

IRWM Regions Need Streamlining, Certainty, Stability: Findings from Statewide IRWM Survey

Author: Tracy Hemmeter, Santa Clara Valley Water District

1. Streamline the grant application process

- ✓ Too expensive - Average implementation grant application was \$115,000 or \$17,000 per project.
 - Reduce economic analysis requirements and/or provide tools. This was noted to be the most difficult part of the application. People recognize the importance of ensuring that public money is being put to good use, but cost of the requirements far outweighs the value of the information provided.
 - Allow regions to self-certify compliance and consistency rather than having to reiterate and resubmit information multiple times
 - Some regions prefer a two-step process, where detailed information is provided later in the process.
- ✓ Cost and complexity of the application process puts small agencies and DACs at a disadvantage
 - Numerous regions have successful DAC and NGO participation in project selection and planning.
 - DACs don't always have the technical staff and resources to develop and implement projects.
 - Large agencies and non-profits can't always pick up the costs.
- ✓ Make better use of bond language (PRC Section 75028(a)) and defer to approved local project selection processes, especially in funding areas that have a collaborative, valid, and transparent method of prioritizing projects

2. Improve the certainty of the schedule and amount & purpose of funding available

- ✓ Uncertainty in the grant program schedule further complicates inter-regional efforts to agree on cooperative long-term funding area strategies. Cooperative strategies would result in cost-savings in the application process for all organizations involved. Also, local momentum can be lost when regions are waiting for the State to do what it said it would do.
- ✓ Clarify intentions regarding whether DAC funding is intended to be a specific set-aside for such communities or whether larger projects that meet the needs of DACs also meet the intention of the funding
- ✓ Grant agreement implementation is a challenge
 - Uncertain reimbursement timing
 - The one-contract with DWR/region reduces implementation efficiency at the regional level because there are so many layers of contracting.

3. Maintain some stability in the IRWM program requirements

- ✓ Give regions a chance to develop some momentum in their IRWM efforts before changing or adding new requirements. Each new requirement adds cost and/or complexity and, for some regions, is making it difficult to sustain the regional program.
- ✓ Many regions are still developing and haven't had a chance to really establish themselves or develop cooperative arrangements with neighboring regions. Changes in the program make it more difficult to develop stability in the IRWM process at the local level.
- ✓ More is not better. The IRWM requirements already address a broad range of water resource issues.