



Getting into the Business

National New RDO
Executive Directors Training
May 16 2014
Point Clear, Alabama

Sitting in the Big Chair

- Previously held a staff position
- Previously held a board position
- Previously were an appointed official inside the region
- Came from outside

Executive Director Skills

- Innovator
- Public Entrepreneur
- Jack-of-All Trades
- Air Traffic Controller
- Statesman/Stateswoman

Executive Director Skills

○ Innovator

- Creative administrator who can invent new approaches and new methods as the needs arise

Executive Director Skills

○ **Public Entrepreneur**

- Ability to develop and implement new concepts and ideas for the greater good of the region

Executive Director Skills

○ **Consensus Builder**

- Must influence progress and change without traditional powers, authorities and funding resources of federal, state and local government officials

Executive Director Skills

○ Air Traffic Controller

- Ability to shift gears at any given moment to deal with diversity of the region and the regional council, including aptitude to understand the agendas, perceptions and interests of each major constituency group (public officials, private sector leaders, funding agencies, media, staff and the public)

Executive Director Skills

○ Statesman/Stateswoman

- Must balance immediate needs and agendas of political leaders with long-term interests and investments for the region

“A politician thinks of the next election - a statesman, of the next generation.”

▶ Hubert H. Humphrey



○ **Foster culture of innovation and performance**

- **Invest in policy officials and staff:** travel, professional development & peer exchanges
- **Break down staffing “stove pipes”** by program; Staff must be cross-trained and informed
- **Encourage collaboration** and leveraging of programs and resources (*legally!*)
- **Facilitate** strategic planning to gain input and buy-in, plus set regional priorities and action plans

Your Board and Your Owners

- Policy Board governance structure takes action on recommendations and provides you direction to carry out their policy decisions on a day to day basis.
- Your Owners almost always are the local governments that are found within your designation region

Your Board and Your Owners

- Your owners may not know it.
- Your board may not understand what their role is
- Neither may know what the RDO functions, roles, and responsibilities are.

Your Board and Your Owners

- If your local governments do not embrace and see your RDO as theirs
- If your local governments do not see the RDO as the convener of the region
- If the RDO is not thought of as a player in the public and the public/private efforts in the key or important opportunities and challenges in the region...

