

April 14, 2005

To: LCOG Executive Committee

From: George Kloeppe, Executive Director

Subject: Biennial Performance Review of the Executive Director—Self-Evaluation

At its March 17 meeting, the Executive Committee requested that I prepare a self-evaluation, reflecting on the goals that were affirmed by the Board in September 2003 and offering an assessment of my performance (and that of the agency) during the past twenty four months. This memo is offered in response to that request.

The Performance Review Process in 2003

Because the current Performance Review will rely in part upon the work that was done by the Executive Committee and Board two years ago, let me offer a few words of perspective about that process. The Review in 2003 did not elicit the level of comment that the then Chair of the Board had wanted. As requested, I had provided a self-evaluation to the Executive Committee in April, 2003, and input was sought from Board members on an objective instrument with 16 performance characteristics. An opportunity was also provided for Board members to add subjective comments. In addition, the Chair privately interviewed the division directors. In May, the Board accepted the Chair's report, summarizing the data; but goals for the coming biennium were not included at that time. In September, I submitted a memo to the Executive Committee in which I proposed seven goals—partially from the data from the Review and partially from my own priorities. The Executive Committee and Board approved those goals at their September meetings.

The Goals Established in 2003

1. Work to provide more intensive, hands-on leadership, support and direction to staff, particularly in the form of mentoring and coaching; increase communication efforts with

staff members, focusing on my visibility, availability, accessibility and the provision of timely information;

2. Provide increased outreach to, and visitation of, member agencies, focusing on vision, strategic direction and outcomes;
3. Apply greater personal initiative, innovation, creativity and advocacy on policy issues;
4. Work to stabilize and enhance the productivity of the line divisions in a period of reduced budget and staffing, focusing on relationships, procedures, management expectation and strategic direction;
5. Work with the Executive Committee and the Board to streamline and make more relevant the format and flow of Board meetings, assuring an appropriate balance between decision-making, information dissemination and intergovernmental sharing; revisit the pattern of oral staff reports *vis a vis* written background reports to the Board;
6. Aggressively work to manage a down-sized organization to maximize the benefits to the membership, customers and citizens; and to work to build the financial resource base through advocacy, grantsmanship and service contracts;
7. Provide one-on-one or small group orientations for new Board members including appropriate written background materials that will help smooth the transition and enhance the comfort of new members and the effectiveness of the policy body.

Assessment of the Experience of the Past Two Years

A review of my performance as your Executive Director cannot be divorced from the experience of the agency as a whole during the review period. In many ways, the biennial assessment of my work can be applied to the LCOG organization, and used to make strategic changes or tactical modifications. The following self-assessment of the experience of the past two years against each of the established goals is intended to reflect both personal performance and agency performance.

1. Leadership, support and direction to staff

I have been mindful of this goal and have worked to address it during this review period—and during the course of my career as an administrator. Obviously, this is a subjective area and, ultimately, the assessment of others will be more valuable and pertinent than my own self-assessment. However, an honest effort has been made to lead, support, and guide the agency staff through timely communication and accessibility. I would say that the “tone” and disposition of the organization are healthier than was the case two years ago. The budget circumstances have

improved somewhat, staff positions are being re-established and well-received organizational changes have been put in place to improve the flow of work. By no means can the Executive Director be credited with all of the positive changes. But the Board's expressed desire for more "leadership" and "support" to the staff has been a part of my agenda for the past year.

2. Outreach to member agencies

I have been "on the road" to a somewhat greater extent than in some years past. I have visited with the policy bodies of a number of member jurisdictions—and yet, to others, I am probably a stranger. However, contacts are made in a number of ways. Related to this goal, I would report that I continue to work with the chief administrative officers of our membership toward the end of enhancing LCOG's position. As turnover has occurred in the ranks of chief administrative officers in the region, a genuine effort has been applied to bring new managers into the fold and to provide direct, one-on-one outreach as they have taken on their new responsibilities. I facilitate the bimonthly meetings of the city/county managers/administrators and also the every-other-week meetings of the metro area managers (the "SEL" group). In a less personal fashion, we have sought to better utilize printed material (the *Regional Focus*, brochures, annual reports etc.), events (such as the Appreciation Dinners and elected officials' training sessions) and the technology of email and Web-based communication to enhance our outreach to and support of our membership. We will, for example, host an agency open house for members and stakeholders next month. While not always the Executive Director, LCOG staff members are meeting and interacting with member jurisdictions continually—literally every day of every week. LCOG remains a *member* organization, and the need to tend to the membership is not lost on the Executive Director.

