. Site visit dates are identified in the annual grant timeline. The Lead Entity Coordinator schedules the site visits with SRFB; sponsors do not schedule site visits. As part of the site visits, project sponsors are required to present their project proposals to the SRFB technical reviewers and local WRIA 1 CRT members. Sponsor presentations of project proposals may include either an orientation of the project proposal and a site visit, or for projects that are not scheduled for a site visit, a full presentation of all aspects of the project. Some project proposals may not require a field site visit. The need for a field visit will be determined by the Lead Entity Coordinator in consultation with RCO and SRFB Reviewers. A recommended format for the presentation will be provided to the sponsors by the Lead Entity Coordinator. Time will be limited and allocated based on the number of proposals. Sponsors will provide full presentations with notes for individual slides, so the information is available to the CRT and SRFB Review Panel members throughout the review process. The annual grant timeline identifies the dates when comments from SRFB Reviewers and local technical reviewers will be provided to the sponsor. Sponsors requesting cost increases over $75,000 will be required to plan for a site visit. If the cost increase involves a scope change, it may require a field visit, which will be determined by the LEC in consultation with the WRIA 1 Combined Review Team members and RCO grant manager.

Project Review, Evaluations, and Ranking

Project Review

All project sponsors are required to attend a local technical review meeting to discuss project proposals. The date for the meeting is identified in the annual grant timeline and will follow the project site visits. This is the final opportunity for local reviewers to discuss the technical elements of the project proposals, methods, objectives, and relationship to other projects in the area with project sponsors prior to the project ranking. There will be no opportunity for sponsors to discuss projects at the technical evaluation session or ranking session. This is frequently scheduled adjacent to the CRT meeting to evaluate the technical elements of project applications and is an opportunity for sponsors to explain how they will respond to SRFB early review comments.

Project Evaluations

Technical members of the CRT meet to evaluate the technical elements of project applications. All members of the CRT are expected to attend. Sponsors do not typically participate in these discussions. The opportunity for sponsors to clarify or expand on technical information in their proposals is the technical reviewer meeting previously outlined (see *Project Review* above). For efficiencies, these meetings may be scheduled adjacent to each other depending on the number of proposals submitted.

Project Ranking

The Combined Review Team discusses and ranks in priority order all the project proposals and cost increases over $75,000 under consideration for funding. The Combined Review Team ranking session includes both the technical reviewers and community reviewers. While sponsors may attend the CRT ranking session, sponsors will not participate in the ranking discussions.

SRFB Review and Funding

After sponsors submit their applications in PRISM and site visits are completed, sponsors receive SRFB Review Panel comments and a project designation of "cleared", NMI (needs more information), or POC (project of concern). If a sponsor's project is "cleared", no additional response is required. Projects labeled as NMI or POC require responses to SRFB Review Panel as outlined in Manual 18. For NMI or POC projects, the Lead Entity Coordinator will coordinate with RCO Grant Manager and members of the SRFB Review Panel to schedule a conference call with sponsors to discuss comments. All comments must be addressed with a final application submitted by the date identified in Manual 18 and the annual grant timeline.

WRIA 1 Combined Review Team

The WRIA 1 Combined Review Team (CRT) is established by the WRIA 1 Watershed Management Board (WRIA 1 Board) acting as the Lead Entity pursuant to ESHB 2496 and the WRIA 1 Watershed Management Board Interlocal Agreement, adopted December 2016. Interests represented on the CRT may include business, cities, citizens, conservation districts, counties, environmental groups, landowners, regional fish enhancement groups, tribes, volunteer groups, and other habitat interests.

The CRT evaluates and ranks salmon habitat protection and restoration projects using the WRIA 1 Lead Entity approved guidelines and submits the list to the WRIA 1 Board or the WRIA 1 Management Team (Management Team) for their consideration. In addition to the ranked list, the CRT may make additional recommendations regarding project proposals. As the Lead Entity for WRIA 1, the WRIA 1 Board or Management Team shall have final authority for submitting the habitat project list to the SRFB, along with any additional CRT recommendations. The WRIA 1 Board and Management Team meetings are open public meetings with opportunities for public comment provided at all meetings.

The CRT is composed of a team of community reviewers and a team of technical reviewers. While the roles and responsibilities of the community and technical reviewers are slightly different during the annual SRFB grant process, the two teams operate as a single team and meet together for review and ranking of the SRFB habitat project list. The habitat project list shall be ranked reflecting current WRIA 1 salmon recovery priorities and strategies informed by the best available data and assessment information in the *WRIA 1 Salmonid Recovery Plan* and associated documents. The goal of the ranked list is to prioritize in a logical sequential manner projects that protect and restore habitat necessary to sustain healthy populations of salmon, especially Nooksack early chinook populations. The CRT functions according to the *WRIA 1 Combined Review Team Rules and Procedures*, and the roles and responsibilities described below.

Technical Reviewers

Technical reviewers are drawn from staff of tribal, federal, state, and local government agencies, NGOs, education institutions, and other groups or individuals with direct knowledge of and/or engaged in salmon recovery. In general, expertise for technical reviewers is from the following disciplines: hydrology, geology, riparian forestry, water quality, geomorphology, fish biology, and engineering. Requirements for technical reviewers of the CRT include technical expertise and willingness to participate as outlined in the SRFB annual grant schedule and occasional technical meetings outside of the annual grant cycle. Membership of CRT technical reviewers is reviewed annually by the WRIA 1 Lead Entity Coordinator in consultation with the WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery Staff Team (SRST) and/or Management Team.

