

Grants:

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The morning of June 2., however, the Measure 110 Oversight and Accountability Council voted on the last of 236 applications representing 326 entities across the state during a subcommittee meeting. Now, Oregon Health Authority is negotiating contracts with grant winners, a process the state estimates will take until late July or early August to complete. After the agency writes up the contracts, the council votes on whether or not to approve them.

“We feel tremendous,” Council Tri-Chair Ron Williams told The Lund Report. “We’re hopeful and optimistic that the county review process will continue on schedule. We plan to have half the counties done within the next couple weeks.”

As of this writing, two contracts totaling about \$2.8 million, for Harney and Jefferson counties, were completed and funded. Those contracts, obtained by The Lund Report, offer few details about what the money will be spent on and how. Reporting requirements included in the contracts require tracking of whether people struggling with substance use disorder are able to access services more quickly after the networks receive funding. But it’s unclear how the efficacy of specific programs that receive funding, such as rewards-based programs, will be tracked.

Providers must form networks to apply for funds

Under the measure, provid-



Kristyna Wentz-Graff/Oregon Public Broadcasting

The Oregon Secretary of State’s Office is conducting an audit of Measure 110 implementation and on Wednesday, June 1, 2022, sent a letter to the Oregon Health Authority calling out “areas of risk” in the way the program has been administered so far.

ers applying for funds in different regions of the state, in many cases by county, must jointly form “Behavioral Health Resource Networks.” Each network must provide a range of services that includes needs screening, intervention planning, low-barrier substance use treatment, peer support, housing services, harm reduction and supported employment.

And, providers must provide services in a way that aligns with the spirit of Measure 110. For example, services must be culturally competent, inclusive and low barrier. This means programs can’t eject a patient for a single relapse, and that harm reduction services — such as overdose reversing drugs, fentanyl testing strips and clean syringes — should be available for people who are not ready to abstain from substance use. In some regions, a single provider

serves as the entire network.

Grant applicants sought more than \$400 million, which is at least \$65 million more than is available for distribution. So not all were fully funded, or were not funded at all. Providers working together in Harney County requested \$4.6 million, but were only allocated \$857,711. Each county’s allocation is based on factors such as the number of people on Medicaid, number of people experiencing homelessness, number of drug overdose deaths and the number of arrests.

Oregon Health Authority was not able to say by press time when tribes will get their set-aside of the funding, which amounts to \$11.2 million.

While providers, politicians and observers have balked at the length of time it’s taken to get funds out the door, state officials and the oversight council have contended the task at hand has been an

arduous one. The number of applications was “unprecedented,” according to Oregon Health Authority, and never before has a community council made up of those harmed most by the war on drugs — including people who’ve been incarcerated and who are in recovery — been tasked with designing and implementing a grant program that doles out hundreds of millions of dollars.

State sends its recommendations

In a letter sent to Allen on June 1, state auditors issued a list of recommendations for the program.

Issues pinpointed by auditors through conversations with the council mirrored problems The Lund Report identified in its coverage of Measure 110 starting in February. Their findings and recommendations include: The Oversight and

Accountability Council did not receive information about individual grantee performance and did not receive public comments from meetings, despite asking the health authority for these items.

Measure 110 does not provide clarity around the roles and of the health authority and the council, therefore the Legislature should provide that clarity.

The Oregon Health Authority “has not always provided adequate support” to the council and has experienced staffing issues. That has contributed to delays in funding. Therefore auditors recommend sufficient and dedicated staff support the council and the authority provide timely and clear responses to the council’s questions.

The council “developed an inefficient grant evaluation process, due in part to a lack of support and guidance.” Again, more support from the health authority is recommended.

“Insufficient grant management and monitoring pose a risk that providers will not use funding in alignment with the equity and treatment support goals” of Measure 110. Auditors recommend the health authority “develop robust grant management and monitoring processes, including ensuring sufficient data is collected to enable those processes,” and that it give the oversight council sufficient support “while developing and voting on rules for data collection and reporting.”

