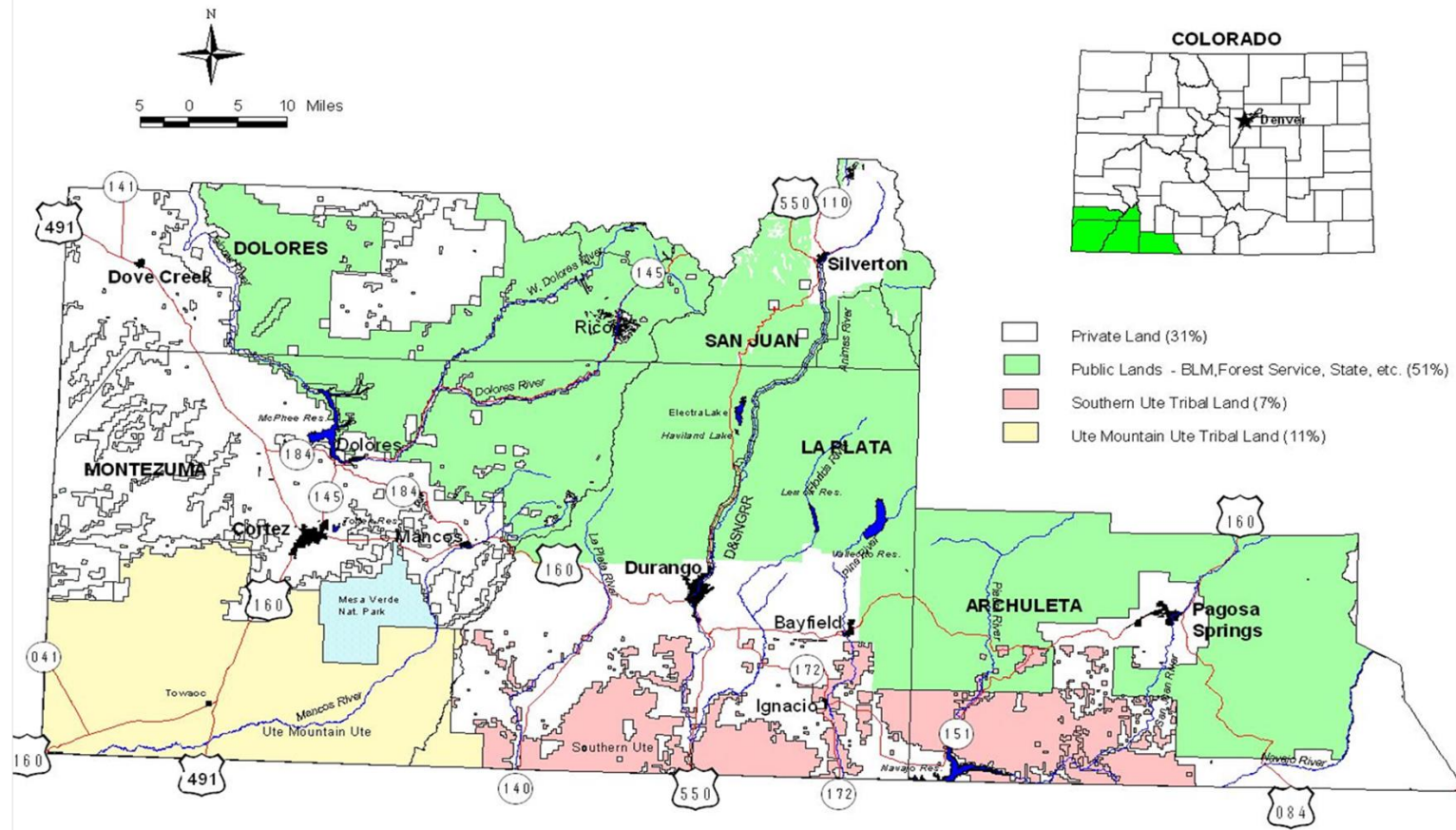


Running an Effective RDO: Strategies for New (and soon to be) Executive Directors

