

FAQs ADVANCE PLANNING

Process

1) What is my role in the Advance Planning process?

Program Offices – Reclamation’s work activities are generally planned through the budget formulation process. As you are formulating your budget requests for future work to be performed, you will need to identify what portion of that work will require support from Reclamation’s technical service providers and provide this information to the COG as part of the annual budget formulation process. Your estimates help the service providers understand the future needs of the organization and staff to fulfill those needs.

Service Providers – As you receive advance planning estimates, you will need to work with program office managers to ensure that you have a reasonable understanding of their needs. You should also use these estimates to identify areas in which critical technical capabilities may be endangered by a lack of workload necessary to sustain that capability.

2) When are the Advance Planning estimates prepared?

The advance planning process will be integrated with the annual BRC/program formulation process. When the BRC guidance letter is distributed in the fall of each year, program offices will be requested to prepare a table of technical service needs necessary to support your budget request in the BRC notebook.

3) How accurate do the advance planning estimates have to be?

Advance planning estimates should be based on the best available information. Estimates during program formulation should be in sufficient detail to identify which service providers will be required and the general level of support needed from each of them. If there has been significant planning on a large project, the estimates may be based on detailed estimates of the necessary technical services to be provided. In other cases, it may be based on commonly accepted percentages of the total funding for the activity. It may also be possible to make reasonable estimates using data from recent projects of similar scope.

4) What if I'm not sure that the project will make it through the budget formulation process?

If an activity warrants seeking funds in the budget formulation process, advance planning estimates for the technical services required to support that activity are required. As the budget for a given year approaches the year of execution, there will be opportunities to remove projects from the Advance Planning tables if they have not been funded.

5) Are advance planning estimates commitments for funding future work?

Commitments for funding specific work activities are provided through the fee-for-service process. Advance planning estimates provide notification to service providers of the technical services work that may be requested, but are not necessarily commitments that the work will come to fruition.

6) What happens if my technical specialty has little or no work identified in the advance planning estimates?

These cases will initiate discussions within the service provider organizations to assess:

- Are the services logically included with a broader description of the technical services required?
- Is the specialty needed to sustain achievement of Reclamation's mission and goals now and into the foreseeable future?
- Is this a temporary condition or is there sufficient long-term workload to sustain that specialty at that location?
- Are there other work activities being contracted out that require this technical specialty? (potential case for an appeal for a Reclamation service provider to perform the work)

7) How will advance planning information be shared?

Advance planning information will be shared with service providers to ensure appropriate staffing and procurement planning to meet program needs. When this information is shared, it will be marked as pre-decisional embargoed budget information (internal use only). It will not be available for sharing with the public, however it may be appropriate to share information about individual line items with customers as necessary to establish plans for accomplishing the work.

8) What role will the COG have in determining the distribution of the work listed in the advance planning worksheet?

The fundamental principle is that decisions on where to have the work performed lie with the program offices. The COG will monitor the distribution of work and highlight areas where there is a significant risk of losing a key technical capability that is necessary for Reclamation to carry out its mission. The COG's role will be to educate program offices and the Deputy Commissioner – Operations on the areas of technical capability that are at risk of being lost and opportunities for reallocation of work that would help sustain those technical capabilities.

9) If a program office submits advance planning information, what guarantee do they have of getting the requested resources?

While the goal of the advance planning process is to facilitate agreements between service providers and program offices, we must acknowledge that the Reclamation program is subject to frequent changes due to the budget process, administration priorities, and congressional mandates. There are also changes in personnel that occur on a regular basis. It is the COG's belief that service providers will do their very best to meet program office requests/expectations for resource assignments. However, the nature of the Reclamation program doesn't realistically allow for guarantees and it is incumbent upon managers to ensure that appropriate resources are available to meet the commitments that have been made.

BRC Notebook Table

10) How much detail should I use in defining my project activities?

Project activities should be defined to a level of detail that both aides the program office in estimating the needs for technical services and aides the service providers in understanding the expected levels of support for each activity. Even so, the expectation is that most activities will lead to some level of communication between service providers and program offices.

11) What types of work need to be included in the table?

All work requiring technical services that has a total estimated cost exceeding \$25,000 must be included in the table. The majority of this work is anticipated to be in the Water and Related Resources account. However it is also expected that there will be substantial work requiring technical services that will be customer funded, funded by other agencies, or funded by other accounts such as P&A (i.e. manuals and standards).

12) What if my project uses several service providers, but none of them individually have work reaching the \$25,000 threshold for reporting? Do I still need to report the estimated technical service needs?

The reporting threshold is cumulative for the work activity. If the combined need for technical services meets/exceeds the threshold, the advance planning estimates must be provided.

13) Why do I need to fill out the table for two years?

One table is for technical services necessary to support the activities under consideration for the budget year being considered by the BRC. The second table is an update to prior year estimates for the budget year under consideration by OMB and Congress. The purpose of the latter table is to provide adjustments to the estimates based on information from the last BRC process, the Commissioner's priorities, and Department priorities.

14) How long will it take to consolidate advance planning estimates and distribute them to the service providers?

The COG believes that the estimates can be consolidated and sorted by service provider for distribution in about a month's time. With the BRC notebooks generally being due at the end of January, we anticipate advance planning information being available to service providers at the beginning of March.