

RCW 70A.02.080 Environmental justice obligations of agencies relating to budgets and funding. (1) With consideration of the guidelines issued by the council in RCW 70A.02.110, and in iterative consultation with the council, each covered agency must incorporate environmental justice principles into its decision processes for budget development, making expenditures, and granting or withholding environmental benefits. Through the incorporation of environmental justice principles into its decision processes, including by conducting environmental justice assessments where required under RCW 70A.02.060, each covered agency, to the extent allowed by law and consistent with legislative appropriations, must equitably distribute funding and expenditures related to programs that address or may cause environmental harms or provide environmental benefits towards overburdened communities and vulnerable populations.

(2) Beginning on or before July 1, 2023, each covered agency must, where practicable, take the following actions when making expenditure decisions or developing budget requests to the office of financial management and the legislature for programs that address or may cause environmental harms or provide environmental benefits:

(a) Focus applicable expenditures on creating environmental benefits that are experienced by overburdened communities and vulnerable populations, including reducing or eliminating environmental harms, creating community and population resilience, and improving the quality of life of overburdened communities and vulnerable populations;

(b) Create opportunities for overburdened communities and vulnerable populations to meaningfully participate in agency expenditure decisions;

(c) Clearly articulate environmental justice goals and performance metrics to communicate the basis for agency expenditures;

(d) Consider a broad scope of grants and contracting opportunities that effectuate environmental justice principles, including:

(i) Community grants to monitor pollution;

(ii) Grants focused on building capacity and providing training for community scientists and other staff;

(iii) Making technical assistance available for communities that may be new to receiving agency grant funding; and

(iv) Education and work readiness youth programs focused on infrastructure or utility-related internships to develop career paths and leadership skills for youth; and

(e) Establish a goal of directing 40 percent of grants and expenditures that create environmental benefits to vulnerable populations and overburdened communities.

(3) A covered agency may adopt rules or guidelines for criteria and procedures applicable to incorporating environmental justice principles in expenditure decisions, granting or withholding benefits, and processes for budget development.

(4) In incorporating environmental justice principles into its decision processes for budget development, making expenditures, and granting or withholding benefits, each covered agency must consider any guidance developed by the council pursuant to RCW 70A.02.110.

(5) A covered agency may not take actions or make expenditures under this section that are inconsistent with or conflict with other statutes or with conditions or limitations on the agency's appropriations.

(6) If a covered agency, due to the breadth of its programs and funding opportunities, determines it is not practicable to take the actions listed in subsection (2) of this section for all applicable expenditure decisions and budget requests developed, the covered agency is encouraged to prioritize taking the actions listed in subsection (2) of this section for those budget requests and expenditure decisions that are primarily directed at addressing environmental impacts. By July 1, 2023, each covered agency must publish on its website the types of decision processes for budget development, making expenditures, and granting or withholding environmental benefits for which the agency will take the actions listed in subsection (2) of this section. [2021 c 314 s 16.]

Conflict with federal requirements—2021 c 314: See note following RCW 70A.02.005.