**NADO's 2018 Annual Training Conference
October 13 – 16 | Charlotte, NC**





Region 9 Economic Development of SW Colorado

History

- Organization

- Almost 30 years old
- Regional
- Rural
- One director

- Path to Directorship

- 14th year with org
- No ED Experience but ED experience
- Promotion
- Closely mentored for transition (10) – don't recommend that much notice
- Negatives were not leaving on top

• Strengths

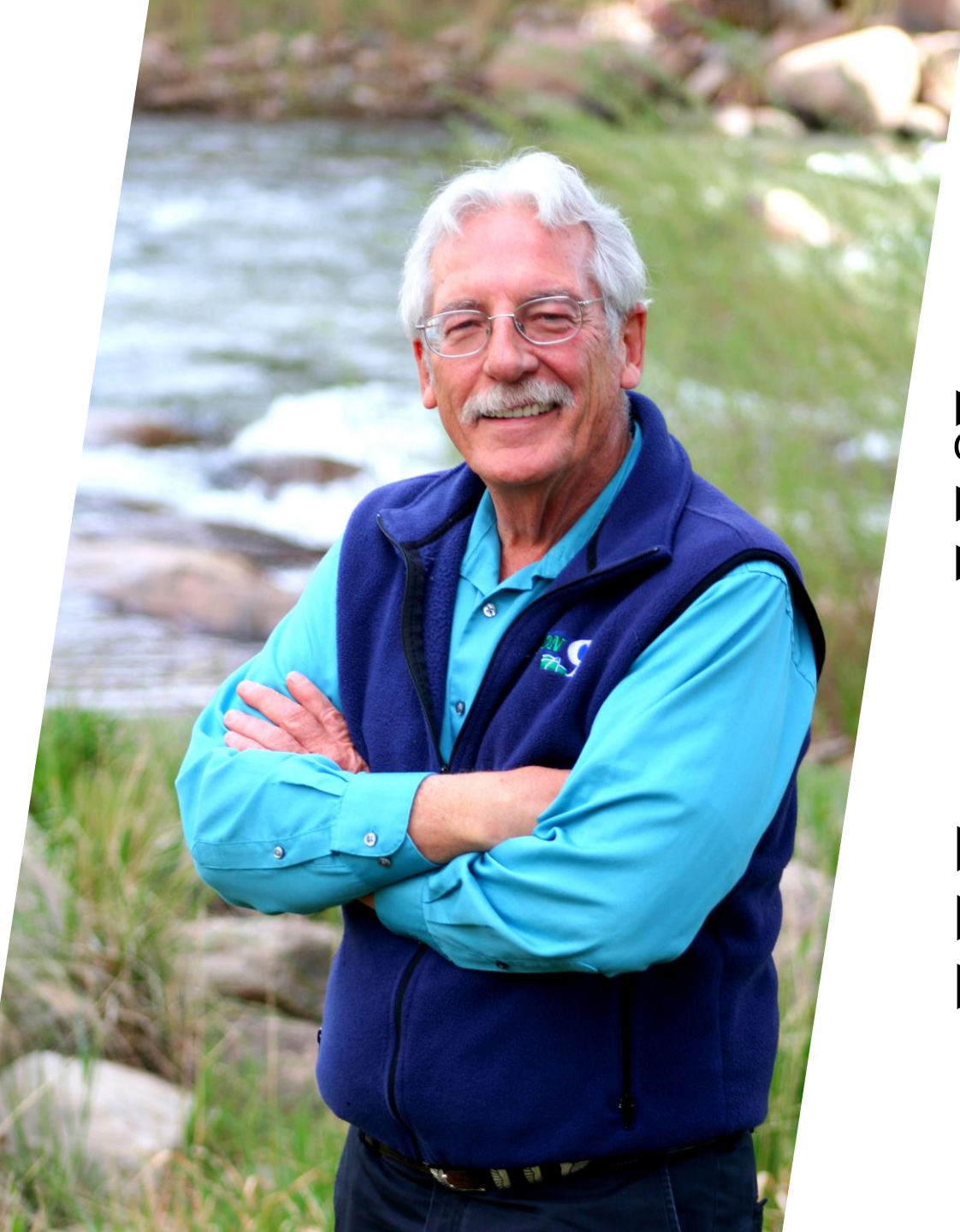
- Board and ED supported
- Came in well trained
- Knowledge of s/w of organization
- Associated with organization
- Strong organization
- Transition plan

• Challenges

- Big shoes to fill– original director
- Staff transition
- Ability to Innovate and change slow
- Lack of competitive hiring process

Past Two Years

- Celebrate 30 years as organization with first special event
- Bought a building
- Hired strong staff – helped dynamic
- Satellite offices in our 2 largest communities in banks
- “Overcommunicate” externally and internally
- Strategic Plan
- Goal to increase unrestricted funds and grow



Thank you Ed!

