



Innovation Task Force

April 10, 2014

Regional Grant Coordination Member Services

Issue: Staff will present lessons learned and recommendations for next steps on Regional Grant Coordination, one of the original member/shared service concept proposals.

Discussion: In the past year, SACOG has served as the coordinator for cities and counties in grant-related activities. When SACOG started the member/shared services initiative, it asked the regional managers what services could be provided potentially on a regional or sub-regional basis. Grant coordination was identified as one such service. SACOG conducted outreach to planning directors and/or other high level management staff in each city and county to participate in a working group.

Conference calls with the working group have included 20 to 30 participants. SACOG staff identified a clear common need for a less costly grant tracking database subscription. In the summer of 2013, SACOG investigated different vendors providing grant tracking databases and found one vendor, EfficientGov, providing comparable features to the databases then in use, but which allowed unlimited user accounts within the region. The total cost of the EfficientGov database was \$2,000 annually, compared to the \$5,000 to \$25,000 being paid by many local governments.

SACOG subsequently purchased a subscription to EfficientGov. Under that subscription, approximately 200 individuals, from 20 jurisdictions and their non-profit partners, have received free access to the EfficientGov grant database. SACOG has spent \$2,000 for the database and approximately 100 staff hours. Working group experience with the grant tracking tool is largely satisfactory, however sub-regional concerns remain about how jurisdictions with limited staff can effectively use the tool. Many jurisdictions use existing department staff with technical expertise for grant development, but lack professional grant writing capabilities.

The working group has also identified other ideas for grant coordination, including a shared consultant contract for grant writing. However, the working group expressed concern about the equitable allocation of consultant time and challenges to intra-regional grant competition. After two discussions, the working group agreed not to pursue this further.

Lessons Learned:

- Joint purchasing is possible, and may yield member jurisdiction savings, for general or generic services such as the grant tracking database. Joint purchasing is likely to be more difficult for specialized, individual, or personal services such as professional grant writing.
- While SACOG is currently providing this as a member service at no cost, to meet some members' needs for professional granting writing services, a regional cost sharing agreement would be necessary.
- Concern continues to exist among some members that a shared service arrangement for professional grant writing could be inequitable to some members and that it could provide an advantage to a member in a competition for grant funding.

Over the course of the 2014 calendar year, SACOG staff will explore working group interest in member-to-member staff sharing and informal matchmaking by SACOG. Conceptually, members would offer staff for hire to other members with a need for technical support with highly specialized grant applications. SACOG staff would assist by connecting members that need services with members that have the capability and capacity. Staff will continue to meet/communicate with the working group periodically and will provide updates to the Task Force.

Approved by:

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