

Colorado Water Plan 101: Better Understanding the Roadmap to a Secure Water Future
Question and Answer Transcripts to the November 18, 2019 Webinar

Please note: These answers are not direct quotes from the webinars. If you do review the recorded webinar, the first two minutes of the Q&A recordings are choppy, but it clears up.

How are grants prioritized when the need is so great? Are all basins getting equal funding?

- The CWCB prioritizes grant proposals that have multiple benefits and multiple uses. The CWCB wants to see projects that benefit water supply for agriculture and communities and benefit the environment and recreation, because they bring together a more collaborative stakeholder approach to projects and meet multiple objectives in the Water Plan.
- The CWCB looks for projects that are technically feasible, have done their homework, have match funding available, a strong scope of work and tie back to goals and measurable objectives within the Water Plan or the Basin Implementation Plan (BIP).

The total estimate for grant program funding was about \$56 Million, but DD is only going to provide about \$12 million per year. Where does the rest of the money come from?

- Projections are that Proposition DD will provide approximately \$10-15 million annually, which is a good down payment on implementing the Water Plan, but we will need additional funding to cover its full cost. Depending on need and availability, after Proposition DD funds come in, the CWCB may continue to provide Water Plan Grant funding through its cash fund, the Construction Fund. Existing funding sources are important, but we will also have to identify additional new sources of funding.
- In the past, funding from the CWCB's Construction Fund has helped to cover the different grant programs that the CWCB manages. In the last few years, the CWP implementation grants have averaged at levels between \$7 - \$10 million. Last year, the CWP implementation grants were also allocated funding from the General Fund (\$10 million) for the first time.
- The Water Plan has a sub chapter on financing. The Plan recognizes there is a funding gap to achieve its objectives despite resources from federal, state and local governments and utilities. The funding gap is approximately \$100 million annually for 30 years (or \$3 billion total).

How will DD funds be spent toward CWP implementation?

- Funds from Proposition DD will go to CWCB's existing Water Plan Grant Program, which has five established project categories: agricultural, conservation and land use, environment and recreation, innovation and outreach, and storage and supply. Funding will be allocated among these grant categories and compact compliance efforts through the CWCB Board's recommendations and ultimately through a legislative appropriation.

Understanding that some water projects are tied up in litigation, would there be any consideration of grant dollars going to resolve some of these legal issues so projects can move forward?

- The CWCB does not provide grants or loans to outside entities for legal services.

What is the benefit implementing the Water Plan for communities?

- The Water Plan is a lens for the values that we all share as Coloradans. The development of the Water Plan provided a forum to have a focused conversation about Colorado's water future.
- Not only does the CWP provide a shared vision for the state but it also provides community forums to identify priorities within Basins across the state. The Basin Roundtables (BRTs) and BIPs have provided the social infrastructure to get local projects accomplished. The BRTs recommend funding for projects that align with their BIP through the Water Supply Reserve Fund. As BRTs embark on updating and refining their BIPs in the next couple of years, they will be updating and revising a water project database to provide a better understanding of the water project needs statewide.
- In creating the CWP, the state increased resources for water planning and implementation of projects available for communities. These resources are not only available through increased funding but also technical resources. One example is the work the CWCB and nonprofits collaborated on to create tools and educational materials integrating land use planning and water which is a great resource for local municipalities.
- Additionally, in finalizing the CWP, the state prioritized stream management plans, which can bring together all water users and sectors to talk about their vision for a specific river reach or watershed. Funds are available from the CWP implementation grants to help cover the costs of developing the SMPs. Once the plan is completed, the local community can apply for additional funding to implement their vision.
- In addition to the CWP implementation grants, there are other financial resources available to communities. For example, watershed planning grants help communities plan and react to issues with floods, forest health, wildfire mitigation and other watershed health activities that can provide financial resources to help implement their vision and stream management plans.

If I'm interested in talking with someone about a grant proposal, is there a good person to talk with?

- There are about 15 different grant programs that the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) manages as it relates to water and the Colorado Water Plan. To learn more about the different funding options, reach out to the CWCB's Chief Operating Officer, Anna Mauss (anna.mauss@state.co.us). Anna can provide helpful information about the many different grant opportunities and direct you to other staff members if needed.

In the original outreach for the CWP, was there a specific aspect of the public input that worked well?

- The process of creating the first Water Plan was successful but had a lot of learning moments during the process. Because Colorado has gone through the process of writing the original Water Plan, the update should be easier. The update will also not start from scratch as it will build upon the original document, making it more strategic and applicable to the data we have today and allowing everyone to focus on its new aspects.

- In writing the first Colorado Water Plan, the Legislature passed a bill requiring the interim Water Resources Review Committee hold hearings around the state to collect public comment and provide its input to CWCB regarding the CWP. This bill also requires the CWCB to engage with the Legislature on any updates or modification to the CWP. As updates begin, the CWCB will come before the Legislature to continue to conversation about the Water Plan as it is updated and receive their input.
- Technology and data availability are both greater today than during the plan's original writing. During the CWP update, the CWCB is exploring using new/different technology to make it easier for stakeholders to provide updates and comments. There will still be traditional methods to providing comments, but the options will be expanded in the update. The CWCB will have a robust effort to both collect comments and disseminate information to stakeholders.