- ▶ “If I knew everything I’d be County Commissioner”
 - ▶ “I am just the pretty face”
 - ▶ “That’s why I make the moderately big bucks”
-
- ▶ Share the spotlight
 - ▶ Training
 - ▶ Partners

Making the Transition

**Russ Cowley, Executive Director
Six County Association of Governments**

Making it a Smooth Transition

- **Allow sufficient time to transition**
- **Communication between old/new**
- **Involve Board earlier than later**

Building a Strong and Viable Organization

➤ **Public Relations is key**

➤ **Your Board/Elected Officials are Boss**

➤ **It's the Boards Idea – Not Yours!**

➤ **Let your staff do their job – Not You!**

Particular Challenges

- **Boards decisions are based on facts you provide**
- **Learning to Organize Neglect**
- **Taking the heat when its not your fault**
- **Keeping the Board apprised of all issues**
- **Being the boss and maintaining staff support**
- **You are the face of your organization**

The Transition from Old to New



New Executive Director RDO Strategies

Robert C. Hiatt

Executive Director

Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments



Maximizing Time

Hello
my name is

NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

- **Maximize the first 12 months of your employment with your new organization!**
- **There are great opportunities for feedback that might not come again!**

Transition Period– External Hire



Develop a Transition Plan

Key Elements

- Policies and Procedures
- Organizational Chart
- Budget & Recent Audit
- Regional Plans
 - CEDS
 - Area Aging Plan
 - Transportation
 - Workforce
- Past 6 Months of Meeting Minutes
- Debriefing with outgoing Executive Director (if possible)

Hit the Ground Running– External Hire

Planning Assumptions

Key Elements

- The way you did it somewhere else was ...somewhere else!
- Plan to spend 65%+ of your time on the road
- Meet your board members in their communities
- Meet key business and community leaders on their turf
- Get a good debriefing from your department directors
- Create your operational plan, and get your management onboard
- Make steady but stable changes to guide the operations into the future
- Create or update your agency's strategic plan for long term change

You are not the cheetah. You are trying to outrun it!

You Got Promoted – Internal Hire



Planning Assumptions

Key Elements

- Quickly and fairly establish your leadership role
- Repeat steps in slides #2 - #4!

Questions?

Replacing a Long Term Executive Director

Sasha Grist

Western Arkansas Planning and Development District

Moving Up

- **Promoted from within.....**
 - **Challenges of being promoted within**
 - Knowing co-workers on a friend level and then that relationship changing to a leadership level
 - Natural resistance to change from employees, board members, Local, State and Federal Officials
 - **Benefits of being promoted from within**
 - Knowing employees already and what each are capable of and utilizing those skills to match your style of leadership
 - Having knowledge of the past and the opportunity to mold it into your expectations for the future

Challenges of Change after 30 years

- **That's the Way it's Always Been!**
 - Same provider of benefits for employees, IT Services, contracts
 - Board meetings were the same every meeting
 - Staff development was very minimal
 - No branding or marketing of the District

- **Change is good, but be patient and take your time!**
 - Not making any changes too quickly
 - Gain trust from staff and board members
 - It's not always what we first see

Be Receptive, Be Patient, Make it Great

- **Reach out to other Executive Directors in your state**
- **Trusted board members are so important**
- **Key leaders in your district**
- **Past Director if possible**
- **Smile, Have Fun, Make it Yours**



Western Arkansas Planning
& Development District Inc.

6/30/12

Sasha -

Good Luck!

If there is ever anything I
can do for you please call.

Just follow your thoughts, tempered
a bit by what your heart says, and
everything will be fine. You're a
"Winner"

JCL