

2011 Program Report Card: Campaign Disclosure and Audit (SEEC)

Quality of Life Result: Connecticut citizens, officers and members of political committees have increased confidence in the electoral process.

Contribution to the Result: Leading to improvement of public trust in government and increased confidence in electoral process by making campaign finance data available to the public in a timely manner as well as ensuring accurate disclosure of committees' financial activities.

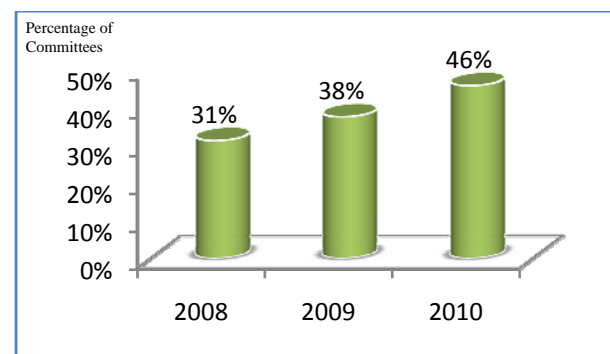
SFY 10 Total Program Expenditures: \$987,204 **State Funding:** \$987,204 **Federal Funding:** \$0 **Other Funding:** \$0
Estimated SFY 11 Total Program Expenditures: \$1,019,993 **State Funding:** \$1,019,993 **Federal Funding:** \$0 **Other Funding:** \$0

Partners: Officers of political and party committees, Candidates and officers of candidate committees that include Statewide Office, General Assembly, Judge of Probate, and municipal office.

Performance Measure 1

The percentage of campaigns making electronic filings.

Committees using eCRIS



Story behind the baseline:

The percentage of committees filing campaign finance disclosure statements electronically has increased over the last three years. Prior to 2008, approximately 10% of committees electronically filed using "CFIS", a system then under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the State. The SEEC created a new electronic campaign finance reporting system called eCRIS which was based upon feedback from focus groups of campaign treasurers and other users. The new system was launched in January 2008. By the end of the 2008 calendar year, 48% of all candidate committees filed using eCRIS.

The Campaign Disclosure and Audit Unit receives an average of 5,200 financial disclosure statements each calendar year.

Paper Filings: The Unit receives between 3,000 to 4,000 paper filings a year. Committee disclosure statements filed via paper are scanned into an online system and the scanned copy is publicly available within 24 hours. The data contained in the paper filings are data entered into a fully searchable database within 24 hours to 30 days of receipt at a cost of \$39 per filing.

Electronic Filings: Each disclosure statement filed electronically via eCRIS, the SEEC's electronic campaign reporting information system, is displayed in its entirety, at the moment the filing is received at no additional cost. The eCRIS filing system also displays warning flags of potential reporting problems as the user is entering their data which increases accuracy and proper disclosure. The use of eCRIS has consistently increased over the last 3 years.

eCRIS Document Search: The use of this user-friendly and fully searchable database on the SEEC website is vital not only to committees participating in each election cycle but also to academicians studying campaign finance data as a whole, and the public. The eCRIS search module contains the actual filings of each committee required to file with the SEEC as well as their registration statement. Users are also able to access specific receipts and disbursements data as well as search for data across committees. **On average, there are more than 400 visits per day to the eCRIS search module on the SEEC website.**

Proposed actions to turn the curve:

Although committees have the option of using eCRIS, electronic filing is mandatory only for committees who spend or receive in excess of \$250,000. The SEEC continues to encourage the use of eCRIS, and will continue to propose legislation to lower the threshold for mandatory electronic filing. This proposal will

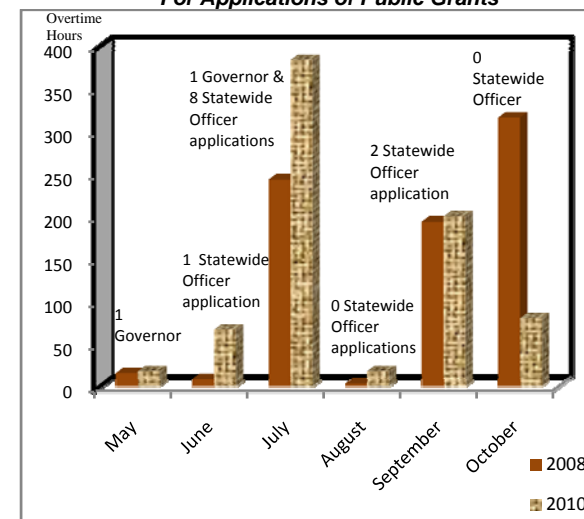
decrease the cost to the SEEC in data entry costs as well as increase timely and accurate disclosure.

