



Eastern Carolina Council

10. Planning Services Business Plan

The background image shows two women in a professional setting. One woman is smiling and looking towards the other, who is holding a pen and looking at some papers. The image is overlaid with a dark teal color.

PLANNING

SERVICES

Business Plan



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction..... 3
- 1. Contracting Services 7
- 2. Planning Average..... 10
- 3. Planning Duties Reassigned 12
- 4. Executive Director’s Recommendation .. 15

INTRODUCTION

At the September 10, 2020 Eastern Carolina Council of Governments (ECC) Executive Board Meeting, the Board requested the ECC Executive Director develop a plan to continue the Planning Department's function for the nine-county region. This document will address the three separate functions of the Planning Department which are the following:

- technical assistance to towns
- Rural Transportation Planning Organizations (RPO)
- Economic Development grant administration

The purpose of this document is to recommend a plan for the ECC Planning Department. Previously, the Planning Department was managed by a Regional Planning Director who supervised three positions including one Community Planner and two Transportation Planners. The two Transportation Planner positions are funded by the Department of Transportation through the Rural Planning Organization Program.

The Community Planner and Planning Director were both unfunded staff positions. What that means is those two positions were expected to bring in enough funding through grants or projects to sustain their salary and benefits each year. If they did not, the only way to fund these positions would have been by allocating fund balance to pay them or terminating them. In the past this has created a huge risk for ECC. Once staff become aware of this, they realize the risk of not having a job and are more likely to look for stable work elsewhere. This increases staff turnover.

The ECC Planning Department previously offered a variety of land use planning services for the nine-county region. Planning staff advise local governments on current planning issues such as zoning, annexation, ordinance revisions, and related land-use issues. Staff also draw on expertise in such areas as the environment and strategic planning to assist local governments as requested. This work includes the development and update of numerous types of ordinances (UDOs, zoning, subdivision, historic preservation, public nuisances, minimum housing, flood damage prevention, and other codes), and

Planning Services

Business Plan

plans such as Comprehensive Land Use, as well as performing administrative services for primarily smaller municipalities. This is a broad spectrum of skills and the ECC has been unable (since October 2019) to identify an individual person with this varied skillset resulting in poor quality work products and tarnishing the reputation of ECC. Rather than continue to waste money on trying to train new staff, many fresh out of college, the ECC turned to consultants who are experts in the specific task. This reduces ECC's cost by not having to train staff, as well as being able to use resources for each project rather than just a 40-hour work week. For these and many other reasons at the September 10, 2020 ECC Executive Board Meeting, the Board voted to contract out the Community Planning functions with the Executive Director having oversight to the contractors performing the services which was a previous function of the ECC Planning Director.

The Board requested that the Executive Director make a recommendation on how to manage the other functions of the ECCOG Planning Department, specifically the Rural Transportation Planning Organizations (RPOs) and grant administration and to recommend how to fund the functions. This document will recommend how to fund and by whom the Planning Department functions will be managed in a more fiscally responsible manner while delivering better services to ECC's clients.

Rural Transportation Planning Organizations

The ECC is the lead planning agency for two RPOs. The Eastern Carolina RPO and the Down East RPO were developed in response to Senate Bill 1195 which amended General Statute 136, Article 17 directing North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to develop a plan to establish RPOs. NCDOT completed its report in early 2001 and 20 RPOs were established between 2001 and 2003. As defined in 136-66.210, an RPO is an organization of local officials formed through a Memorandum of Understanding to work cooperatively with the NCDOT to plan rural transportation systems and to advise the Department on rural transportation policy.

General Statute 136-212 identifies four primary duties for RPOs:

- develop, in cooperation with NCDOT, long-range, local and regional multimodal transportation plans;

Planning Services

Business Plan

- provide a forum for public participation in the transportation planning process;
- develop and prioritize suggestions for transportation projects the organization believes should be included in the State's Transportation Improvement Program (STIP); and
- provide transportation-related information to local governments and other interested organizations and persons.

