

**NADO WASHINGTON POLICY CONFERENCE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PEER LEARNING LAB  
TALKING POINTS BY STEVE W. ETCHER  
MARCH 2012**

**STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES**

1. Adopted Minimum Standards for RPCs and Executive Directors (Self imposed requirement to receive State appropriation)
2. Adopted Financial Management General Practices and Minimum Standards (Self imposed requirement to receive State appropriation)
3. Conduct yearly professional development training (Self imposed requirement to receive State appropriation)
4. Developed template and outline for Regional Transportation Plan
5. RPCs are responsible for allocating transportation planning dollars among the RPOs. Developed a matrix based on performance standards.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR QUALIFICATIONS**

1. High octane, high energy, self starter
2. Great communication skills—one on one and in group settings
3. Personal integrity and trustworthiness
4. Creative entrepreneur—thinks outside the box, YET is a calculated risk taker. Entrepreneurial spirit to benefit region and constituents—not self
5. Ability to see and understand micro and macro perspective of issues—and manage and direct resources accordingly
6. Consensus builder and motivator—It is one thing to get people to agree, it is another to get them to act in concert
7. Open minded—considers and values others opinions, willing to accept constructive criticism, willing to transfer ownership, credit, praise to collective effort versus self
8. Results oriented—delivers, does what says will be done, follows through on large and small issues, and sees things through to completion

**STATE ASSOCIATION**

1. Hired a part time planner to coordinate statewide activities and to build relationships with State agencies
2. Allocate 3% of statewide contracts to help fund the position. Initially instituted a dues increase to help fund the position at startup
3. Hold monthly meetings in Jefferson City (State Capitol)
  - a. State Agency staff regularly attends meetings
    - i. Economic Development
    - ii. Department of Transportation

- iii. Office of Administration
- iv. Department of Natural Resources
- v. State Emergency Management Agency
- 4. Hold an “Annual Retreat” for RPC Directors and key management staff
  - a. Invite State agencies for relationship building
  - b. Develop annual work program for State Association and Planner
  - c. Incorporate professional development
- 5. Hold Quarterly Meetings for designated staff
  - a. Fiscal offices
  - b. Transportation Planners
  - c. Planners/Hazard Mitigation/Land Use

## **STATEWIDE CONTRACTS**

1. Human Service Public Transit Plans
2. All Hazard Mitigation Plans (developed on a county level, statewide)
3. Electric Cooperatives hazard mitigation plans
4. 604b EPA water quality planning
5. CDBG small cities funded land use planning
6. Broadband planning
7. Homeland Security Regionalization planning and implementation activities

### **Keys to building statewide contracts through our state association**

1. Relationships—they know us, are engaged with us, and can manage program and projects through a single point of contact
2. Relevance—they know our impact—both statewide and within the respective regions.
3. Reliability—agencies know we can deliver what we promise—proven through experience, peer accountability, recognized effort to create uniform work product

## **CHALLENGES WE HAVE TACKLED IN MISSOURI**

1. Re-establishing 2 inactive regions to achieve statewide coverage
2. Assisting with Executive Director recruitment, including providing MACOG staff to serve in interim
3. Enhancing underperforming RPCs
4. SWOT analysis as requested by individual regions
5. Loan pool to help struggling RPCs manage cash flow challenges
6. Fraud and misuse has been an issue in the State-work with local boards to address problems Best done on a board member to board member level
7. Addressed issues of non-compete agreements with RPCs soliciting work outside their region

## **KEYS TO STATEWIDE ASSOCIATION SUCCESS**

1. Relationships—constantly building new and reaffirming existing
2. Responsibility—do what we say, when we say, with a high quality product

3. RPCs don't all have to agree all the time, but we must rise above indifferences to work together
4. Work toward common goal of the State, not individual organizations or directors
5. "Bad apples" may exist—work to prevent that from spoiling the entire "bushel".  
Aggressively work to manage public perception
6. Revolving leadership-Short terms for officers in the State Association helps develop leadership skills within all organizations, helps build a stronger network, and keeps association viewed as statewide versus an extension of an RPC or Director
7. Constant education with agency leadership and legislators—reality is term limits, turnover, and elections
8. GO to agencies and legislators—Don't wait for them to come to you
9. Become an extension or delivery agent for State agencies—especially during an era of tight budgets and limited resources
10. Impactful State Associations are multi-faceted; They:
  - a. Do more than just lobby
  - b. Do more than maintain a "death grip" on existing programs and geography
  - c. Do more than just network among their peers
  - d. Seek out new partnerships
  - e. Seek out new and innovative ideas, programs and projects
  - f. Practice what they preach regarding collaboration and partnering

## **KEYS TO BOARD MANAGEMENT**

1. Board engagement is essential. Get members engaged and keep them engaged by:
  - a. Seeking their opinion
  - b. Allowing them to take ownership in ideas
  - c. Providing value to them through information, and project results
2. Board education is critical and constant
  - a. Filter and interpret data to provide meaningful information
  - b. Immediate education and inclusion of newly elected officials and appointed board members
  - c. Education is a continuous cycle
3. Have regularly scheduled meetings that encourage participation
4. Have a structured meeting format to make the most use of their time and provide value to the members
5. Utilize committees as appropriate to streamline the policy debate, make recommendations, and broaden board member engagement
6. Create Ownership by the Board—as appropriate with your enabling legislation. Constantly reinforce their ownership versus ownership by the Executive Director
  - a. I have seen local boards not "assume" ownership due to a high performing organization or Executive Director
  - b. I have seen local board not "assume" ownership because they wanted to distance themselves from a "sketchy" organization or Executive Director