WRIA 9 Discussion Guide: Project Identification and Review Considerations for Watershed Planning Under RCW 90.94.030

November 2019

Purpose of Discussion

This document provides considerations for the committee's approach to identifying and reviewing projects. This document is accompanied by a detailed memo on project screening criteria. This document does not address project list organization by priority, tier or sequencing, which will be further discussed in the spring or summer. A separate discussion guide will be provided to the committee for policy and regulatory actions.

What is Required?

The NEB Guidance states that planning groups will prepare a watershed plan for their WRIA. These plans will include projects and actions intended by the planning group to both offset all new consumptive water use and achieve a NEB. (pg. 6)

The NEB Guidance defines projects and actions as general terms describing any activities in watershed plans to offset impacts from new consumptive water use and/or contribute to NEB. (pg.5) Examples of project types include: water right acquisition offset projects; non-acquisition water offset projects (e.g. managed aquifer recharge, streamflow augmentation); habitat and other related projects.

The NEB Guidance states that there is no minimum requirement for the number or distribution of offset projects or actions within each WRIA. Chapter 90.94 RCW allows offsets for permit-exempt domestic wells to occur anywhere within a WRIA, provided the watershed plan achieves a NEB within the given WRIA. This means planning groups have significant latitude to place offset projects at desired locations (e.g. most beneficial to fish, meet local feasibility considerations, etc.) regardless of whether these provide offsets within each of a WRIA's subbasins. (pg.9)

Background and context

Technical consultants can support the committee in identifying and developing projects for the Plan and support to evaluate project benefits. Additional support is available to identify projects with water right acquisition opportunities. Technical consultants have developed draft project screening criteria for the committee's consideration. The intent of the screening criteria is to provide a tool that can evaluate relevant attributes of candidate projects and prioritize the most valuable projects for further evaluation and potential inclusion in the WRE plan for each respective WRIA.

Considerations for the Committee

The committee needs to consider the following in determining how best to identify and evaluate projects:

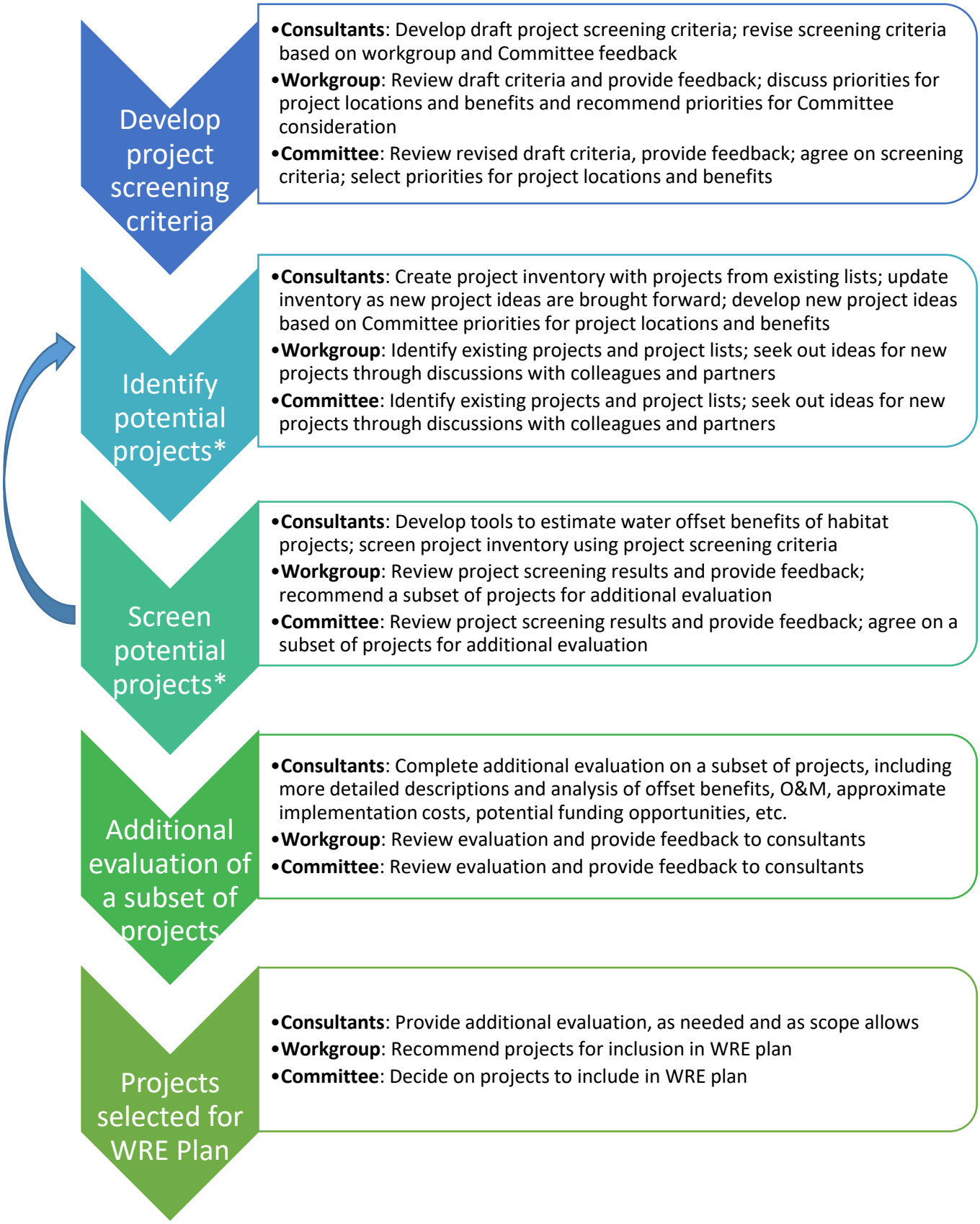
Project Review:

1. What are the roles and responsibilities of the consultants, workgroup, and committee for reviewing projects against the criteria? (*See proposed process and roles on last page*)
2. Does the committee support a multi-phased approach to project review (e.g. fatal flaws followed by more detailed criteria) and if so, who should complete each level of review? (*see proposed process and roles on last page and proposed screening criteria memo*)
3. How will the committee tailor the criteria to meet the need for our WRIA? (*see proposed screening criteria memo*)

Process/Committee Involvement:

1. What is the preferred process for bringing projects forward for committee consideration? (Consider both those that are general ideas as well as those that are more fully developed projects.) Some options for committee consideration include:
    a. iterative at each committee meeting (such as one hour of each meeting dedicated to reviewing projects)
    b. special focused workshops on projects for workgroup, committee and/or others
    c. by project type or geographic area
    d. full list that has undergone an initial screening by a workgroup
    e. combination of any of the above
2. What additional information does the committee need to determine the process for considering projects in the plan?

WRIA 9 WREC: DRAFT Process and Roles for Project Identification, Evaluation, and Selection



*Identifying and screening projects will be iterative, with new project ideas brought forward throughout the process