3. Personal initiative, innovation, creativity, and advocacy on policy

I have worked to emphasize "innovation" and "creativity" as key ingredients for the council of governments. But my input to the policy processes with which LCOG is involved is often made below the Board of Directors level. Nevertheless, I have been mindful of this expressed goal and have attempted over the past two years to ratchet up my efforts in this arena. I continue to view this general function as an important task for my position; but it is also a function that requires sensitivity and diplomacy. With the MPC, for example, I am "at the table" and afforded "voice" in the discussions; however, my most constructive input to that process is applied in one-on-one conversations with MPC members or at the SEL

or staff levels. With the change in policy structure of the LCOG organization (see item 5, below), I have been somewhat more assertive with the Executive Committee, as the primary decision-making body for the agency. While not an observation particularly tied to the past 24 months, I would say that *innovation* and *creativity*, along with *flexibility* and *competence*, are critical to the health and success of an organization such as LCOG. Simply doing the same things in the way they have been done in the past is not an acceptable strategy for an organization that must be responsive to changing trends and “light on its feet.”

4. Enhance the productivity, focusing on relationships, procedures, management expectation, and strategic direction;

For several years the agency was laboring through a contraction of budget and staffing. I believe that decline has leveled and may now be moving in a positive direction. By that I do not mean simply increased budgets and staff size. During the steepest cut-backs, morale and productivity were significant issues. In the S&DS division, for example, staff reductions were not matched by reductions in case loads and frustration and anxiety were high. While that circumstance has not altogether passed and the 2005 Legislature has not completed its work, conditions are better. We have attempted to work with the staff to find better ways of doing business. That tactic has also been applied in the planning and technology services areas of the agency. A substantial reorganization has been put in place. The new model improves span of control ratios, but more importantly, it de-emphasizes the traditional hierarchical model and focuses on work teams. We are now much better positioned to “grow” the future leaders of the organization. By looking carefully at how our most important work gets accomplished, we were able to change gears to support and enhance that productivity. The management team and I are constantly assessing the strategic implications of opportunities—keeping the standard of service to our membership as the highest priority.

5. Streamline and make more relevant the format and flow of Board meetings

Perhaps the most substantial change envisioned in the 2003 Performance Review was in the area of Board and Executive Committee roles, procedures and processes. The Bylaws were changed and functions have been redefined with the Committee attending to day-to-day business and the Board of Directors—now meeting just six times per year—giving its attention to the exposition of regional issues and the establishment of broad policy. I have worked with the agency’s policy leadership to smoothly implement the vision that emerged from a Board Goal-Setting Session at the beginning of this review period.

6. Manage a down-sized organization to maximize the benefits; build the financial resource base through advocacy, grantsmanship and service contracts;

“Cut-back management” has been very much a part of LCOG’s experience for the past several years. While some rebuilding has taken place, the FY 2004-05 (current year) *Revised Budget* will still be some \$474,000 smaller than the FY 2002-03 *Revised Budget* that was in place when my last Performance Review was conducted; and for the same period, our staff has been reduced by approximately 20 FTE. Nevertheless, we have consistently emphasized the importance of maximizing customer service and positive “outcomes,” as difficult management decisions have been made. While we have given energy to the income side of the organization through “advocacy, grantsmanship and service contracts,” it is important to note that we have not simply “chased dollars,” but have focused on the consistent delivery of relevant high quality services. And we have been attentive to the expenditure side of our fiscal responsibilities—reducing and containing costs through purchasing and personnel decisions and by engaging staff and their union representatives in the bargaining process. I believe that, if a new CEO was appointed tomorrow, he or she would find the LCOG organization in a sound position to accomplish its mission and serve its members. The agency is well positioned to rise to new heights in the year ahead. Our staff is LCOG’s greatest asset, and we have been careful in the way that “right sizing” has been managed. We have some very good and talented people coming up through the ranks; and yet, we are also challenged by LCOG’s employee demographics. As with many other organizations, a significant number of our most experienced staff members are reaching retirement age. We are managing the risks associated with this “brain drain” phenomenon by succession planning. But the anticipated loss of talent through retirement demands careful planning.

7. Provide orientations for new Board members

We have developed a new orientation packet for the Board of Directors and are providing that information to new Board members. Copies of that packet are brought to every Board meeting, because staff often does not know when a new representative will attend. In addition to two Board “orientation sessions” during this period, LCOG’s biennial public officials’ training session, sponsored in conjunction with our Legal Counsel and held this year on February 10, provided a good opportunity to tell LCOG’s story. The six-meeting-per-year schedule for the Board may both positively and negatively impact this goal. With the Board

adopting more of a *discussion and exploration* role, there will be increased opportunity for new members to participate. At the same time, given the pattern of rapid change of delegates, it is likely that first-time-attendees will be a continuing part of every meeting.