Ongoing ethics and conflict of interest training also was recommended for the council.

In its coverage of Measure 110, The Lund Report has often not received clear, timely answers from Oregon Health Authority to questions about

numbers, staffing and other aspects of Measure 110 implementation.

Williams, who serves as council tri-chair and is a prominent community organizer in Portland, said the council has learned valuable lessons, such as to ask for expert advice early on in the process and the health authority needs to play a more strategic role. He expects the next round of Measure 110 grant funding to go more smoothly, he said.

To what extent access to treatment and recovery services will expand due to the funding will become more clear as contracts are negotiated and money is spent. In the meantime, Williams said he is especially excited to see the investments being made in housing because finding safe and affordable places to live for people who are recovering from addiction is “a tremendous need.”

“I’m also excited about — there are some proposals that we’ve approved to increase detox and sobering, and there are some proposals that actually make it possible for folks who are categorically ineligible for Medicaid or uninsured to be to get inpatient treatment,” Williams said. “So just the whole array of services I’m excited about.”

The council will begin to accept applications for the next round in the fall of 2023.

You can read the state auditor’s letter at bit.ly/3NITSK.

— *The Lund Report is tracking the implementation of Measure 110 as part of a reporting fellowship sponsored by the Association of Health Care Journalists and The Commonwealth Fund. Emily Green can be reached at emily@thelundreport.org.*



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

About 100 Blue Mountain Community College faculty, students and community members gather Wednesday, June 1, 2022, on the Pendleton campus to protest the college administration’s budget proposal that would cut several teaching positions.

BMCC:

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The first speakers were Roy Barron, Hermiston city councilor and educator, and Enrique Farrera of Clackamas, vice president of the Oregon Education Association, the union that represents the faculty association. Paul Keefer, Boardman mayor, 1987 BMCC grad and sixth grade teacher, next addressed attendees, followed by Hermiston educator Tammy Fisher. Umatilla teacher Chris Early, president of Columbia River UniServ, which supports OEA locals in the region, rounded out the list.

Speakers sounded themes of unity and solidarity, and emphasized the value of full time teachers to students and the community. Two urged administrators to “figure it out.”

“Something is hinky here,” Early wrapped up. He urged an outside audit of at least the past five years, and to “send the architects of this outrage packing.”

McKeon thanked all who spoke and attended the rally.

“A budget says a lot,” she added. “Students don’t come for a snazzy website or pretty campus. They come for good faculty. Diversity

of courses and quality of instruction will get them where they want to go in life.”

Faculty supporters formed up outside the doors of Pioneer Hall, but found them locked. McKeon produced a key, and the crowd marched into the hallway outside the conference room. Part-time philosophy teacher Nicholas Nash led the way.

The crowd waited in the hall until invited into the conference room.

“We want to save BMCC from BMCC,” McKeon commented.

Chair Don Rice of Boardman, Vice Chair Jane Hill of Pendleton, Kim Puzey of Hermiston and Chris Brown of Heppner attended in person. Bill Markgraf of Baker, Kent Madison of Echo and Abe Currin of Milton-Freewater attended remotely.

Sign-carrying faculty supporters opposed to layoffs marched into the room. Rice allowed 30 minutes for public comments of a maximum three minutes each. About 15 community members, present and past BMCC faculty and students spoke. Alan Feves of Pendleton said he supported the faculty because the community needs arts and music. Dale



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

Liam Pennington, son of English instructor Shaindel Beers, joins about 100 Blue Mountain Community College faculty, students and community members on the Pendleton campus Wednesday, June 1, 2022, to protest proposed budget cuts and listen to speakers.

Baker said he graduated 45 years ago but his automotive and auto body degrees are no longer available.

Then the board turned to its agenda.

“We recognize that the board has a fiduciary responsibility to pass a balanced budget,” McKeon said as faculty association president, “but propose you have an equally great responsibility to advocate for the community’s needs. Well, they are (here), speaking loud and clear—discretionary cuts to faculty and student scholarships should

come from other line items.”

