



**Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG)
Joint Powers Authority Agenda**

STAFF REPORT

To: ESCOG Joint Powers Authority
From: Elaine Kabala, ESCOG Staff
Subject: Provide Direction to Submit Letter of Interest for Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation Proposition 3 Regional Biomass Accelerator Pilot
Meeting date: April 22, 2026
Prepared on: April 15, 2026
Attachments: A) Eastern Sierra Wildfire Alliance Memorandum of Understanding
B) 2025 Biomass Utilization Project Summary and Recommendations

Background

Proposition 4 (the 2024 Climate Bond) created a major new funding opportunity for regional forest-health and wildfire-resilience work, including \$185 million for the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program, with grant guidelines expected in April 2026. State legislation adopted alongside the bond allows agencies to begin deploying these funds this year, creating an important window for regions to define their priorities and request support.

Over the past year, ESCOG participated in the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation's biomass pilot program that brought together regional governments, nonprofits, and community partners to develop economically viable, locally appropriate pathways for biomass utilization across multiple pilot regions. In June, August, and October 2025, ESCOG brought partners together as part of this program to review regional biomass challenges, hear updates from local project developers and the Inyo National Forest, and identify clear next steps for coordinated biomass solutions. In October 2025, the ESCOG Board expressed clear interest in having ESCOG serve as the regional convener for biomass solutions, recognizing that this issue spans wildfire resilience, agriculture, economic development, community waste systems, and the work happening on U.S. Forest Service land. The work completed through the pilot created a foundation that the region now has an opportunity to move forward through directed funding. (see Attachment B - 2025 Biomass Utilization Project Summary and Recommendations).

Because of this context, ESCOG has been asked to prepare a brief letter of interest requesting Proposition 4 funding to continue and expand the regional biomass work that began in 2025.

Content to Include in Letter to LCI

The Board is asked to provide input on the letter that needs to clearly address these essential elements:

- Why the funding is needed now, based on current fuel-reduction projects and lack of local biomass solutions.
- ESCOG's role as regional convener, shaped by the 2025 pilot and Board direction.
- Key partnerships and agreements, including U.S. Forest Service collaboration.
- Specific local projects, businesses, and ongoing efforts that create or use woody material.
- Other funding streams that support this system, plus existing gaps where ESCOG seeks targeted pilots.
- Specific metrics and goals for biomass production, utilization, and outcomes.
- What types of targeted investments could most effectively improve local biomass use.

Direct staff to incorporate edits/comments and submit letter to LCI.

Fiscal Impacts

None

Recommendation

Review the draft letter and provide direction to staff to submit the letter to the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation.