

Agenda Item Number 10.e

Communication Improvements

Presenter: George Kloeppel

Action Recommended: None. Information and Discussion

The Executive Committee has discussed the “Communications” recommendations that emerged from the Climate of Prosperity process at two meetings. For LCOG’s purposes, the subcommittee that addressed this issue had considered relevant “communication” as having the following attributes:

- *All communications among and between:*
 - Citizens and Government*
 - Business and Government*
 - Government and Government*
- *Communications Technologies.*
- *Coordination, for example on grant applications.*
- *Relationship management.*
- *Mediation – neutral-party services.*
- *Training and education.*
- *Branding, i.e. “when I have a need for information, I immediately think to call LCOG.”*
- *Intergenerational communications strategies, especially new technologies.*

As the subcommittee considered the agency’s performance and outcomes within this context, a number of issues—shortcomings—emerged:

- *Member Agencies don’t know what services LCOG provides. What are LCOG’s specialties?*
- *Agencies/Citizens don’t have a single place to go for contacts/services.*
- *Could use one location to find out what other jurisdictions are doing – something like the AOC newsletter to keep everyone informed.*

- *Public should have one location to find meeting dates and times, as well as agendas and meeting materials. Also a single location for government news and updates. Would like to have a 3-1-1 telephone system region wide. One location for information and referral.*
- *As an elected official/government employee how do I find the expert and specialized information in a topic area? Knowledgebase.*
- *LCOG has done a poor job of marketing itself.*
- *Could use a course in “Respectful Communications 101.”*

As some of these issues centered around LCOG member jurisdictions and the organization’s various forms of communication with its membership, a special set of remedial actions, aimed at improving the channels of communication with member governments, might be suggested. Other issues, or identified problems, involved the public image of the agency—LCOG’s community visibility or lack thereof—and in that realm another set of potential responses might be considered. A suggestion that emerged from the subcommittee’s work and became the subject of considerable discussion at the Executive Committee was the hiring of a public information officer, or manager of communication services. A model job description, which Greg James provided for the Committee’s review at its June meeting, suggested a senior level administrative position, working directly for the Executive Director, and having broad agency-wide responsibilities. While it was understood that the creation and filling of such a position would be a management prerogative, the identification of possible tasks (hence, the identification of needs to be addressed) was clearly appropriate work for the Committee.

An assessment of shortcomings and desirable outcomes led the Executive Committee to the consideration of possible action step:

- *Hire an Information Officer at LCOG. This position needs to:*
 - o *Have Vision.*
 - o *Move Communications Projects Forward (so it needs to be a dedicated position, not simply another work assignment.)*
 - o *Understand and Make Technology Decisions.*
 - o *Coordinate Relationships and partnerships Among Agencies in support of*

- joint planning efforts*
- o Help to Brand LCOG – Want Someone’s First Thought to Be “LCOG” When You Want Information.*
 - o Work Freely Across Organizational Boundaries Within, and Without LCOG.*
 - o Arrange for Trainings and Demonstrations.*
 - o Have Free Access to / Report to the LCOG Board.*
 - o Gathering and translating complex information*

The Executive Committee is committed to giving the Board of Directors a clean, focused recommendation in this area, and it was the Committee’s conclusion that more work was needed. The members agreed to meet on August 12 (previously scheduled as a bye month) in order to craft a recommendation for the September Board meeting. George Kloeppe was asked to work with the agency’s management team in preparing a report and background material in advance of the August Committee meeting. That work was to include specific recommendations, or multiple recommendations, that would align identified shortcomings or needs with strategies that could be employed to bring about desired outcomes.

Board members’ insights on the communication problems to be addressed and the outcomes desired would be of great help to both the Executive Committee and management staff.