Roles and Responsibilities

The technical reviewers provide feedback to project sponsors on their project concepts, proposals, designs, or other project-related information at different times throughout the grant cycle including:

- Early Technical Feedback – Project sponsors have the option of requesting early feedback on their project concept or aspects of their project prior to completing a draft application. The date for the optional early feedback is identified in the annual grant timeline. Technical reviewers are highly encouraged to participate but are not required. This is an informal opportunity; presentations, designs, etc. are <u>not</u> required but may be helpful in explaining the concept.

- Applications – Technical reviewers are required to review and be familiar with the applications prior to scheduled site visits and presentations. There is approximately two weeks for this review to occur. This provides opportunities for the technical reviewers to ask questions of and/or provide feedback to the project sponsors either in the field or during the presentation so the sponsor can consider the information as they develop their final applications.

- Site Visits and Presentations – Technical reviewers are expected to participate in the virtual site visits and presentations that are scheduled two weeks after the applications are due. The site visits and presentations are done in conjunction with the SRFB requirement for site visits for SRFB Review Panel members. At this point in the grant process, the grant applications will be complete and submitted in PRISM Online. Optional field visits may be scheduled for some projects. The field visits are optional for local review team members.

- Project Discussions – Technical reviewers are required to participate in a session with the project sponsors to discuss technical elements of the proposals including but not limited to methods and habitat objectives. This session is a discussion between the technical reviewers of the CRT and sponsors and is focused on clarifying elements of the project proposals that will be important to the overall ranking. Sponsors will not be provided with the opportunity at the evaluation session to respond to questions or provide clarifications. Technical reviewers should ask all clarifying questions or confirm methods with sponsors as part of this step in the process. It is important to the ranking process, therefore, that all reviewers understand the project proposals upon completing this step of the process.

- Technical Reviewer Evaluation Work Session – Technical reviewers meet to evaluate the technical aspects of project applications. The technical reviewers and attending community reviewers are encouraged to make notes on the evaluation forms as projects are discussed.

- Ranking Session – The community and technical reviewers meet to review and rank the project applications. All CRT members are required to pre-rank each of the applications

prior to the ranking session including providing rationale for the ranking on each project. The Lead Entity Coordinator consolidates the rankings and prepares a starting point for discussion at the CRT ranking session. The discussion is based on the pre-rankings and rationale for rankings and does not include policy discussions. The CRT prepares a recommendation to forward to the WRIA 1 Board or Management Team that includes a ranked list of projects and any other recommendations that come out of the CRT ranking session.

Community Reviewers

Community reviewers are drawn from the community and may include representatives from business, cities, citizens, conservation districts, counties, environmental groups, landowners, regional fish enhancement groups, tribes, volunteer groups, and other habitat interests. In general, community members of the CRT have an interest in and knowledge of local salmon recovery efforts, the Nooksack Basin and salmon habitat needs. Membership of CRT community reviewers is reviewed annually by the WRIA 1 Lead Entity Coordinator in consultation with the WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery Staff Team (SRST) and Management Team. Letters are sent to various community groups and committees soliciting participation.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Application – Community reviewers are required to review and be familiar with the applications prior to scheduled site visits and presentations. There is approximately two weeks for this review to occur. This provides opportunities for reviewers to ask questions of and/or provide feedback to the project sponsors at an early stage in the application process.

- Site Visits and Presentations – Community reviewers are expected to participate in the virtual site visits and presentations that are scheduled two weeks after the applications are due. The site visits and presentations are done in conjunction with the SRFB requirement for site visits for SRFB Review Panel members. At this point in the grant process, the grant applications will be complete and submitted in PRISM Online. The site visits are typically a full-day commitment or in alternate years, may be a two-day commitment with field visits being optional for local review team members

- Project Discussions – Community reviewers are required to attend the project discussions. This session is a discussion between the technical reviewers of the CRT and sponsors and is focused on clarifying elements of the project proposals that will be important to the overall ranking. This session is the last opportunity to engage sponsors in discussions to clarify project proposals, confirm reviewers' understanding of project elements, and/or ask questions.

- Technical Reviewer Evaluation Session – Community reviewers are expected to attend the technical evaluation session for the technical reviewers. At this work session, the technical reviewers of the CRT discuss and comment on the technical elements of the proposed projects. While it is understood that Community reviewers of the CRT will not have the technical expertise or background to fully engage in this session, the discussion by the Technical Reviewers will be extremely informative to the overall ranking session and Community reviewers will benefit from these discussions. The community reviewers are encouraged to make notes on the evaluation forms as discussions proceed.

- Ranking Session - The community and technical reviewers meet to review and rank the project applications. All CRT members are required to pre-rank each of the applications prior to the ranking session including rationale for the ranking. The Lead Entity Coordinator consolidates the rankings and prepares a starting point for discussion at the CRT ranking session. The discussion is based on the pre-rankings and rationale for rankings and does not include policy discussions.   The CRT prepares a recommendation to forward to the WRIA 1 Board or Management Team that includes a ranked list of projects and any other recommendations that come out of the CRT ranking session.