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191520

Emergency Ordinance

*Authorize application to the Environmental Protection Agency for an Innovative Water Infrastructure Workforce Development Grant not to exceed \$1 million

Passed

The City of Portland ordains:

Section 1. The Council finds:

1. The Bureau of Environmental Services (BES) and the Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) have an opportunity to apply for a workforce development grant in an amount not to exceed \$1,000,000 for two incubator public works efforts. The first is to develop a wastewater operator-in-training program. The second is to create a leadership training program within the PBOT Maintenance Operations Environmental System Division, which, among other duties, provides stormwater services on behalf of BES.
2. Authorized under the American Water Infrastructure Act and implemented by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Innovative Water Infrastructure Workforce Development Grant (EPA-R-OW-OWM-23-02) provides grants to ensure a strong pipeline of skilled and diverse workers in the water utilities sector by accelerating career pipelines in that sector and by providing access to water utility workforce opportunities. The grant stipulates only one application per applicant (jurisdiction), prompting BES and PBOT to work together to develop shared programs for a proposed single grant application, advancing the spirit of the charter transition's proposed Public Works Service Area.
3. The project, titled "Building the Future Generation of Wastewater and Stormwater Professionals," is intended to serve three needs within the Public Works Service Area:
 - A. Development of a pipeline of wastewater and stormwater operators,
 - B. Leadership development opportunities to retain and support the existing workforce, and

Introduced by

[Commissioner Mingus Mapps](#)

Bureau

[Environmental Services](#)

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Requested Agenda Type

Consent

Date and Time Information

Requested Council Date

November 15, 2023

C. Addressing potential layoffs with retraining and placement opportunities within the City of Portland.

4. If awarded, funds will be used to develop a training program for up to six wastewater operators. The first openings will be offered to PBOT employees seeking retraining and placement opportunities. Additional funds will be used to develop a leadership training program to move existing staff into progressively responsible positions within wastewater and stormwater operations. Both programs will develop outreach and partnership components to specifically target historically underserved and underrepresented communities.
5. BES currently has two unfilled Wastewater Operator II positions and is authorized to underfill one position to fulfill critical roles. Furthermore, current vacancies in supervisory and coordinator roles are likely to create additional vacancies in the Wastewater Operator II classification due to these promotional opportunities. The City will always need qualified journey-level wastewater operators. For several decades now, BES has only hired Wastewater Operator IIs, the journey-level classification in the Wastewater Operator series. In recent years, BES has seen a decline in the number of qualified journey-level wastewater operators applying for vacancies. While interest in these positions remains high with diverse candidates, applicants lack the education, knowledge, and experience to fill the journey-level role of Wastewater Operator II. By developing an operator-in-training program, BES would be providing those interested members of the community with the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to become journey-level operators.
6. BES and PBOT also provide stormwater operations and maintenance services. If grant funds are awarded, BES and PBOT will jointly develop a leadership and professional development training program to retain highly effective employees and prepare them for progressively responsible positions. This internal workforce development program will result in more entry level vacancies, allowing PBOT to utilize its current programs focused on underserved and historically underrepresented communities within the stormwater operations and maintenance workforce.
7. Funding these programs would develop sustainable workforce pipelines to provide livable wage opportunities for high school or GED-educated applicants and underserved communities. These positions provide critical public health and safety services, resulting in a clean and healthy environment.
8. This grant would come at a critical time, when filling vacancies is increasingly difficult. In addition, creating a Public Works Service Area is prompting infrastructure bureaus to work better together to share resources in new and innovative ways, while also reducing costs and responding to budget constraints. The operator-in-training pilot

program would seek to identify PBOT employees interested in potential career changes within the City. BES and PBOT share stormwater management and maintenance responsibilities.

However, there are few leadership and professional development opportunities for employees serving in these critical jobs. This grant would provide the opportunity to develop two programs to retain, promote and re-train existing staff, while creating new programs to recruit entry level staff to provide onsite job training to serve in critical, hard-to-recruit positions.

