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Review of the Maine Economic Improvement Fund

This topic was first brought to the attention of the Government Oversight Committee (GOC) in March 2013 as a formal review request submitted by a current GOC member.

The Legislature created the Maine Economic Investment Fund (MEIF) in 1997 (10 MRSA Chapter 107-C) to provide funding for applied research and development by the University of Maine System (UMS), its member institutions and employees and students. UMS administers the MEIF, which must be used in the following statutorily defined target areas:

- Biotechnology;
- aquaculture and marine technology;
- composite materials technology;
- environmental technology;
- advanced technologies for forestry and agriculture;
- information technology; and
- precision manufacturing technology.

The Fund's purpose is to act with private businesses, the federal government and public and private research institutions to invest in applied research and development in the target areas within UMS and support the development of private enterprise based on that research and development. The Legislature budgeted \$14.7 million for the MEIF in FY12/13.

At its December 12, 2013, meeting the GOC approved the following scope questions for this review:

1. What process is used to allocate MEIF to the target areas established in statute and to specific projects within those target areas?
2. What is MEIF being spent on and are the expenses consistent with statutory intent?
3. What metrics does UMS use to measure accomplishments attributable to MEIF? Are these results being accurately tracked and reported? Are there other metrics that might be used to measure success?

OPEGA expects to complete this review in the second quarter of 2014.