



SACOG Board of Directors

Item #17-8-12 Information

August 10, 2017

State and Federal Advocacy Strategy

Issue: State and Federal Advocacy Strategy

Recommendation: None, this item is for information only.

Discussion: In May, staff provided a brief update to the Government Relations and Public Affairs Committee regarding a planned contract for federal advocacy services. Since that time, staff has considered how to most effectively provide state and federal advocacy services. The CEO determined that hiring a federal lobbyist would be costly and would not address state-level needs. The CEO has determined that it would be more effective to hire a full-time Policy Manager. This position is currently being advertised and the desired start date is October 1. Staff encourages promoting this opportunity to potentially qualified applicants.

In deciding to hire an in-house resource, staff assessed the advocacy needs of SACOG at the state and federal levels, as well as existing staff capacity for meeting these needs. Staff also explored other models, including contract lobbyists at the state and federal level, and the use of shared contracts with other public agencies or SACOG's state association, CALCOG.

SACOG's advocacy needs at the state and federal level have grown over the last several years, and in particular, this year with the passage of SB 1. There is a significant growth in the amount of work required to participate in the development of guidelines and regulations to implement SB 1 and Cap and Trade grant programs. Over the past decade, there has been a de-emphasis, particularly at the federal level, of obtaining funding directly from legislative bodies. In addition, the amount of formula funding has remained relatively flat, and most growth in funding is through competitive programs. Not only has the amount of competitive funding grown, but the array of specific funding programs has grown. This requires a significant amount of staff time in terms of understanding the programs and developing competitive applications. There is also a necessity for active work to analyze and seek to modify the program design, as programs have been created and not necessarily resulted in the Sacramento region receiving a proportional share of funding.

SACOG employs the smallest staff compared to the other large regional agencies in California, and work has been spread amongst SACOG staff to work on different aspects of state and federal government affairs. Additionally, internal restructuring has placed new responsibilities on the management staff who have worked most on government affairs. By hiring a dedicated Policy Manager, the intent is to have one staff member primarily focused on managing all aspects of state and federal government affairs.

A full-time Policy Manager will help SACOG build in-house knowledge and capability, as well as provide unique value to SACOG's members. Regional planning is a unique environment, so it is difficult to retain contract lobbying services that are able to handle both state and federal work. The work and advocacy priorities also vary enough from cities, counties and even other regional planning agencies that shared lobbying services are not feasible.

Since SACOG's contract with Transportation for America expired in June, staff has transitioned to a membership with Transportation for America, which still provides access to policy information, but less one-on-one support, at a lower cost. SACOG's membership in CALCOG at the state level also provides access to policy information that has for the past several years helped augment staff work.

The Policy Manager position is already included in the adopted budget. Budget Amendment #1 (also on this meeting's agenda) shifts funds to this position that were set aside for the federal advocacy contract and from a vacant manager position.

Approved by:

James Corless
Chief Executive Officer

JC:EJ:rh

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