General Self-Assessment

Looking back on what I gave to the Executive Committee as a self-evaluation two years ago, I note that considerable time and ink were spent on a musing about the “nature of the job.” I will refrain from subjecting the gentle reader to a lengthy exposition of that kind here. But I would note that I still see three fairly distinct aspects to this position. I flag them again because I believe that any sort of assessment or review of performance should logically consider those distinct facets of the job. Under the topology of two years ago, I asserted that the Executive (1) must “manage the operation;” (2) must “set the tone” and the expectations for the agency’s operation; and (3) must accept primary responsibility for “communication” with and between the community, the membership and the staff. There clearly are other ways of dissecting the job of Executive Director. But for this assessment, let me touch on each of the aspects mentioned.

Regarding general management, I give myself a fairly good, but not stellar, grade. I understand and constructively contribute to the administrative side of the agency. Financial management, human resources management, I.S. management, legal familiarity, facilities and logistics oversight, strategic planning, communication... are all functions with which I am familiar—but not expert. In my view, the keys to managing an operation of LCOG’s size and complexity are open communication and a good management team. As I have said before, you and I are fortunate to have skilled and dedicated professionals working in key positions of the management team. The place is “well run,” and I am proud of that. But I cannot take all of the credit for good procedures, balanced books, clean audits, and state-of-the-art technology.

“Tone setting” requires me to remain engaged in the broad range of agency activities; but of course, such engagement cannot be equally deep in all cases. I pick and choose the areas of activity which seem to require my presence and participation. I have been more involved with the management team of the S&DS division over the last year or so, and I have put a substantial amount of time into our transportation planning activities and only slightly less in the Region 2050 enterprise. On the other hand, I have put little time into public safety recently (with the small exception of working with the County to provide staff assistance on

the Homeland Security grant application), very little personal investment has been made in the areas of telecommunication and television, and little time has been spent in natural resources or business assistance. General familiarity with the programs and open and regular communication with the managers of the agency's enterprises help me to stay informed about—and hence able to contribute to—the agency's work. My role, as I see it, is to apply experience, judgment and an understanding of the wishes of our membership to the flow of the agency's work. I would add that this role is not merely a matter of catching the prevailing winds. As your Executive Director, I apply my own vision and my own ethical standards to the decisions that I make on your behalf. Therein lie the elements of trust and confidence, which are key to a healthy relationship between an appointed CEO and a policy board.

The art or science of communication is the third aspect of my job in this typology. It is critical that the Executive energetically describe and explain the organization to the outside world; and similarly, I must communicate with staff, member agencies and other stakeholders. This broad range of activities is a constant part of the job, and I believe that I have competencies in both written and oral communication to serve the organization well. It should be noted that the “message” must be constantly adjusted and reinforced, because the enterprise is diverse and complex and because the target group (those whose understanding and support the agency needs) is constantly changing. We utilize a variety of channels and media to tell our story to the outside world; and similarly, internal communication requires the application of different approaches. In the self-interest of the agency, it is critical that the members of the staff—an army of potential ambassadors—understand the ethic, purpose and activities of the organization well beyond their own job descriptions.

Finally, related to communication, I would say that I view the maintenance of associations and connections in the broader regional community as a clear component of my job. The LCOG Executive needs to convey the message that this agency is a good and important player, making this region a better place, and that task can be best accomplished by being “out there” in the community. It has been largely in that context that I have served on the Eugene City Club Board, the Board of United Way of Lane County, the Board of Southtowne Eugene Rotary Club, the Board of the Oregon City/County Managers Association, the Executive Directors Committee of the National Association of Regional Councils and others. These venues provide opportunities that need to be capitalized upon. Similarly, I try to accept as many invitations as I can for civic ceremonies and events—not because I am crazy about the cookies, but because such engagement is an important *part of*

the job. Participation, visibility and communication are all incorporated in the role of the Executive Director.

After 23+ years as your Executive Director, the job remains interesting and challenging. There are around me good people to work with and for—and to learn from. I am proud of this organization and proud to be taking part in a genuine regional success story. Of course none of us will stay in our present roles forever, and transitions are a healthy part of human and organizational experience. As my tenure has grown, I have given more thought to the inevitable changes of leadership at LCOG. I fully understand that my continued employment as your Director is a matter for you to decide; I know for whom I work. But both you (collectively) and I have decisions to make with respect to the future. The most self-congratulatory observation that I can make in this introspective exercise is that the agency is healthy and in a sound position for transition, whenever that may take place. I appreciate the confidence that you have placed in me and look forward to your insights and direction, as together we pursue this agency's mission.