



Meeting of the Board of Directors

Special Session: Seed Grant Review

Thursday, March 29, 2007

11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Hyatt Regency

Sacramento

Meeting Minutes

Present: Frank Bigelow, Secretary Dale Bonner, Secretary Victoria Bradshaw, Jay Chamberlin, Kathleen Crookham, Connie Conway (chair), Farrell Jackson, Secretary AG Kawamura, Kirk Lindsey, Sunne McPeak, Michael Navarro, Michelle Orrock, Pete Parra, Cindy Tuck, Peter Weber

Present via Teleconference: Alan Autry (*joined by phone at approximately 12:30*), Fritz Grupe (Deputy Chair), Barry Hibbard, Luisa Medina, Leroy Ornellas, Gary Podesto, Fred Ruiz, Lorraine Salazar, Stanley Simpson, Carol Tomlinson Keasey

I. Introductory Remarks

Chair Connie Conway welcomed everyone in the room and joining by teleconference. Deputy Chair Fritz Grupe also welcomed everyone and acknowledged the work of the Seed Grant applicants and Proposal Review Committee.

II. Self-Introductions

Board members, staff and members of the public introduced themselves.

III. Partnership Seed Grants

Sunne McPeak, Chair of the Proposal Review Committee, provided the committee report to the board. She explained that she would make recommendations, explain them and then allow time for public comment. There were 106 Seed Grant concept proposals submitted in January. The board recommended that 36 be invited to submit full proposals in March. Of those, four were combined into two joint applications, resulting in 34 full proposals being submitted for review.

The Proposal Review Committee included Yolanda Benson, Marcie Buford, Jay Chamberlin, Connie Conway, Kathleen Crookham, Jaime Fall, Trina Gonzalez, Fritz Grupe, Jonnalee Henderson, Stephanie Leach, Sunne McPeak, Luisa Medina, Gary Podesto, Lorraine Salazar, Cindy Tuck, and Ray Watson. Proposals that were most closely aligned with the goals of the Strategic Action Proposal, best leveraged financial and human resources, and proposed regional approaches or the eventual replication of models, were scored highest.

Ms. McPeak noted that the Review Committee recommended a total of \$2.5 million be allocated for the grants. The Committee did not necessarily recommend the full amounts that were being requested by the applicants. Some grants were recommended for partial funding. The Committee did its best to pare down the funding allocations in order to not negatively impact the outcomes and deliverables of the proposals.

Given the high caliber of the full Seed Grant proposals, Ms. McPeak concluded with suggesting that the proposals not recommended be debriefed and referred for future funding opportunities among the various governmental and private sector agencies.

Board Discussion of Seed Grant Review Committee Recommendations

Discussion ensued as to the availability of additional funding for Seed Grant applicants. It was concluded that any supplemental funding would have to go through an additional RFP process. It is important to note that this body, the Partnership Board, has established a mechanism to review projects and allocate monies. There will be a larger inclination to make investments in SJV projects since there is a mechanism in place.

The board further discussed the accountability mechanisms for deliverables and monitoring of funding expenditures. There will be negotiations following Seed Grant awards, which will include specifications for monitoring and accountability. The Secretariat will be reporting on the seed grants to the board on a quarterly basis. Grant recipients will be expected to disseminate results and “lessons learned” to the region. Kirk Lindsey suggested that the Review Committee reconvene twice a year to review and monitor seed grant projects. If the seed granting process does not work then the Board would exercise caution when considering a second round.

Secretary Bonner asked whether the Review Committee considered how far the funding levels would take each project. Ms. McPeak responded that \$250,000 grants were the maximum allowed by the solicitation and that the Review Committee did take into consideration how much of the proposals could be implemented at the recommended reduced funding levels. The contracting process will provide the grantees the opportunity to appropriately adjust their scopes of work based on their funding levels. In many cases, the seed grants provide funding for region-wide planning processes.

Kirk Lindsey asked for information on the Fresno Metro Rural Loop project (#94), which was recommended for partial funding. Mr. Lindsey commented that all of the other projects seemed to take the entire San Joaquin Valley into consideration while the Fresno Metro Rural Loop project is focused on the Fresno-Madera sub-region. Ms. McPeak explained that the project was supported by multiple jurisdictions (17 cities, 2 counties and 2 COGs) and that it is a concept that is applicable to the whole region. The project will combine land use and multimodal transportation planning. The recommendation is for partial funding (\$125,000) to provide the collaborative with funds to begin convening the jurisdictions and to start organizing their work. Mr. Lindsey responded that funding a partial study may not be worthwhile and recommended that the communities involved with the project raise the additional funding needed to complete the full feasibility study. Ms. McPeak agreed with adding the condition to the Fresno Metro Rural Loop project.

Luisa Medina, joining by teleconference, expressed support for the Seed Grant Review Committee recommendations and added that she felt it was a very fair process and appreciated assistance from the cabinet members' staff.

Virginia Hernandez, a seed grant applicant joining by teleconference, asked if there would be feedback from reviewers regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the proposals. Ashley Swearingin answered yes, and noted that her staff will do as they did in the initial round – providing direct feedback to each applicant organization.

