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Report to Rep. L. H. Fountain; by Gregory J. Ahart, Director, Human Resources Div.

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Congressional Relevance: Rep. L. H. Fountain.

Authority: Environmental Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1531).

Information was compiled on the estimated costs incurred by the Government in administering the Environmental Education Act and by applicants in applying for grants under the act. The estimates are based largely on unverified information obtained through interviews and responses to questionnaires. The estimated cost of \$1.5 million is equivalent to about 50% of the \$3 million grant funds awarded for fiscal year 1976. The recipients of the 90 grants awarded for fiscal year 1976 were selected from among 1,154 applicants, 300 of which were considered to be in the fundable range. Estimated costs broken down by agencies are as follows: the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare was \$322,803 and the Office of Management and Budget was \$425. Officials of the Office of Environmental Education indicated that they had received approximately 370 congressional endorsements on behalf of the applicants. Congressional costs were estimated to be in the range of \$1,600 to \$6,500. Responses to questionnaires sent to applicants indicated that, in total, the 1,154 applicants spent from \$929,000 to \$1,521,000 in preparing fiscal year 1976 grant applications. (SW)

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

HUMAN RESOURCES
DIVISION

JAN 9 1978

B-164031(1)

The Honorable L. H. Fountain
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Fountain:

As requested in your August 9, 1976, letter, signed jointly with Congressmen James C. Cleveland and John W. Wydler, we have compiled information on the estimated costs incurred by the Government in administering the Environmental Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1531) and by applicants in applying for grants under the act. The estimates are based largely on unverified information obtained through interviews and responses to questionnaires. Based on such information, the estimated total cost incurred for fiscal year 1976 was about \$1.5 million, as shown below:

	<u>Fiscal year 1976 estimated costs</u>
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW)	\$ 322,803
Office of Management and Budget (OMB)	425
Congressional offices	<u>a/4,050</u>
Applicants for grants	<u>b/1,225,000</u>
Total	\$ 1,552,278 *****

The estimated cost of \$1.5 million is equivalent to about 50 percent of the \$3 million grant funds awarded for fiscal year 1976. Following are some background information on the environmental education program and descriptions of how we developed the estimated costs.

- a/ The amount shown is the midpoint of an estimated cost range of from \$1,600 to \$6,500.
- b/ The amount shown in the midpoint of an estimated cost range of from \$929,000 to \$1,521,000.

HRD-78-37
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BACKGROUND

The act was signed into law October 31, 1970, and created the Office of Environmental Education (OEE) within HEW's Office of Education (OE). The act's purpose is to support research, demonstration, and pilot projects designed to educate the public on the problems of environmental quality and ecological balance. Projects can encompass such activities as:

- developing new and improved curriculum materials;
- initiating and maintaining environmental education in elementary and secondary schools;
- disseminating curriculum materials and other information for use in education programs;
- supporting training programs for teachers, education personnel, public servants, private industry personnel, and Government employees;
- supporting community education programs and plans for outdoor study centers for ecology;
- preparing and distributing environmental and ecological material by mass media; and
- demonstrating, testing, and evaluating any of the above mentioned activities, whether or not such activities were supported under the act.

For fiscal years 1971 through 1976, almost all support under the program was in the form of grants. The amounts authorized to be appropriated, the amounts appropriated, and the numbers of grants awarded for those years were as follows:

<u>Fiscal year</u>	<u>Authorized</u> (in thousands)	<u>Appropriated</u>	<u>Number of grants</u>
1971	\$ 5,000	\$ 2,000	74
1972	15,000	3,514	162
1973	25,000	3,180	53
1974	25,000	2,000	106
1975	5,000	1,900	75
1976	<u>10,000</u>	<u>3,000</u>	<u>90</u>
Totals	\$85,000 *****	\$15,594 *****	560 ***

During the same period about \$6.6 million of the grant funds was used for 242 projects for developing or improving curriculum materials for use in public schools. These included projects to develop such things as text or resource books, instructional guides, films, and manuals.

Environmental education program regulations, criteria, and funding priorities have been incorporated in the Code of Federal Regulations. These regulations are reprinted each year for inclusion in grant application packets. Applicants send their applications to the Office of Education's Grant and Procurement Management Division which forwards them to OEE where they are screened for conformance with Federal regulations.

