



Savannah River Site

Citizens Advisory Board

Recommendation 238

DOE Budget – Stakeholder Participation Consistency

Background

At any point in time, DOE is dealing with budgets for three fiscal years. For example, in October 2006, while the FY 2007 budget is being executed, internal deliberations are underway for the FY 2008 budget and the requirements for the 2009 budget are being assembled. This “annual” budget process is how Federal agencies operate. For the Savannah River Site the budget process follows four steps: 1) site requirement development; 2) internal DOE and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) deliberations; 3) congressional action; and 4) execution.

Typically, during the January-February timeframe, budget guidance and funding targets are released to the field sites, like the Savannah River Site (SRS). When the local budget (DOE-SR) is submitted in April, DOE’s Environmental Management Office (DOE-EM) gets input and prioritizes it. DOE-EM compares the budget requests across the complex to the budget targets issued by OMB and identifies issues that need to be resolved and holds a “Corporate Forum” to resolve issues and work towards an acceptable EM budget submission to DOE’s Chief Financial Officer. Once the issues have been resolved, the budget is submitted to DOE’s Chief Financial Officer for final management decisions in early June. At this point the budget process is “embargoed” to the public. Between June and August, internal budget briefings are held at DOE-HQ. The budget is then submitted to OMB in September. Around Thanksgiving, it is given back to DOE for review and potential appeals are reviewed. Normally, the final budget decision is made in January. The budget is then printed and the Presidential budget is released to Congress around February, when the embargo ends. There are Congressional hearings from March to September. Then around the first of October, the budget is approved and the new fiscal year begins (Ref. 1).

Comment

Based upon the DOE-EM budget timeline, the planning year budget (FY 2008 in this case) is embargoed from June 2006 through February 2007. The SRS Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) has not had an opportunity to provide meaningful input in the FY 2008 budget process unlike other Advisory Boards, specifically Hanford (Ref. 2). The SRS CAB has voiced its concern about this disparity and the need for a more consistent and effective budget participation process across the DOE complex (Ref. 3). The SRS CAB still has major concerns about the lack of a current SRS stakeholder budget participation process which include site priorities listing, planned key accomplishments and over-target activities. The SRS CAB also wants DOE-SR to reestablish a consistent involvement process in the planning and formulation aspects of the SRS budget.

Recommendation

The SRS CAB recommends the following:

1. For FY09 and all outyear budgets, DOE-SR provide a briefing to the SRS CAB in March of each year on the status of the fiscal year budget currently being formulated for the SRS.

2. For FY07 and FY08, DOE-SR provide to the SRS CAB a priority funding list and their relative risk rankings identifying the status (i.e., fully funded, partially funded, fund reductions, non-funded, etc.) of all SRS projects.
3. DOE-HQ reconfirm the length of the budget embargo period and provide potential alternatives to shorten this period to provide stakeholders more time to provide meaningful input in the budget process.
4. DOE-SR ensure that all program presentations to SRS CAB committees have a budget component that addresses the budget and expense history of each project.

References

1. Department of Energy, Office of Environmental Management, Budget Process Timeline, June 2004 (attached)
2. Fiscal Year 2008 Budget Briefing, Office of River Protection, presented to the Hanford Advisory Board, March 20, 2006
3. Citizens Advisory Board Recommendation No. 234 (adopted May 23, 2006), "SRS Budget Participation."