9. No match would be required for this grant.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Council directs:

- A. The Mayor to apply to EPA for the Innovative Water Infrastructure Workforce Development Grant for an amount up to \$1,000,000.
- B. The Mayor to provide such information and assurances as are required for the grant period.
- C. The Office of Management and Finance Grants Management Division to perform all administrative matters in relation to the grant application, grant agreement or amendments, requests for reimbursement from the grantor, and to submit required online grant documents on the Mayor's behalf.
- D. The Directors of the Bureaus of Environmental Services and Transportation to accept any subsequent modifications by EPA to the Innovative Water Infrastructure Workforce Development Grant, provided such modifications do not increase the City's financial obligation or risk. Any modifications that increase the City's financial obligation or risk must be authorized by the Council.

Section 2. The Council declares that an emergency exists because the grant application must be submitted no later than November 17, 2023. Per the Office of Management and Finance Grants Management Division, submittal of the application sooner than this deadline is preferred; therefore, this Ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage by the Council.

An ordinance when passed by the Council shall be signed by the Auditor. It shall be carefully filed and preserved in the custody of the Auditor (City Charter Chapter 2 Article 1 Section 2-122)

Passed by Council
November 15, 2023

Auditor of the City of Portland
Simone Rede

Impact Statement

Purpose of Proposed Legislation and Background Information

If awarded, the grant funds will be used to develop two mutually beneficial workforce development programs between BES and PBOT. Because BES has an urgent need for Wastewater Operators and PBOT is potentially facing steep budget cuts that may result in elimination of positions, BES and PBOT are partnering to provide the initial opportunities within the Operator In Training (OIT) program to voluntary, self-selected PBOT employees. PBOT and the initial employees will in turn help to refine and promote the OIT program, specifically within underserved and historically underrepresented communities. PBOT has strong workforce development programs within underserved and historically underrepresented communities that BES will be able to utilize to promote the OIT program. In a companion effort, BES and PBOT have an existing stormwater management agreement that lacks leadership development opportunities. Grant funds will be utilized to develop a professional development leadership program within the PBOT-BES Environmental Services Division, serving critical supervisory and management needs while opening opportunities for entry level stormwater operators.

Financial and Budgetary Impacts

This Council action does not amend the City budget or require additional FTE. If this grant application is successful, BES and PBOT will bring the award to Council for acceptance.

Community Impacts and Community Involvement

This project will specifically address workforce development in underserved and historically underrepresented communities within the BES and PBOT workforce. PBOT has a mature workforce development partnership with these communities that BES will draw on to develop the OIT program and future pipeline opportunities. Currently, Clackamas Community College offers the only Wastewater Operator Certification program in Oregon. This effort seeks to strengthen the connection between OIT and the CCC certification program, creating a regional model so that OIT graduates can seek successful employment at BES or at other regional wastewater providers such as Clean Water Services (Washington County) and Water Environment Services (Clackamas County).

In addition to wastewater needs, BES and PBOT also provide stormwater operations and maintenance services to Portland. If grant funds are awarded, BES and PBOT will jointly develop a leadership and professional development training program to retain highly effective employees and prepare them for progressively responsible positions. This internal workforce development program will result in more entry level vacancies, allowing PBOT to utilize its current programs focused on underserved and

historically underrepresented communities within the stormwater operations and maintenance workforce.

100% Renewable Goal

This action does not directly impact the City's total energy use.

Agenda Items

958 Consent Agenda in [November 15, 2023 Council Agenda](https://www.portland.gov/council/agenda/2023/11/15)
(<https://www.portland.gov/council/agenda/2023/11/15>)

Passed

Commissioner Mingus Mapps Yea

Commissioner Carmen Rubio Yea

Commissioner Dan Ryan Yea

Commissioner Rene Gonzalez Yea

Mayor Ted Wheeler Yea