IV. Public Comments

Keith Kelley, Executive Director, Fresno West Coalition for Economic Development (FWCED) and seed grant applicant thanked the Committee and the Board for the opportunity to submit a Seed Grant proposal and to present before the Board. The FWCED proposal sought to train and place individuals in solar installer positions, a process for which FWCED has already secured \$1 million in federal funding. FWCED serves the poorest population of urban west Fresno. They were looking to this grant to allow them to develop the training curriculum so that residents in West Fresno have access to cutting edge occupational training.

Robina Asghar, Executive Director, Community Partnership for Families of San Joaquin and seed grant applicant thanked the Board for the opportunity. She shared that their proposal was very important in that families would be taught financial literacy skills, enabling them to learn more about money, how to keep their money and save their money, and to improve their quality of life. She suggested that their model be used region-wide for the delivery of social services.

Melissa Tatham, Associate Director, SBDC Regional Network and seed grant applicant presented that the SBDC program proposal sought funds to match monies allocated to them through federal programs. The SBDC struggles to keep \$2.5 million in play because they are challenged with adequate matching funds from the state.

Debbie Link, representative of United Cerebral Palsy and seed grant applicant indicated that she would like to receive comments from the reviewers on their proposal. She requested that future funding opportunities were shared with those who submitted proposals.

Darrel Rutheford, representative of the California Rural Housing Coalition, noted that housing is a major issue in the achievement of all of the Strategic Action Proposal goals and objectives. Affordable housing is definitely needed. His agency took a region-wide approach to help residents understand issues that go along with affordable housing, as exhibited from the multiple support letters from both state and federal agencies.

Brenda Smith, a private developer and seed grant applicant representing the Hmong American Community, Inc., expressed her thanks for the opportunity. She mentioned that their organization has been able to bring a world-renowned architect to the region to build housing that doesn't look like affordable housing. Their focus is on the Hmong community. Most of their clients are small farmers earning only \$8,000 annually.

Chris Hart, representing the Central Valley Tourism Association (a seed grant applicant) asked the Board to reconsider funding for tourism promotion in the region. The funding would have provided a cohesive plan and staffing to implement the plan. He suggested that one-half or one-third of the funding requested be allocated to the CVTA. Chair Conway asked about CVTA's current source of funding. Mr. Hart explained that approximately \$30,000 is allocated from the state each year. In addition, the organization receives membership dues.

Mark Stout, Clean Tech America, representing the Steering Committee of the SJV Clean Energy Organization expressed appreciation for the recommended allocation of a seed grant to the clean energy project.

Chair Conway thanked everyone for their questions and comments.

End of Public Comments

V. Partnership Seed Grants

Discussion and Approval of Seed Grant Awards

Pete Weber thanked and acknowledged the Proposal Review Committee and seed grant applicants. He recommended that each applicant present meet with the Secretariat to identify additional funding sources. Finally, he talked about tourism opportunities in the SJV as the "low-hanging fruit" with respect to the SJV economic development opportunities. He spoke to the need to develop the Valley as a tourist destination, and advocated that a percentage of funding could be taken from several or all grants awarded to fund a \$70,000 project launch that is long overdue.

Discussion ensued and agreement was reached to carve out up to \$75,000 for a challenge grant (\$25,000 from 3 planning grant proposals), that would be awarded only if matched by local stakeholders from the region. Ms. McPeak suggested that the UC Merced telemedicine, environmental justice air quality and meth recovery projects could each be reduced by \$25,000 to fund the \$75,000 challenge grant for the Central Valley Tourism Association.

Approval of Seed Grant Awards

Ms. McPeak motioned to approve the recommendations from the Seed Grant Review Committee with the following conditions:

- The Metro Rural Loop Corridor proposal project is required to identify the additional funds needed to complete the feasibility study;
- Funding for the San Joaquin Valley eHealth Network Project is reduced to \$225,000;
- Funding for the Air Quality Education in Environmental Justice Areas project is reduced to \$225,000;
- Funding for the Methamphetamine Recovery project is reduced to \$125,000;
- A challenge grant of up to \$75,000 will be made to the Central Valley Tourism Association (CVTA); CVTA is to notify the Secretariat within 30 days to indicate whether the organization has accepted the challenge or not; and
- Additional assistance will be made to the seed grant finalists that were not selected for funding.

Kathleen Crookham seconded the motion. The following votes were cast:

Yes:

- Secretary Bonner
- Secretary Bradshaw
- Jay Chamberlin
- Connie Conway
- Kathleen Crookham
- Farrell Jackson
- Kirk Lindsey
- Sunne McPeak
- Luisa Medina – via teleconference
- Mike Navarro
- LeRoy Ornellas – via teleconference
- Michelle Orrock
- Pete Parra
- Gary Podesto – via teleconference
- Lorraine Salazar – via teleconference
- Stan Simpson – via teleconference
- Carol Tomlinson Keasey – via teleconference
- Cindy Tuck – yes
- Pete Weber – yes

Abstentions:

None

No:

None

VI. AB 1403

Assemblyman Arambula introduced AB 1403 and discussed the details of the proposed legislation. He mentioned that this bill will further one of the education priorities for the Partnership by developing an alternative accountability system in education. He referenced a recent Stanford University report that documented 22 different studies that have demonstrated that inflexible systems hinder the progress of school districts. His proposed legislation will present the State with an alternative accountability system that will give academically struggling school districts the flexibility to come up with remediation plans and will provide them with a local representative to waive state regulations that interfere with implementing that plan. Assemblyman Arambula further commented that this bill will help California find a way to hold public schools accountable, but at the same time gives the schools a fighting chance by removing needless regulations that get in their way.

