

December 28, 2007

Topic #16: Berk and Associates Report on RCO's Grant Processes

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Approved by the Director:

Proposed Action: Information and Update

Summary

The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) hired Berk and Associates to examine the reasons for the occasional un-timeliness in completing grant projects as scheduled. When deadlines are missed, planned pay-outs do not occur and the agency must request that the Legislature re-appropriate the funds. While the final report is due in mid-February, Berk is providing to the RCFB an overview of the project, their findings and early thoughts about possible recommendations.

Background

We asked Berk and Associates to help us understand the re-appropriations issue from two perspectives: our own internal policies and process, as well as our grantees' processes. We subsequently asked RCO to provide a workload analysis to help identify appropriate caseload size.

Berk's review has focused on five areas:

- RCO's re-appropriations rate, compared by grant program and to other grant agencies;
- RCO's effectiveness in screening out projects that are not ready to move forward;
- Ability of project sponsors to complete their projects on time;
- RCO's project management and tracking approaches; and,
- Providing greater incentives for project sponsors to deliver on-time projects.

Berk and Associates Report on RCO Grant Processes

December 28, 2007

Page 2

Along with Bonnie Berk, Pia Franzese and Heather Rogers have worked with staff and external stakeholders to learn more about the RCO, specifically regarding issues surrounding project delivery and workload. Among other things, Berk accomplished the following:

- 25 phone interviews with project sponsors;
- 10 phone interviews with other grant making agencies researching best practices;
- Two (2) grant manager focus groups;
- Individual interviews with select grant management staff;
- Individual interviews with RCO management, fiscal, and policy staff;
- Interviews with legislative staff;
- Interviews with OFM staff; and
- Data analysis (through data supplied by PRISM and OFM staff).

Next Steps:

Berk's focus has turned from information gathering and data collection to analysis and formation of findings and recommendations. At the January RCFB meeting, Pia Franzese and Heather Rogers will provide a project overview and some initial findings. A draft report will be available for staff review in late January. The final report is due to RCO in mid-February. The Director will meet with the chairs of the RCFB and the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) to outline a strategy for briefings, discussions and, if warranted, policy changes. Legislative staff and staff from the Office of Financial Management (OFM) will also be briefed. The agency intends to use the Governor's Government Management and Accountability Program (GMAP) as a tool to measure its success in reducing re-appropriations.