



## Shared Services & New Initiatives: Regional Grant Writer

**DESCRIPTION** This concept proposal would create a range of service options for local governments relating to grant preparation services. SACOG's observations are that services needed by local governments fall into the following categories:

- Grant tracking and opportunity assessment
- Technical Expertise/Strategic Positioning
- Grant development Grant partner collaboration and coordination

**ORIGIN OF THE IDEA** In a fall 2012 survey of SACOG members, 10 of 28 indicated high or very high interest in this as a possible shared service opportunity. These included jurisdictions of all sizes.

SACOG has found success in bringing together unlikely partners and regional support for grant and other competitive fund acquisitions on infrastructure and research projects. SACOG staff also observed needs for individual jurisdiction grant development support in the SACOG Regional Funding Programs as well as state and federal opportunities. Staff interest in reducing the chance of highly competitive need-to-opportunity matches in our region for which jurisdictions may lack sufficient staff resources to complete a competitive application. The region continues to be increasingly competitive in grant fund attraction, which presumes this is an opportunity area if local and regional capacity and talent could be expanded.

**CONCEPT** Competitive fund opportunities require sufficient resources to research opportunities, develop an effective application strategy, and produce successful applications. Within the six-county region, there are varying levels of staff capacity for competing for these fund opportunities.

This proposal includes two types of support:

*Individual local grant application support* – assist agencies with grant application development including writing, data, graphics, maps, etc., which may not require subject matter expertise.

*Partnership applications* –research grant opportunities, identify grant approach strategy, build partnerships for joint applications, and identify matching funds or in-kind services.

**GEOGRAPHY/SCALABILITY** Local governments with common needs that do not share geographic boundaries may partner for research, engagement, collaborative policy development, and catalyst activities. Partnerships may include multiple partners within a geography or of like need across multiple jurisdictions including potentially chambers of commerce,

small business advocacy groups, community based organizations, universities, etc. This service could be provided to an individual jurisdiction or consortium, sub-regionally or regionally.

### SERVICE DELIVERY OPTIONS

- Private contract provider. The grant tracking service could be provided by an outside company that tracks grant programs to all of the US for local governments. Some exist today and the region or individual governments within the region could subscribe.
- Sole public contract provider (SACOG or other entity) could fund a dedicated position.
- Shared cost position. Common to sole public contract and the shared cost position delivery options, is the likely provision of non-technical grant services potentially without subject matter or technical expertise. SACOG could help provide a list of known companies/contractors or a consortium could come together to hire or contract with a dedicated grant writer to be available at an hourly rate. Input from focus groups including grant writers and jurisdictional staff could help identify areas of local and regional interest to pursue in unique expertise for a selected position.
- Agency fee-for-service (one or more agencies provide services to others). The Technical Expertise/Strategic Positioning services needed are highly particular to the individual jurisdiction and potential grant subject. Here, jurisdictions seeking help in subject areas within SACOG's subject areas could request and/or hire SACOG staff time to develop the strategy and/or provide a specific related service in preparing the application. Or, jurisdiction may request references of potential resources for hire that SACOG is familiar with, or knows other jurisdictions have had success with in the past.
- Agency trade (one agency trades a service with another agency).

### POTENTIAL BENEFITS

- Grant tracking done by one firm creates an economy of scale.
- Very targeted specific technical subject experts help provide a strategy for an application approach.
- Access to a list of available consultants in technical and non-technical areas that have proven track records for local governments in the region.



- Improved coordination of grant requirements (support letters, matching funds, in-kind services).
- Leverage of individual and regional work to support competitiveness of individual applications.
- Expanded advocacy opportunities for unique innovation and advancements throughout the region.

- The jurisdiction would retain entire governance and control over the grant application process.

#### **POTENTIAL RISKS**

- Competing applications from individual agencies using the same resources.

#### **FINANCIAL**

*Potential savings* – Savings may result from lower costs through shared resources as well as from lower labor rates if cheaper options are available. Most significant is the opportunity for expanding fund development opportunities for innovative projects for which without grant writing expertise funds may not be realized for the local government or the region.

*Potential costs* – Dedicated position could range between \$45,000 to \$75,000 plus benefits package depending upon technical expertise and grant experience. Could be billed to participating jurisdictions either as fee-for-service on an hourly basis or as a shared cost position funded by consortium of local governments. Contract relationship with consultant could be slightly higher, possibly hourly, but without risk of compensation of full time equivalent if staff is not fully subscribed with work requests from jurisdictions. Minimal costs for coordination/facilitation. Enhanced efficiency from dedicated position building knowledge for individual jurisdictions and the region to enhance competitiveness.

**INTERESTED PARTIES** Jurisdictional executives, staff and elected officials; consultants; non-profit and public agency partners.

#### **ISSUES TO RESOLVE**

- Guiding principles for coordination of application matching opportunity to jurisdiction interest and competitive interests within the region.
- Jurisdictions would need to willingly provide confidential reviews on technical and non-technical consultants.
- Jurisdictions would have to manage non-jurisdiction consultants in preparing grant applications.