Mayor Autry joined the meeting by phone to comment on AB 1403. He noted that the K-12 system has enormous problems and that the present structure is prohibitive. Assemblyman Arambula added that this bill will allow County Superintendents to opt in

but would not require them to participate. Thus far, Fresno, Madera, San Joaquin, and Tulare county superintendents have taken an official “support” position for the bill. The Merced superintendent has taken a neutral position, while, Stanislaus, Kings and Kern Counties are still evaluating the bill.

Mr. Lindsey encouraged Assemblyman Arambula to also engage school board members and ask them to weigh in on the legislation. Assemblyman Arambula indicated that the focus of the legislation is on school districts, not individual schools where 50% of the schools are at the “bottom of the barrel” according to academic achievement measurements. The Assemblyman is reaching out to the California School Boards Association and working with the school districts that would qualify for alternative accountability according to the proposed legislation.

Ms. McPeak complimented Assemblyman Arambula and Mayor Autry for their focus, persistence and diligence in bringing this to the Legislature and Partnership. She mentioned that it represented the first Goal of the K-12 Work Group Action Plan, and specifically Objective A in the Partnership’s Strategic Action Plan. She further stated that the rest of the interventions articulated in the Strategic Action Plan are pivotal in improving education performance. If the legislation passes, Ms. McPeak encouraged the Board to support the schools that need intervention.

Pete Weber motioned to support the legislation as evidenced by a letter of support. Gary Podesto seconded the motion. The following votes were cast:

Yes:

- Alan Autry - via teleconference
- Connie Conway
- Kathleen Crookham
- Farrell Jackson
- Kirk Lindsey
- Luisa Medina - via teleconference
- Sunne McPeak
- Mike Navarro
- LeRoy Ornellas – via teleconference
- Gary Podesto – via teleconference
- Lorraine Salazar – via teleconference
- Stan Simpson – via teleconference
- Carol Tomlinson Keasey – via teleconference
- Pete Weber

Abstentions:

- Jay Chamberlin
- Jonnalee Henderson
- Stephanie Leach
- Cindy Tuck
- Michelle Orrock

No:
None

VII. Other Business

Discussion and consider approval of process for supporting legislation and projects related to CPSJV

The Board discussed approval of a process for supporting legislation and projects related to CPSJV. Mr. Lindsey remarked that Chair Conway should establish an Executive Committee to review any amendments that may be made to AB 1403, as well as any other “timely” legislative or other issues that needed to be addressed before the May 4 Board meeting. He recommended that the Executive Committee should have the authority to review the issue, make decisions, and keep the board informed of the actions. If no immediate action was required then the item could wait until the next Board meeting. Mr. Weber further recommended that the Executive Committee consult with the Work Group conveners on any legislation related to their scopes of work before making a decision. Ms. McPeak recommended that a temporary Executive Committee be established to function as Mr. Lindsey described and that a plan for a permanent Executive Committee be presented and discussed at the May 4 Board meeting.

The motion was made by Mr. Lindsey to authorize a five-person executive committee comprised of the Chair, Deputy Chairs and two additional people appointed by the Chair to temporarily function during the month of April to address timely issues that cannot wait until the May Board meeting. On matters related to reviewing legislation, the Work Group conveners will be consulted by the Executive Committee before decisions are made, and the Executive Committee will keep the full board informed of their actions. A recommendation for a permanent Executive Committee will be presented and discussed at the May board meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Crookham.

The following votes were cast:

Yes:

- Connie Conway
- Kathleen Crookham
- Farrell Jackson
- Kirk Lindsey
- Sunne McPeak
- Mike Navaro
- Lorraine Salazar - via teleconference
- Stan Simpson - via teleconference
- Pete Weber

Abstentions:

- Jay Chamberlin
- Jonnalee Henderson
- Stephanie Leach
- Cindy Tuck
- Michelle Orrock

No:
None.

Discussion and consider approval of support for solar project

Pete Weber stated that action was no longer required at this meeting. Mr. Weber reported that the Clean Tech America project will move through the PG&E approval process, advancing the creation of the largest peak-solar energy production plant in the world in the San Joaquin Valley. He indicated he may ask the board for a supportive resolution in the future.

Next Meeting

Ashley Swearengin informed the Board of the quarterly board meeting dates for the remainder of 2007. They are May 4 in Bakersfield, August 10 in Hanford, and November 9 in Stockton.

Chair Conway provided closing remarks and adjourned the meeting at 2:05pm.