Historically, the Regional Planning Director managed the day to day activities of the two RPOs. Since October 2019 (13 months), the Deputy Finance Director has completed this duty by overseeing all functions of the RPOs to include the assignment of tasks and the submittal of reports to NCDOT. Part Five of this document will expand on the recommendation in continuing the reassignment of duties to the Deputy Finance Director with a recommendation of a salary adjustment to align compensation appropriately.

Grant Administration

According to the ECC Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that was approved by the Board in November 2019, Goal 1 is to assist communities with meeting their infrastructure needs. Tactic 3 of the CEDS is the ECC will assist communities with finding, applying for, and administering grants to upgrade and expand their infrastructure needs. Previously, this function was managed by the ECC Planning Director. Since November 2019, the Executive Director is performing this task. Additionally, the ECC CEDS Goal 2 is to increase the quality and availability of skilled workers. Tactic 1 specifies that the ECC will continue to assist communities and community colleges find, apply for and administer grants to create or expand opportunities for worker training programs. A current example is the Economic Development Administration grant for James Sprunt Community College to build a nursing facility on campus.

Historically, the Regional Planning Director managed the day to day activities of all grant administration. Since October 2019 (13 months), the Executive Director and the Finance Director have completed this duty by overseeing all grant administration functions. Part Four of this document will

Planning Services

Business Plan

expand on the recommendation in continuing the reassignment of duties to the Executive Director and Finance Director with a recommendation of a salary adjustment to align compensation appropriately for the Finance Director.

I. CONTRACTING SERVICES

According to the ECC CEDS, Goal 3 is to ensure communities are prepared for the expected growth in the region. Tactic 1 of this goal is the ECC will assist communities with comprehensive land use plans as required by Session Law 201-111. Additionally, in Tactic 2, the ECC will assist communities with ordinance updates as required by Chapter 160D Land Use Statue. Furthermore, Tactic 3 states the ECC will continue to assist with disaster recovery mitigation to increase resiliency and lessen the chances of future disasters as growth occurs.

The ECC has advertised since October 2019 to find an individual to complete these tasks. To date no candidate applying has appeared to possess the required education, experience, and expertise to complete these tasks. The Executive Director and Finance Director have absorbed these duties into their current job duties.

The ECC Executive Director and the Finance Director analysis of the previous Planning Department costs are:

Name	Yearly Salary	Benefits	Indirect2	Total Yearly	Avg Yearly Mileage Reimb			
Flanagan	\$62,872.16	\$22,138.04	\$36,554.39	\$121,564.59	\$8,365.00			
Howell, E	\$47,340.02	\$18,510.27	\$28,315.62	\$94,165.91	\$8,702.84	8702.84	18/19 only	
		Transportation		\$215,730.50	\$17,067.84			
Davis, C	\$59,161.18	\$20,561.95	\$34,280.95	\$114,004.07	\$3,150.00	2446.51 / 3039.13	18/19 17/18	
Burdick, S	\$49,384.14	\$19,602.19	\$29,664.12	\$98,650.45	\$3,150.00	3989.44	5/2018-12/2019	
		Community		\$212,654.53	\$6,300.00			
		Planning Dept Total		\$428,385.02	\$23,367.84			

Planning Services

Business Plan

Additionally, the ECCOG staff turnover since 2015 is as follows:

Date	Staff	Position	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	
	Left	Rob Will						
9/9/2015	Hired	Robin Bloss	Flanagan	Flanagan	Flanagan	Flanagan		
8/12/2016	Left	Robin Bloss				Davis		
12/5/2016	Left	Lauren Tuttle	Will	Bloss/Davis	York	Howell	Anderson	
1/27/2017	Hired	Ryan Griffith					Eversole	
6/26/2017	Hired	Matt Livingston	Tuttle	Griffith	Griffith/Davis			
6/30/2017	Left	Judy Hills	Extra Community Planner			Burdick	Burdick	
4/24/2017	Hired	Chad Davis						
12/11/2017	Hired	Chris York						
1/1/2018	Left	Ryan Griffith						
4/13/2018	Hired	Sam Burdick						
5/21/2018	Hired	Sam Burdick						
6/15/2018	Left	Chris York						
7/31/2018	Transfer	Patrick Flanagan						
7/31/2018	Transfer	Chad Davis						
9/10/2018	Hired	Eric Howell						
10/25/2018	Left	Matt Livingston						
5/20/2019	Hired	Katie Bordeaux						
8/26/2019	Left	Eric Howell						
10/18/2019	Left	Patrick Flanagan						
12/6/2019	Left	Chad Davis						
1/31/2020	Left	Sam Burdick						
Notes:								
** Before 2018/2019 all positions in Planning were called Community Planners, noted on here which ones did Transportation for reference								
** RPOs pay for 2 staff positions								
** Any other positions must bring in their own funding, there is no automatic grant to pay them								

