How Can We Make Grant Funding Programs More Effective?

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Introduction

• Environmental work done by non-profits, local and state governments, as well as by other entities is crucial to environmental protection

• Limited funding is available to these entities via grants, making it important for grant funding programs to manage and distribute funds effectively

• It is crucial to understand how Best Management Practices and grant review strategies can be implemented by grant funding programs to maximize positive impacts on the environment

Research Questions

1. Which Best Management Practices can benefit grant funding programs?
2. What grant review strategies can aid grant funding programs?

Internship

Figure 1: I interned at the U.S. EPA Region 10 from November 2019 – March 2020 as a program support intern for the Columbia River Basin Grant Program. My work focused on aiding the program management team in processing applications and developing application review materials. Above is a portion of the vast Columbia River.

Methods

• Reviewed grant funding programs to determine which Best Management Practices had the largest impact on performance

• Analyzed grant application review methods that could be incorporated into grant funding programs

Results

• Grant funding programs can benefit from the implementation of three primary Best Management Practices prior to, during, and after funding has been distributed:

   1. Pre-Project: Considering if applicants project goals align with funding program goals in selection process
   2. During Project: Consistent analysis of project performance and outcomes
   3. Post-Project: Using project outcomes to inform future project selections

   Along with aligning project goals, three strategies for grant review can be utilized to aid efficiency and project selection:

   Use of statistical analysis to determine application patterns
   Collaborative data management
   Program specific review criteria

Results Part 2

Pre-Project

• It is important for grant funding programs to see a connection between an applicant’s proposed project and their organizational expertise

• The use of statistical analysis to determine themes within a group of applications can provide valuable information for scoring project applications

• Collaborative data management, such as effective use of shared databases, can cut down on wasted time in the grant review process

During Project

• By analyzing the performance of projects while they are being conducted, problems that arise can be addressed efficiently

Post-Project

• Determining traits of successful projects can help grant funding programs understand how to advertise funding, select projects, and oversee projects

• By analyzing traits of unsuccessful projects, grant funding programs can avoid selection of similar projects in the future

Significance

• By effectively integrating best management practices and grant application review methods, funding programs can create progress in many environmental fields

• Internal review of grant funding programs combined with external audits could be used to ensure funding dollars are being used effectively

• Grant management is rarely taught in undergraduate education. Increasing exposure to undergraduate students could have positive impacts on program management

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