From May 1 through October 31, 2010, the eCRIS search module received 85,000 visits. The SEEC will continue to collect data on the number of visits to the eCRIS document search module to measure usage by partners and the public. In addition, the SEEC will advertise availability of the search site via cooperation with the Connecticut State Library and in-state library consortiums.

Performance Measure 2

Meeting the 4-day statutory deadline for review of applications for grants from the Citizens' Election Fund.

**Overtime Hours of 2008 vs. 2010
For Applications of Public Grants**



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Story behind the baseline:

The number of overtime hours needed to meet the statutory deadline 100% of the time increases significantly when applications for Statewide Offices are received.

Commission staff is required to review and make a recommendation to the State Elections Enforcement Commission within 4 days of receipt of applications, which must arrive by a filing deadline every Thursday during a specified period. Commission staff has met that requirement 100% of the time for applications received in 2008 and 2010. In 2008 and 2010 SEEC audit staff reviewed each application submitted by a candidate to determine if these committees met the necessary thresholds to qualify to receive a grant from the Citizens' Election Fund. **The average General Assembly candidate application contains between 200 and 400 contributions requiring review.** In 2008, 250 General Assembly candidates submitted applications and in 2010, 253 candidates for General Assembly offices as well as Statewide Offices applied for a grant from the Citizens' Election Fund. In order to ensure that Program requirements are met and the public fund is protected, overtime is necessary for Commission staff.

Effect of grant applications for Statewide Officers:

The average Statewide Officer's application contains between 1,000 and 1,500 contributions for review. The addition of applications for candidates for Governor and Statewide Officers has led to an increased workload for Commission staff. The most apparent increase was in the month of July when total overtime in 2008 for Campaign Disclosure and Audit staff was 243.5 hours. However, the overtime in July, 2010 was 384.25 hours. The number of applications received in July from General Assembly candidates was virtually the same in both years; the only increase in workload was the receipt of 8 applications from Statewide Officer candidates and 1 application from a candidate for Governor. In months where applications received from General Assembly candidates in 2010 were approximately the same as those received in 2008, staff overtime actually decreased.

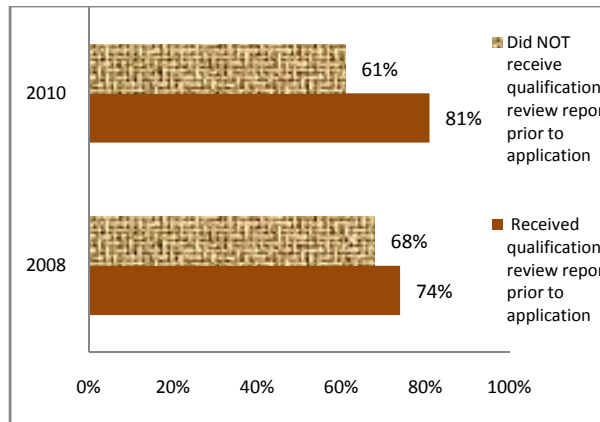
Proposed actions to turn the curve:

Because the amount of overtime increases significantly with the addition of Statewide Officer applications, an increase to the 4-day statutory deadline for review or variations in application schedules will assist in the reduction of overtime costs. The Commission has made and will make legislative recommendations that the time for review of applications by candidates for Statewide Offices be increased to 10 days, and to briefly extend the review period for General Election applications submitted during the Primary grant determination deadline week, to give priority to grant applications of candidates facing a primary.

Performance Measure 3

The percentage of applications where the issuance of a grant from the CEP occurs on the first submission.

Committees Approved for Citizens' Election Fund Grant with First Application



Story behind the baseline:

Committees who voluntarily provide qualifying contribution documentation for review a month or two prior to grant application are more likely to be

approved by the Commission on their first application submission.

Each exploratory and candidate committee may submit backup documentation of contributions raised together with their campaign disclosure filings for an initial review by Audit staff. Commission staff reviews qualifying contribution documentation and disclosure statements and will issue a Qualifying Contribution Review Report to committees detailing which contributions are considered "qualifying contributions" and which are not, along with instructions for making corrections or adjustments. Treasurers who received qualifying contribution review reports prior to applying for a grant from the Citizens' Election Fund were more likely to be recommended for payment with their first application in both 2008 and 2010. For example, 81% of those committees who were recommended for approval with their first application submission had received a previous review report from Audit staff. This early review process benefits committees who are better prepared to apply for a grant and conserves Commission and candidate resources when candidates are recommended for approval with their first application. In addition, early review allows Commission staff to address repeated documentation or reporting errors by way of training and consultations with committees in the current election cycle.

Proposed actions to turn the curve:

Through increased training and outreach to treasurers by SEEC staff, SEEC will continue to encourage committees to provide documentation for pre-application review.