Planning Staff Turnovers	
16/17	2
17/18	2
18/19	0 **No ED majority of year
19/20	4

Staff turnover is costly. The ECC communities need continuity with whom projects start and finish with and need to know who to contact for what services. Contracting out is a solution to create advantage by reducing operational costs. External contracting solutions can assist both in short-term and long-term, depending on the scope and duration of work required and operational needs.

Acquiring contracted professionals help where the existing staff does not have the capacity to complete the tasks. Contracting helps specialize functional areas, help build capacity of ECC, and allow focus on core business functions and processes. Specialization with contractors provides more efficiency and turn-around time with higher levels of quality.

Staffing processes, developmental processes, salary and wages would cost substantially more than short-term contracts. The element of risk is higher with employed resources than contracted staff, as

Planning Services

Business Plan

employees leave for other opportunities midstream on a project, leaving other staff to complete the project.

The following are recommended land use consulting fees for member governments:

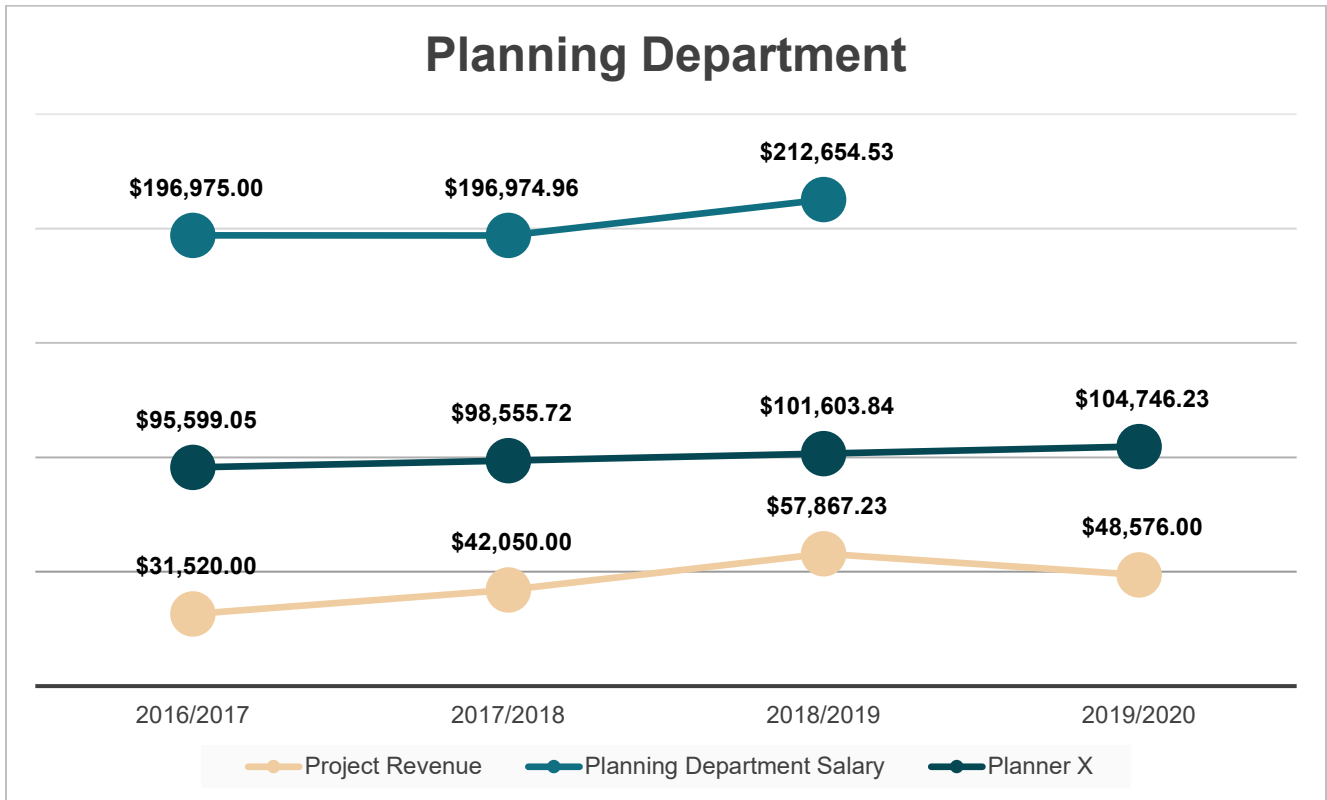
- Permits and Zoning \$115.00
- Planning \$120.00
- Environmental Planning \$150.00
- Grant Writing \$150.00
- Construction Management \$165.00
- Engineering/Landscape Architecture Program Management \$175.00
- Project Management \$175.00