Two agenda items took up most of the meeting’s time. Dean Tammy Krawczyk reported on early college credit classes for high school students. Executive Vice President John Fields reported on accreditation and enrollment.

Chair Rice and President Brown concluded the meeting by explaining the postponement of a budget approval vote. Board member Brown shook hands with and thanked the remaining faculty supporting guests.

Profits:

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spring rains. And there was a jump in wheat price as India banned export of the staple cereal, due to its heat wave.

Leber noted that major wheat exporter Ukraine is managing to plant, despite the war.

“Even with the ports closed, they’ll find a way to get it out,” he said.

Still, looking ahead to his likely fertilizer bill in the fall is worrisome.

“We’re paying 50 cents per pound more than last fall, but that’s as of now,” he said during a recent interview in May. “Fertilizer could keep going up.”

The supply of fertilizer diesel dried up on the East Coast, he added, and that shortage can mean higher prices on the West Coast.

U.S. natural gas prices are at a 14-year high, according to recent reporting in The Financial Times. Keeping orchard and fruit crops from freezing requires propane and diesel, as well.

“Orchardists and fruit growers power their wind machines with propane,” said Roger Lemstrom of Los Rocosos Vineyards in Milton-Freewater’s Rocks District. Besides using these giant fans for warming, they still use old-fashioned smudge pots fueled by diesel, he noted.

High petroleum prices slam local fruit growers

It’s not just pain at the pump for local farmers and orchardists. High prices for other petroleum products, such as agricultural chemicals squeeze growers’ profits.

“(Inflation) differs by region,” said Corey Coad, president of agricultural supplies at Orchard & Vineyard Supply, with locations in four states. He’s based in McMinnville, but is familiar with OVS’ business in Milton-Freewater.

“In some areas, fertilizer prices have shot up by 500%,” he said. “In the Pacific Northwest, it’s 50% to 150%. For pesticides, it’s 175% since January of 2021.”

Coad explained the problem isn’t just with supply and demand for hydrocarbons. Shipping containers are in short supply as a result of pandemic-induced interruptions to international trade. Many active ingredients in

agricultural chemicals come from overseas.

“Then there’s the cost of fuel, especially diesel, which impacts everything farmers do,” Coad noted. “Spraying, cultivation, you name it. Diesel is up 39% from January of this year.”

Crop nutrient prices also rose as a result of sanctions on supplier Belarus, curbs on Chinese fertilizer exports and sanctions on Russia, a big provider to Brazil, according to Reuters in May.

The cost increases, combined with fuel, lubricant and other agricultural chemical cost hikes, mean farmers may have trouble turning a profit even with higher crop prices. Ukraine is a major wheat exporter, so war on the Black Sea has naturally boosted grain prices.

Midwest farmers have adapted by planting more nitrogen-fixing soybeans and less corn, but enduring drought reduces yields for all crops. Northeast Oregon farmers and ranchers have fewer options, with the market for peas so much lower than in previous decades. Canola is not a legume.

Don Wysocki, local Oregon State University Extension soil scientist, said one option is to grow a nitrogen-fixing cover crop, such as peas. The crop is terminated before its water use threatens grain yield, but still adds some nitrogen to the soil. Cover crops can be planted in the fall or spring, but it’s always a risk in the fall, since producers can’t know how wet the winter will be.

Management practices also can make less fertilizer go farther, such as split applications. Again, growers don’t know how much moisture to expect, so Wysocki recommended applying an average amount in the fall, then top dressing in the spring. With a wet winter and spring, such as this year, farmers can get more crop growth per fertilizer buck by applying when it’s most needed.

Costlier application methods can save on fertilizer. Liquid solutions applied with pesticides in the spring make both agricultural chemicals more efficacious.

“Producers might want to consider whether to bale their straw or not, now that the value of nitrogen has gone up,” Wysocki said.

Wysocki also said the war affected both supply and Black Sea shipping and he didn’t see change coming abruptly.