

2015-2016 Linkage Program Status and Recommendations

At their meeting on February 17, 2015, the Administrative & Financial Subcommittee approved the addition of new linkage studies to our 2015-2016 Line Item Budget. Since the increase in the consultant contract budget line was due primarily to the addition of the new linkage studies and the rollover of linkage studies not yet completed, the subcommittee also discussed the status of the existing studies.

As of April 1st, we will have 11 ongoing linkage studies and will have committed hundreds of hours of staff time. The concern of the A & F Subcommittee, and the CDTC staff, is that we may not be able to offer any new linkage studies next year unless some of these existing linkage studies are completed.

Subcommittee members discussed several actions to address completing the backlog of linkage studies. One idea was to require study sponsors to complete specific phases of the project within specified periods of time, and for sponsors to lose the linkage funding if they did not meet the requirement, in other words, "Use it, or lose it!" Another idea was to require that all sponsor's local match funding be deposited with CDTC before the study consultant is hired. And another suggestion was that CDTC produce a monthly status report which included completion status. i.e., on-time, late, and very late.

CDTC staff agreed to develop a draft linkage study report which included study sponsor, date programmed, a description of status, and an estimated completion time from the beginning of the fiscal year (April 1st) to estimated completion date. This draft report was circulated to A&F subcommittee members before it was sent to the full Planning Committee for input.

Attached is a draft Linkage Study Status Report with 2 new columns added to the right side. Since federal planning funds for newly approved linkage studies are available on April 1st, the beginning of our fiscal year, we used April 1st as a start date. Ideally a linkage study should take about 15 months, or to about July of the following year. As you can see, several studies are taking longer than 15 months.

As you can imagine, there are many reasons for study delays, and some of them are truly unforeseen and reasonable. Sometimes sponsors are just not ready to begin a study, and sometimes the study relies on information and data from another ongoing study.

We would suggest the following milestones and outcomes:

1. Within 1 year – hire a study consultant and have a kick-off meeting.
2. Within 2 years – 50% of the study scope of work completed by the consultant.

3. Within 3 years – 100% of the study scope of work completed by the consultant. This may or may not include legislative adoption of study findings, but in either case the work of the consultant is complete.

If a study sponsor fails to meet these milestones, it would need to request from the Planning Committee more time to reach that milestone and to complete the study. If it does not make this request, it would lose its funding. Also if it fails to meet these milestones, the study sponsor would not be allowed to submit an application for a new linkage study while their study is incomplete and for the number of months their study exceeded the 15 month estimated completion time.

These new requirements would become effective later this year when we solicit for new studies.