

NRCC Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
November 15, 2023
8:30 am
Zoom Meeting

Agenda

1. Welcome (Rick)
2. Review and approve meeting minutes (Clare)
3. Grant proposals, approvals, and updates
 - AgCWIP (Emily) – discussion of new RFP and evaluation metrics/methods of funding
 - Design & Implementation Block Grant (Lina) – project review and approvals
 - Core services (Clare) – Review FY25 budget request
4. Other business, as required

Attendance: Rick Hopkins, Chris Von Alt, Richard Noel, Jill Arace, Clare Ireland, Jess Miller, Emily Nummer, and Lina Smith

The meeting was called to order at 8:32 am.

Welcome (Rick)

Rick welcomed everyone and thanked them for joining this morning.

Review and approve meeting minutes

Clare presented the finance committee meeting minutes of October 18, 2023.

The motion was made by Chris to approve the minutes as presented. Richard seconded the motion. Upon a call for a vote, all were in favor.

Grant proposals, approvals, and updates

AgCWIP – Emily explained the new AgCWIP RFP and presented a spreadsheet with proposed allocations to each district. The goal is to provide districts with more guidance up-front about how much money they should be requesting under the new RFP. She explained the evaluation metrics/methods she had used, acknowledging the metrics were imperfect and asking for feedback from the finance committee about the metrics and whether they support a base amount given to each district.

A lengthy discussion followed with explanations by Emily, Clare, and Jill. Additional quantitative metrics were discussed, such as number of small farms, number of organic farms, number of farm closures, and number of NRCS contracts, as well as more qualitative measures, such as the level of commitment to regenerative practices. There was discussion weighing the relative importance of supporting ongoing growth for districts in which the metrics show a clear need (e.g. a high number of farms) and of supporting districts in which the metrics show a lower need artificially (e.g. a low number of farms due to a high rate of farm failure). It was agreed that funding levels should try to take this dynamic into consideration to avoid contributing to a negative feedback loop that leads to additional farm failures and

the conversion of farmland into other, more developed land-use types. The committee acknowledged this is a complicated dynamic and gave feedback to explore additional metrics and consider a base amount to each district.

Design & Implementation Block Grant – Lina outlined the projects applications that were received for the latest round of DIBG/EDIBG grants for the finance committee for approval.

Chris reiterated as he has in past meetings that he wants to receive information on a timelier basis and was unsure of the value the finance committee adds by approving projects. He requested more information.

There was a lengthy discussion on this topic, including a discussion of staff capacity, clarification of the finance committee's role, and specifications of what kinds of information the committee would like to see in the future.

Core Services – Due to lack of time for discussion, Clare said she would follow up by email.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Meeting adjourned at 10:27 am.

Minutes approved 12/20/2023 with the following addition:

“After the presentation requesting approval, no motion was made to approve the request, and the discussion continued. C. von Alt stated that he felt that the information provided was inadequate and was effectively requesting that the Finance Committee rubber stamp the recommendations made by the EDIBG (Enhanced Design and Implementation Review board) since no other information was provided in the outline. Mr. Von Alt also indicated that the information concerning the grants had not been provided in a timely manner so it could be considered by the committee. There was concern expressed about delaying the approval of these projects. Mr. von Alt said he could not approve the projects without additional information”