



TO: Columbia River Gorge Commission

FROM: Krystyna U. Wolniakowski, Executive Director
Connie Acker, Finance and Administration Manager

DATE: January 14, 2025

RE: ANNUAL “BEST PRACTICES SURVEY” OF THE COMMISSION FOR CY 2024

Background:

One of the Gorge Commission’s **Key Performance Measures (KPM)** is the “Percentage of Best Practices Met by the Board/Commission.” Oregon has a list of 15 Best Practices, and each year, Connie sends out a link to a survey for Commissioners to complete to evaluate how well the Commissioners and agency follow best practices for the **previous calendar year**. It is essentially the Commission’s “report card” of how well we follow state board and commission requirements.

In a separate email, Connie will provide the link to SurveyMonkey Best Practices Survey for the 2024 Calendar Year. **Please complete the survey at your earliest convenience.** The purpose of using SurveyMonkey is so that Commissioners can complete the survey, and their answers are anonymous/confidential. Some Commissioners prefer to fill out a scoresheet by hand, scan it, and email it directly to Connie. When Connie filed the CY2023 responses in our KPM notebook, I read through them to prepare our Annual Report on KPM outcomes to the state that the Gorge Commissioners and the agency are meeting our best practices obligations.

Best Practices Calendar Year 2023 Scores

Best Practices CY 2023 Data	Met	Not Met
	96%	4%

Best Practices Calendar Year 2023 Results

Best Practices Criteria	Yes	No
1. Executive Director's performance expectations are current.	12	1
2. Executive Director's receives annual performance feedback.	13	
3. The agency's mission and high-level goals are current and applicable.	13	
4. The board reviews the <i>Annual Performance Progress Report</i> .	12	1
5. The board is appropriately involved in review of agency's key communications.	12	1
6. The board is appropriately involved in policy-making activities.	13	
7. The agency's policy option packages are aligned with their mission and goals.	13	
8. The board reviews all proposed budgets.	13	
9. The board periodically reviews key financial information and audit findings.	13	
10. The board is appropriately accounting for resources.	12	1
11. The agency adheres to accounting rules and other relevant financial controls.	13	
12. Board members act in accordance with their roles as public representatives.	13	
13. The board coordinates with others where responsibilities and interests overlap.	12	1
14. The board members identify and attend appropriate training sessions.	11	2
15. The board reviews its management practices to ensure best practices are utilized.	12	1
Total Number	187	8
Percentage of Total	96%	4%

The fifteen best practices for Oregon are listed below with a narrative of their interpretation, specifically to assist Commissioners with definitions. I have included my perspective, but you may choose a different answer based on your experience:

1. Executive Director's performance expectations are current: *The Commission has developed a performance evaluation framework that clearly states expectations and deliverables for the ED, so this best practice should be a yes. The Commission began the ED Evaluation process in November 2023, completing it in January 2024.*
2. Executive Director receives annual performance feedback: *I will receive formal feedback in January or February 2025 for the CY 2024. However, I often receive feedback during Commission meetings during the year.*
3. Agency's goals are current and applicable: *It is clear what the Commission's workplan goals are: Finishing The Climate Change Action Plan, DEI Strategic Plan, and the Access Database Replacement Project Phase 1 and 2, and also receiving funding for Phase 2 in 2023-2025 shows that we are deliberate about implementing our goals. This best practice should be a yes for 2023.*
4. Commission reviews Annual Performance Progress report: *This is an annual report of Key Performance Measures submitted to the states. We track Key Performance Measures approved by the states of OR and WA and report on them through an Annual Performance Progress Report that is part of our Oregon and WA budget process. Each year we prepare "scores" on*

how well we achieved those KPMs and then must submit them. Best Practices is one of those KPMs as well as number of public presentations, etc. We completed this report as part of our budget submission documents, so this best practice should be a “yes” in CY 2024.

5. Commission is appropriately involved in agency’s key communications: *The Commission established a Communications Committee that produced several “key accomplishments” press releases and newspaper articles for publication so this can be a “yes” for CY 2024.*
6. Commission is involved in policy making: *The Commission was involved in policy making during Commission meetings, so this best practice should be a “yes” for CY 2024.*
7. Policy Option Packages are aligned with mission and goals: *I reviewed the proposed budget with the Commission, which included the policy option package for the Access Database Replacement Project – Phase 3. The Washington State Governor recommended funding Phase 3 of the project as well as funding the Public Records & Administrative Analyst position and continuing Climate and DEI Outreach and Implementation funding, so this best practice should be a “yes” in CY 2024.*
8. Commission reviews all budgets: *The Commission reviewed the final legislatively approved budget in summer 2023 that we submitted to OR and WA. The Commission was fully informed on agency budgets, so this best practice should be a “yes” for CY 2024.*
9. Commission reviews financial and audit findings: *The agency underwent a 5-year Accountability Audit in 2024, and the annual FY 2024 Financial Statement Audit. Both audits were clean with no findings. Commissioners were fully informed during the audits, so this should be a “yes” for CY 2024.*
10. Commission is appropriately accounting for resources: *Need to better define what this means—what does the Commission need from the ED on this topic? Connie and I balance the budget every month and review the allotments with both OR CFO and WA OFM offices each month to make sure we are on target with planned spending. This should be a “yes” for CY 2024 unless there are any improvements the Commission needs to be better informed of regarding our budget spending plan.*
11. Agency adheres to accounting rules and other relevant financial controls: *We have had clean Financial Statement Audits every year. Does the Commission feel the need to better understand how we implement internal financial controls? The most recent audit confirmed we are adhering to the best accounting principles, so this answer should be “yes” for CY 2024.*
12. Commissioners act in accordance with their role as public representatives: *This needs to be better defined, and Commissioners need to evaluate themselves for this best practice.*
13. The Commission coordinates with others where responsibilities and interests overlap: *This needs to be better defined, and Commissioners need to evaluate themselves for this best practice.*
14. The Commission members identify and attend appropriate training sessions: *The Commission requested training sessions, and one was held in 2024 on managing the appeals process, so this should be a yes.*

15. The Commission reviews its management practices to ensure best practices are utilized: *Each year, we review these best practices to be more intentional, so this should be a “yes.”*

For purposes of review, we can also group these into eight distinct categories of responsibilities:

1. Selecting, Reviewing, and Supporting the Commission’s Executive Director

- Best practices 1 & 2

2. Providing strategic guidance by setting vision, mission goals, strategic direction, and risk management

- Best practice 3

3. Governing the Commission by setting broad organizational policies

- Best practices 6 & 7

4. Monitoring and oversight of financial resources

- Best practices 8, 9, 10, 11

5. Monitoring Commission’s performance and management practices

- Best practices 4, 11 & 15

6. Acquiring resources to ensure the organization’s ability to operate

- Best practice 7

7. Self-assess, self-regulate, and uphold fiduciary responsibilities

- Best practices 12 & 14

8. Exercising accountability to key stakeholders

- Best practices 5 & 13

NEXT STEPS: Commissioners should review these 15 best practices. Connie will send a SurveyMonkey link to Commissioners covering Calendar Year 2024. Please complete the online survey or email a copy to Connie as an attachment. Answers using the online survey are anonymous, and those submitting attachments are kept confidential. These best practices survey results will be submitted to the Oregon and Washington state legislatures as part of the budget submission process.