



**Date:** December 22, 2021

**To:** Subcommittee for Pilot Program Implementation Meeting, December 9, 2021

**From:** Denise Wilson, Environmental Review Director, Environmental Quality Board

**RE:** Meeting Summary

**Members Present:**

Chair: Nicholas Martin, Public Board Member Congressional District 4

- Louise Miltich, Department of Commerce; for Grace Arnold, Commissioner, Department of Commerce
- Alan Forsberg, Public Board Member, Congressional District 1
- Mehmet Konar-Steenberg, Public Board Member: Congressional District 5
- Ben Yawakie, Public Board Member: Congressional District 3

**Proposal for Pilot Program metrics**

Environmental Quality Board (EQB) Staff provided a draft proposal for metrics for use in assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of climate information included on the draft revised Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) form as well as metrics that will assess the effectiveness of the Pilot Program design. The proposal included the following elements for consideration of the Subcommittee and other meeting attendees:

**Draft Metrics for Effectiveness**

1. Climate information was considered in project design and provided on the draft revised EAW form:
  - Projects quantify and assess greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions
  - Responses provided for adaptation and resiliency planning
2. New climate information helps project proposers, the public and RGUs understand potential climate effects
3. RGUs are able to assess climate impacts accurately and consistently

**Draft Metrics for Efficiency**

1. New climate questions on the EAW form are clear and unambiguous
2. Additional time and cost for providing climate information results in usable climate information
3. Tools provided in Guidance (both Section 1 carbon footprint and Section 2 climate impacts)
  - Are they user-friendly; easily understood and applied
  - Do they provide consistent and accurate information
  - Do they provide information relative to a specific project location

## **Draft Metrics for Pilot Program Design**

1. The Pilot Program included a cross section of RGUs from State, Metro, and Greater Minnesota
2. The Pilot Program provided meaningful mechanisms to engage Greater Minnesota RGUs who have few staff and are not currently evaluating an EAW
3. The Pilot Program provided meaningful mechanisms for input and transparency for all interested Environmental Program review participants

## **Public and Subcommittee Discussion**

- Quantitative metrics need to be collected in a way that complies with scientific method.
- Project time and cost will vary from project to project and consultant to consultant.
- Gathering quantitative metrics is rife with complexities, caution against this.
- Time and cost data will not be usable or defensible.
- Effectiveness metric 2 is the only one that involves input from the public. Public is as important as project proposers and RGUs.
- Members of the public, project proposers and RGUs should have an equal voice.
- Efficiency metric 1 could be hard to reconcile whether or not public versus RGU responses were valid.
- If we do not collect quantitative data, we will not have a way to show that the State did a good job laying out the process.
- There are times where we go out and study things in Environmental Review and it does not materialize in a quantitative way, but that does not mean that there was not any value in studying that. There is not a place where we capture that value.
- Time and cost data could reveal that climate models and tools are working. RGUs were able to answer the questions in a reasonable time.
- All Environmental Review analyses have costs; caution against using cost numbers on their own. Costs will reduce over time.
- Costs always go up with environmental review and permits. Government is imposing a time and cost on project proposers. EQB will determine if there is value and make the decision.
- To determine what information is usable, project proposers and RGUs have to generate the data, their experience is one of the primary things that the Pilot is supposed to evaluate.
- Concerned with giving special interests a “seat at the table”. The purpose of the Pilot is to give RGUs and project proposers a chance to try out the EAW form. Should not make special allowances for some but not others.
- This Pilot is for people who are putting together environmental documents