The applications are then evaluated by at least three non-government reviewers, commonly referred to as "outside readers" who are considered to be specialists in the environmental education field. Each outside reader ranks each application on a scale of one to five. Those with a combined score of nine or more are considered to be within the fundable range.

All fundable applications are reviewed by one OEE staff member or by two staff members if the initial reviewer disagrees with the outside reviewers' recommendations. Staff and outside reviewers' recommendations are then considered by the director of OEE. The director's recommendations and all required documentation are referred to the Deputy Commissioner for Elementary and Secondary Education for approval.

When approved, the recommendations are sent to the Grant and Procurement Management Division in the Office of Education for final processing. This includes reviewing documentation for completeness and compliance with appropriate requirements, negotiating with prospective grantees when necessary, seeing that funds are obligated, notifying successful applicants, and informing Members of Congress of awards to applicants in their districts.

The recipients of the 90 grants awarded for fiscal year 1976 were selected from among 1,154 applications, 300 of which were considered to be in the fundable range.

ESTIMATED COSTS TO HEW AND OMB

OEE has a staff of nine--a director, five other professionals, and three support staff members. Obligations for salaries and employees' benefits for fiscal year 1976 were \$264,185. Obligations for administrative costs were \$17,740. OEE obligated another \$38,078 to pay fees and expenses for about 30 outside specialists to come to Washington, D.C., for a 2-week period to review the 1,154 applications.

OE's Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education reviews OEE's budget. The Bureau's Deputy Commissioner and eight staff members get involved in varying degrees. They estimated that the total cost of the budget review for fiscal year 1976 was \$1,500.

OEE's budget is also reviewed to some degree by four staff members in OE's Planning and Budget Division, by one staff member in HEW's departmental budget office, and by three OMB staff members. Information provided by them indicated that these reviews cost about \$700, \$600, and \$425, respectively.

ESTIMATED COST TO CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES

About one-third of the applicants responding to our questionnaire had contacted a congressional office concerning their applications. OEE officials told us that for fiscal year 1976 they had received approximately 370 congressional endorsements on behalf of the applicants. OEE officials said that such endorsements are not considered by OEE or the outside readers when evaluating the applications. Most respondents expressed high satisfaction with the efforts of the congressional offices which they had contacted.

OEE files showed that 57 Members of Congress had submitted at least two endorsement letters to OEE on behalf of fiscal year 1976 grant applicants. We interviewed congressional staff members to try to obtain data on which to base an overall estimate of the cost of such endorsements and other assistance provided to constituents who applied for fiscal year 1976 grants. The majority of them could not provide estimates, but most stated that such costs were negligible. The information that was obtained indicated that such congressional costs would be from \$1,600 to \$6,500.

ESTIMATED COSTS TO GRANT APPLICANTS

To obtain information on fiscal year 1976 applicants' costs, we sent questionnaires to a random sample of 268 of the 1,064 unsuccessful applicants (over 82 percent responded) and to all 90 successful applicants (over 93 percent responded). The responses indicated that in total the 1,154 applicants spent from \$929,000 to \$1,521,000 in preparing fiscal year 1976 grant applications. This includes salaries of professional and support staff, consultant and other fees, supplies, and other expenses. According to the responses, applicants used an average of 9 professional staff days, 4 support days, and 2 consultant days to prepare applications.

About 33 percent of the unsuccessful applicants responding to our questionnaire said that OEE did not provide feedback to rejected grant applicants. In our questionnaire to OEE grant applicants, we asked whether they intended to submit future applications. More than 75 percent of the successful applicants said they would apply again. About 50 percent of the unsuccessful applicants said they would apply again, 19 percent said they would not, and 31 percent said they were uncertain.

According to OEE officials, OEE needs to increase their levels of (1) monitoring ongoing projects, (2) reviewing and disseminating project results, and (3) communications with applicants and others interested in environmental education. Increases in such activities could increase the cost of administering the program.

We hope you find the above information useful. We are sending similar letters to Congressmen James C. Cleveland and John W. Wydler.

Sincerely yours,


Gregory J. Ahart
Director