The following are recommended land use consulting fees for non-member governments:

- Permits and Zoning \$135.00
- Planning \$140.00
- Environmental Planning \$170.00
- Grant Writing \$170.00
- Construction Management \$185.00
- Engineering/Landscape Architecture Program Management \$195.00
- Project Management \$200.00

It is recommended the ECC continues working with consultants on the above fee structure on any of the projects other than the EDA or RPO. This will allow the ECC to still perform the jobs requested by member governments without putting a full-time staff member on our payroll when there is no funding source to pay for a full-time position.

2. PLANNING AVERAGE

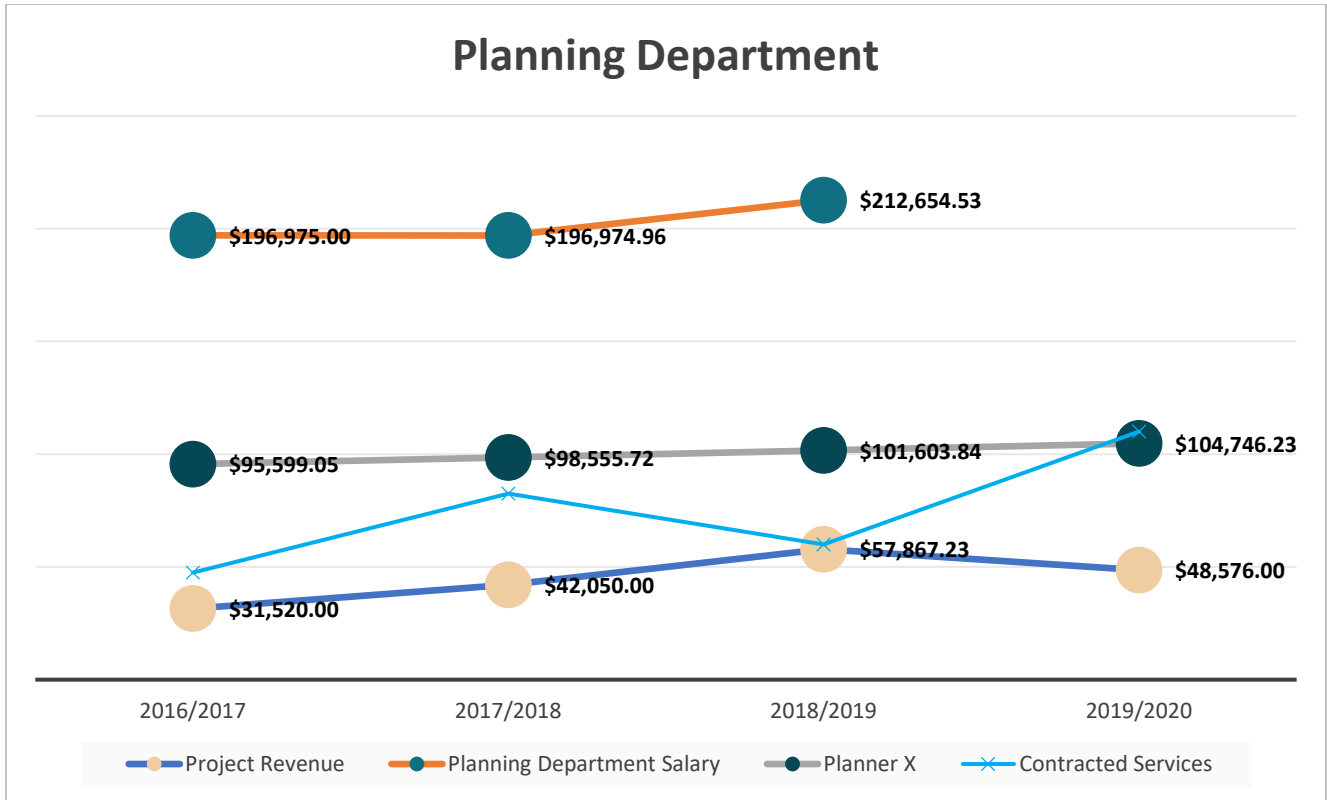


The graph above shows the project revenue of the Planning Department for the past 4 years compared to the Planning Department salary that housed two planners. The Planning Department salary was approximately \$150,00 over the revenue of the projects that came in that year. The grey line represents hiring one planner which is approximately \$105,000 a year including all costs related for ECC. As shown in the chart, the planner position still shows a shortfall in projects that were previously brought in and they should have brought in approximately \$56,000 more in projects or T/A to cover the true cost of the employee.

By not hiring a staff for this position and contracting out the work, the ECC will not risk being in a deficit situation. As assignments come in, the ECC will work with a consultant and each project is priced based on what it will actually cost, which is then forwarded to the member for approval before performing the job. In the past the chart shows that the amount of revenue and projects that came in for several years was only approximately \$50,000 per year which cannot sustain a full-time position, nor the two full time positions that the ECC had for the past three years. By using a consultant, the fluctuations of projects and potential for salary shortfalls when projects do not come in will not be a concern for ECC as we are paying based on each project.

Planning Services

Business Plan



The graph above shows a blue line for contracted services. This line represents if the ECC contracted services for the planning projects completed the past four years. This also reiterates that ECC was not pricing projects accurately to the work involved. Even with contracting service out, the amount is lower than hiring a new employee for the projects that are brought in and significantly lower than the salaries of the planning department. When contracting projects out in the future, ECC will ensure that the proposed contract for services is proper to cover the overhead of the project.

3. PLANNING DUTIES REASSIGNED

Director over the Two Transportation Planners

The Executive Director has identified the Deputy Finance Director as having a comprehensive knowledge of NCDOT general laws and administrative policies governing the RPO practices and procedures. Since October 2019, the Deputy Finance Director has managed the two Transportation Planners by performing administrative, technical, and professional oversight. Work includes preparing planning documents, coordinating, and presenting transportation planning and related studies and long term and short-term comprehensive transportation plans, analyzing relevant data sets collected, manipulated, or corrected to produce geographic datasets, statistics, reports and maps. The Deputy Finance Director troubleshoots issues and facilitates discussion. Resolutions have been completed with professionalism. The Deputy Finance Director has been self-motivated, diligent, implemented creative solutions, as well as the ability to understand different perspectives and build collaborative relationships

