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## *MEMO*

Date December 11, 2003

To Energy Trust Board of Directors

From Peter West, Director of Renewable Energy Programs

Subject Response to Process Evaluation for Open Solicitation  
Program

The Open Solicitation Program was launched by the board early in 2002 as an experimental effort to support smaller scale projects. The program succeeded in attracting numerous applications and quality projects. To date, the program has committed funding to nine projects in seven different cities that represent five different technologies. Projects range in size from 4 KW to 4.1 MW, including the region's largest solar array.

The program has moved from experimental to mainstream, proving to be an effective funding path for a strong variety of projects. It has also been an important conduit to staff for new ideas and emerging issues facing smaller-scale renewable energy projects.

The Process Evaluation concluded that the program is worthwhile and should continue. It also suggested some key areas for improvement. We agree with the key recommendations. The evaluation team presented its findings to the Renewable Energy Advisory Council (RAC). The RAC also supported the key findings.

One item of particular interest is the finding that only about 35% of the applicants had experience in applying for funding for renewable energy projects. This explains the sometimes significant staff support required to qualify a project and points to the critical need for the program to provide technical assistance in order to attract new entities to renewable energy and serve underserved markets.

In direct response to the evaluation, staff proposes to:

1. Redefine the application.
2. Conduct more outreach and program promotion.
3. Establish more concrete timelines.
4. Shorten the average response time.
5. Employ more consultant support to directly work with worthwhile projects.

6. Provide limited feasibility grants to municipalities and nonprofit organizations.

If time allows, staff would also explore defining a less onerous process for the smallest projects. Staff has already drafted a Request for Qualifications to identify additional expertise to review and assist projects. To accomplish this list requires adding more dedicated staff time, greater funding for technical expertise (contractors) and more expenditures for awareness, education and outreach. The draft budget for 2004 reflects the additional staffing and costs to improve the program and continue to attract high quality projects.