

Agency Report

State Library

Government Research and Electronic Services Budget Note Report

Analyst: John Borden

Request: Acknowledge receipt of a report on the Government Research and Electronic Services program.

Recommendation: Acknowledge receipt of the report.

Analysis: A budget note adopted by the Legislature in 2012 directed the State Library to report on its Government Research and Electronic Services program (GRES)(SB 5701):

The State Library is to report to the May 2012 Joint Interim Committee on Joint Ways and Means or the Emergency Board with an analysis of the requests and response received by the Government Research and Electronic Services program. The report shall include the total number of requests received, the nature of requests, and from what entity the request was made, the number of requests that were responded to, and the cost associated with providing responses.

The agency missed submitting this report by the specified due date.

Government Research and Electronic Services Program

GRES services include the State Employee Information Center website, research assistance from professional librarians, document delivery from the Library collection or other libraries via interlibrary loan, distribution of state agency publications to depository libraries, cataloging and archiving of state agency publications in print and electronic formats, electronic mailing list service, maintenance of the search box on the Oregon.gov website, and the State Library eClips daily news briefing service, and other current awareness services.

GRES Budget

The program is funded by a state agency assessment based on the number of an agency's full-time equivalents (2/3) and usage of GRES services (1/3). The 2011-13 assessment totals \$5.4 million, a portion of which is used to fund the administrative function of the agency. The legislatively approved budget for GRES includes 22 positions (20.84 FTE).

The 2013-15 Governor's budget recommends elimination of the program.

GRES Report

GRES has received 12,488 requests from state agencies to-date this biennium and filled 11,289 of the requests (90.4%). This equates to an average of 595 requests per month for the first 21 months of the biennium, which is approximately 42% less than the 900 requests per month averaged the prior two biennia. The agency's explanations for this decline are: budget reductions have reduced the number of databases available for research; state employees are conducting their own online research; and the elimination of training on GRES services for state employees.

A total of 16 agencies make up 92% of the requested materials, with the largest consumers being the Oregon Health Authority (38%) and Department of Human Services (13%), which combined comprise 51% of all requests. The next largest group of agencies comprise another 37% of requests: Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (6%), Public Utility Commission (5%); Department of Environmental Quality (5%), Oregon Youth Authority (3%); Department of Forestry (3%); Department of Corrections (3%); Oregon State Police (3%); Department of Agriculture (3%); Department of Education (2%); Department of Consumer and Business Services (2%); and the Department of Transportation (2%). All other agencies comprise one percent or less of the total number of requests.

The general nature of agency requests are: medicine/health (40%); social sciences (20%); natural resources (10%); business and economics (8%); wildlife/fish (5%); and a variety of other categories (17%). For the purposes of this report, GRES staff had to assign these categories, which otherwise are not tracked as part of the program's normal process.

The report notes that its Key Performance Measure #3 relates to a cost per state employee contact and is \$4.50 for fiscal year 2012.

Report Weaknesses

The report could have been strengthened by detailing the State Library's policy for fulfilling requested information and providing examples of the reasons why approximately 10% of requests were not filled. Additionally, it would have been informative to know the number of individuals within each agency submitting request(s) and how the expertise of GRES staff aligns with the information being requested. The report made no mention of the type of documents being requested either cumulatively or by agency.

The cost figure mentioned in the report understates the cost to state agencies. For example, the 16 agencies specifically identified in the report submitted a combined total of 11,364 requests and will pay approximately \$3.4 million in assessments for the first 21 months of the current biennium. This equates to an average cost of \$298 per request, however, there is a significant variance in the cost of each request due to the difference in each agency's assessment.

While the report satisfied the requirements of the budget note, it did not answer the core question of what value-add GRES provides to state agencies and whether a centralized model of government research remains viable in the digital age.

The agency is currently working with the Department of Administrative Services on an overall agency restructuring plan to present to the 2013 Legislature. How the Executive Branch proposes to restructure GRES services should be a key aspect of that plan.

Recommendation

The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends acknowledging receipt of the report.