Director over EDA Grant Administration

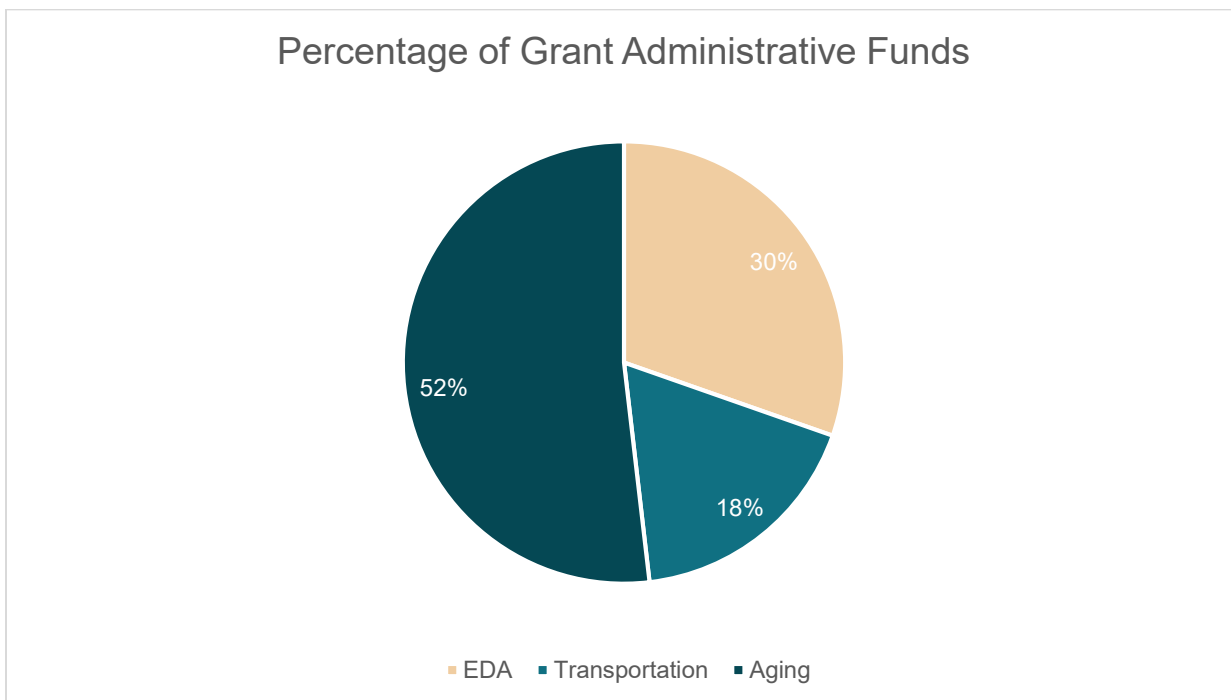
The Executive Director has identified the Finance Director as having a comprehensive skill set to provide technical assistance, conduct analysis, synthesize data, provide grant writing assistance and administration, and facilitate collaboration among member governments and partner organizations, all in a collaboratively mentored context. The Finance Director is highly attentive to details, able to perform complicated grant calculations, possess effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills, to include strong writing skills. Grant work includes tracking progress with measurements and metrics and budget development. Since October 2019, the Finance Director and Executive Director have worked together to monitor and coordinate the activities of 205j grants, EDA projects, disaster recovery, resilient communities, and community asset management. Work includes program and/or project management, submitting budget reports, planning and analytical support in area of the

Planning Services

Business Plan

specific grant. Since October 2019 the Finance Director and Executive Director are providing consulting and advanced technical support related to assigned program, project or planning function, participating in the development of goals and objectives, serving as technical representative and consultant providing information and solutions to address issues and needs, monitor and ensure compliance with applicable policies, plans, requirements, and processes.

As shown, there are three jobs that have been reassigned to the administrative team increasing the workload. The staff have assumed these roles and been doing the work with no compensation for over a year now. The recommendation is to draw the full amount for the aging, EDA, and transportation grants and adjust salaries to reflect the extra duties that were previously under other staff positions. Previously, these funds that are earmarked for administrative fees built into grants are not drawn down by the ECC. Approximately \$70,000 administrative funds are not being drawn down. The administrative funds will be drawn down from Aging, Transportation, and EDA grants



If this is not approved, then the other option would be to hire another full-time person with all these skills to do these separate duties. Please note that doing this will require funds to be used from fund

Planning Services

Business Plan

balance. This position has been posted since October 2019 with no applicates with all these skill sets. This plan does not recommend this approach.

4. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S RECOMMENDATION

1. Consulting

The duties of transportation management and grant management **cannot** be handled by a consulting firm. The consulting fees cover what the ECC has previously performed that are not required Council of Governments functions. Any additional (technical) projects/grants that come in sporadically can be forwarded to the consultant at that time. This is more economical due to not having to hire staff who may not bring in enough grants/projects to support their total salary and benefits.

Recommendation 1

- ✓ The recommendation is the ECC continues working with consultants on the fee structure for member governments and non-member governments on any of the projects other than the EDA and/or RPO. This will allow the ECC to still perform the jobs requested by member governments without putting a full-time staff member on our payroll when there is no funding source to pay for a full-time staff member.

2. Additional Positions

As shown in the above scales, the salary and benefits for the two planning positions that were unfunded are well over \$200,000 a year. This plan recommends not filling either of these positions.

The salary adjustment recommendations fairly adjust staff for what the ECC must do- transportation and grant management. Since October 2019, the Executive Director, Finance Director, and Deputy Finance Director have split the duties of the Planning Director, transportation management, and grant management thus keeping the ECC's budget out of the negative.

Recommendation 2

- ✓ The recommendation is to not hire additional staff and keeping those duties with Executive Director, Finance Director, and Deputy Finance Director, thus saving the ECC the funds to cover hiring additional staff.

3. Rural Transportation Planning Organizations (RPO)

As shown above, previously transportation management was under the Transportation Planner. The Deputy Finance Director has performed this function since October 2019. The current RPOs' salaries that the Deputy Finance Director manages are a combined **\$22,000 less** than what the two previous RPOs earned.

Recommendation 3

- ✓ The recommendation is the supervision and management of the RPO duties remain with the Deputy Finance Director as it has for over a year now and adjust the salary to \$73,009.

4. Economic Development Grant Administration

Previously, the Planning Director provided EDA grant management. The duties include monitoring and coordinating the activities of 205j grants, EDA projects, disaster recovery, resilient communities, and community asset management. Work includes program and/or project management, submitting budget reports, planning and analytical support in area of the specific grant. The administrative staff provide consulting and advanced technical support related to assigned program, project or planning function, participates in the development of goals and objectives, serves as technical representative and consultant providing information and solutions to address issues and needs, monitors and ensures compliance with applicable policies, plans, requirements, and processes. Since October 2019 these duties have is rolled up in the duties of the Executive Director and the Finance Director.

Recommendation 4

- ✓ The recommendation is to approve the EDA planning duties to be split between the Executive Director and the Finance Director and adjust the salary of the Finance Director to \$95,825.

Summary

In summary, the above recommendations will help the ECC fiscally and not operate in the deficient. The ECC does not have enough funds to fund the previously held positions of Planning Director and Transportation Director. The ECC cannot find the skillset in an individual to perform the functions that the experts of a consulting firm can do. Since October 2019 the Executive Director, the Finance Director, and the Deputy Finance Director have performed the duties of the Planning Director and the Transportation Director.

The salary adjustment recommendation is to adjust salaries to reflect the rolling up of two jobs into the duties being distributed among three staff members. The recommended amount of salary adjustments is much less than filling these positions and fairly compensates staff for doing the job duties of two previous positions. Additionally, the salary adjustment will align with the state Council of Governments average.

The salary adjustments are covered by cost allocation drawn down from the administration fees built into the ECC's allotment. Previously, the ECC did not draw down all the funds that were allotted to the ECC so by adjusting salaries and drawing down the full amount, there is no cost to the ECC members. Built into funds that the ECC draws down are administrative cost to cover recommendations three and four. Drawing down administrative costs from the aging, transportation, and grant management does not cost the ECC. As in the past when the ECC did not draw down the allocation, it was distributed to other COGs (helping them with their bottom line and hurting the ECC's bottom line). Since November 2019, the Executive Director, Finance Director, and Deputy Finance Director have coded administrative work for aging, transportation, and grant manager by cost allocation. This helps to capture the workload hours so the ECC can draw down those funds to cover the amount for the recommended salary adjustments. If the ECC does not draw down the funds, the funds go back to the state. In returning the funds to the state, eventually the ECC's allotment will be reduced. Once an allotment is reduced, it is impossible to gain back.

Planning Services

Business Plan

