



Shared Services & New Initiatives: Regional Advocacy

DESCRIPTION This concept proposal would inventory local governments and JPAs about their current state and federal advocacy services, and could create a shared state and/or federal advocacy arrangement for public agencies. Services may include:

- Lobbying
- Legislative and regulatory analysis
- Creating educational materials
- Regional 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 inventorying current approaches to state and federal advocacy among local governments and JPAs, and to then determine if there are opportunities to consolidate or better coordinate this function regionally or sub-regionally. Those expressing this level of interest generally were small or medium-sized organizations.

SACOG has helped manage regional advocacy coalitions, and also has experience participating in statewide and national coalitions with varying degrees of effectiveness. We have learned over the past few years that several member jurisdictions have had to let go of or dramatically reduce the scope of their advocacy contracts and are relying solely on internal staff for host of advocacy functions. There may be natural partnership opportunities on issues relevant to economic development, infrastructure and natural resources to support coalition effort on issues of regional and local significance.

CONCEPT This proposal includes three options:

Inventory of advocacy services – SACOG would survey local governments and JPAs within the region about whether they rely on consultants, staff, or both to provide state and federal advocacy services. SACOG would facilitate an exploration of alternative service delivery for those jurisdictions interested in such a service.

Shared advocacy support – without structural change to current advocacy activities, public agencies could come together for more coordinated effort to share legislative, budget and authorization information from existing advocacy contracts or internal staff efforts. Minimal coordination involved in provided venue for discussion at SACOG or rotating member jurisdictions and partner agencies.

Agency advocacy support – based on interest from the inventory, individual agencies may need advocacy support. This service could provide those services directly to an

agency; the agency would be able to purchase the services they desire on an hourly or flat-fee basis.

Subregional or Regional advocacy – multiple agencies may wish to work together to advocate on issues of common interest. Agencies would need to agree on areas of mutual benefit (e.g., CDBG funding), or areas of sub-regional or regional interest (e.g., Delta issues).

GEOGRAPHY/SCALABILITY No need for proximity between participating agencies; can scale to serve all participants.

SERVICE DELIVERY OPTIONS

SACOG would inventory advocacy services. Advocacy support (individual or group) may be managed by SACOG or another agency, with advocacy services provided by a contract firm. The interested agencies may award a new contract collectively, may join onto existing contracts with individual agencies, or may initially expand coordinating function beyond annual state and federal advocacy programs.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

- Greater access to advocacy services for small and medium-sized jurisdictions
- Unified message
- Dedicated, skilled professional services
- Improved regional sharing of assets and needs

POTENTIAL RISKS

- Conflicting goals and objectives among agencies
- Competition between agencies when advocating for funding
- Less individualized service through a common provider

FINANCIAL

Potential savings – Savings may result from lower costs through shared resources as well as from lower labor rates if cheaper options are available. Savings could range from nominal to tens of thousands of dollars. Potential benefit to purchase labor by the hour rather than by FTE.

Potential costs – Minimal costs for coordination/facilitation (less than \$5,000). Significant cost increases if new services are desired that are currently not funded.

INTERESTED PARTIES Jurisdictional executives, staff and elected officials; consultants; and public agency partners.

ISSUES TO RESOLVE

- Jurisdictional interest (generally)
- Areas of common interest



- Service delivery options
- Cost-sharing structure
- Process for avoiding/resolving conflicts

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