

RCW 43.31.038 Geothermal exploration cost-share grant program.

(1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, a competitive geothermal exploration cost-share grant program is established in order to incentivize deep exploratory drilling to identify locations suitable for the development of geothermal energy.

(2) Grants may be awarded to offset the direct costs associated with the expense of conducting deep exploratory drilling for the purpose of identifying locations in Washington suitable for the development of geothermal energy.

(3) The department of commerce must consult with the Washington geological survey to develop a method and criteria for the allocation of grants, subject to the following:

(a) Proposed exploratory drilling projects should be located in areas of high geothermal potential not impacting federally reserved tribal rights and resources including, but not limited to, those protected by treaty, executive order, or federal law;

(b) Grant applicants should possess, or should demonstrate a partnership or other form of relationship with entities who possess, demonstrated expertise in successful geothermal exploration;

(c) Grant applicants should meet high labor standards, including family sustaining wages, providing benefits including health care and employer-contributed retirement plans, career development opportunities, and must maximize access to economic benefits from exploratory projects for local workers;

(d) Selection and implementation of exploratory drilling projects should align with equity and environmental justice principles as established in chapter 70A.02 RCW;

(e) Grant awards must be available to private, public, and federally recognized tribal applicants. Grant awards to private grant applicants should be for no more than one-half of the overall cost of the project and grant awards to public grant applicants should be for no more than two-thirds of the overall cost of the project;

(f) Grant applicants must demonstrate that they have, or that they will have by the time of the execution of a grant agreement, site control of the site that is the subject of the exploration effort, either through an ownership interest or through a lease agreement that provides access to the site and the right to drill to the proposed depth;

(g) The grant application must demonstrate the applicant's engagement efforts with the local community to provide information about the potential project;

(h) If any fluid is proposed to be injected as part of the exploratory drilling, the grant applicant must:

(i) Include an analysis of any potential for induced seismicity as a result of the injection, as well as a plan for the management of the risk of induced seismicity; and

(ii) Consult with the department of ecology and, if applicable, comply with underground injection control standards and groundwater antidegradation standards as directed in chapter 90.48 RCW;

(i) The award of grants will seek to broaden the state's knowledge of geothermal resources, with a preference given to high impact projects in favorable geologic settings that have been comparatively underexplored; and

(j) All results of any exploratory drilling performed with grant funds must be made publicly available and must be submitted to the

Washington geological survey for inclusion in the database created pursuant to RCW 43.92.090.

(4) In the course of administering the geothermal exploration cost-share grant program, the department of commerce shall make a reasonable effort to utilize the United States department of energy recommendations and guidelines concerning enhanced geothermal demonstration projects in the western states. [2024 c 350 s 3.]