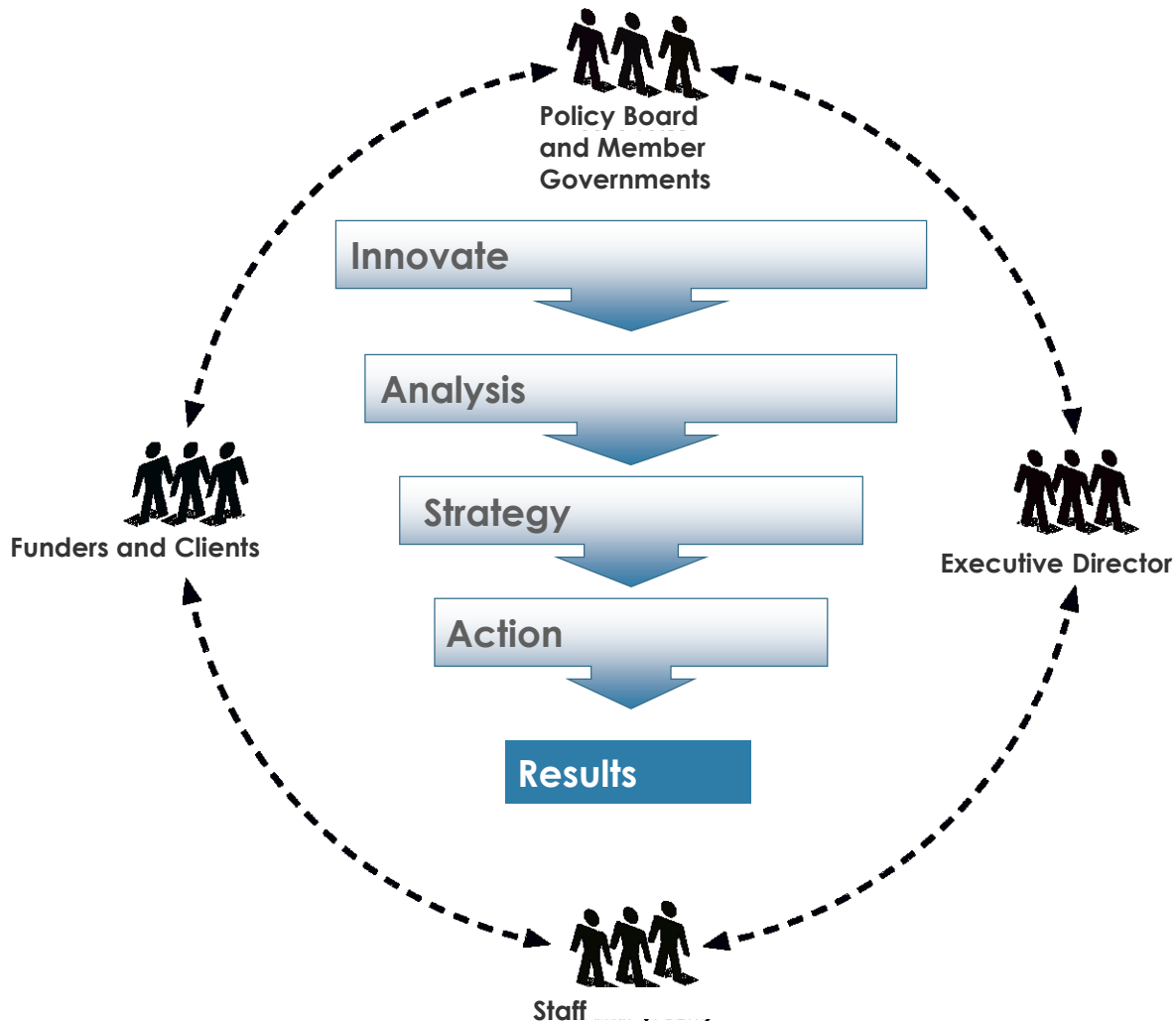
Your Board and Your Owners

- You are in trouble
- You need to take action immediately

Your Board and Your Owners

- Elected and Appointed Officials Orientation
- Yearly meeting of city and county elected officials
- Yearly one on one sessions with Board
- Local Government Administrators


Fundamentals of Regional Councils



Fundamentals of Regional Councils

- Regional councils are political entities that must function politically to be highly effective, yet they must also act in a non-partisan manner.

- Regional Council Self-Assessment and Resource Toolkit (August 2009)

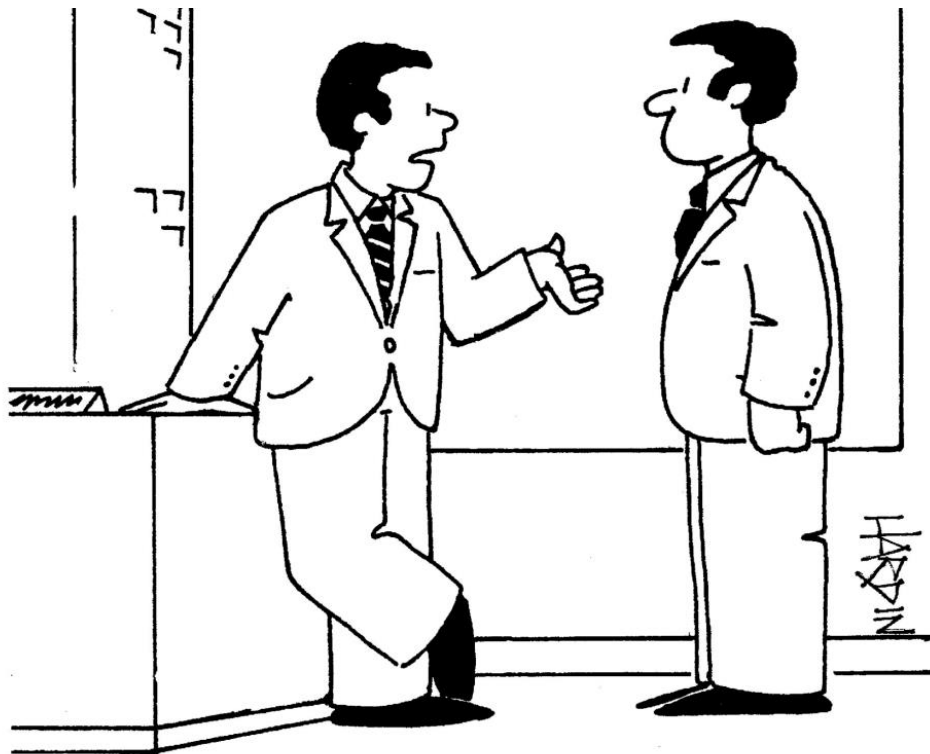


➤ “Regional councils are sometimes less bold in structure and authority than a region’s needs might warrant, yet more advanced than area politics comfortably accept.”

- James Ray, Texas Association of Regional Councils (1978)

Fundamentals of Regional Councils

"The organizational structure is pretty simple: We do the work; they take the credit."



Fundamentals of Regional Councils

- Serve as forum to **craft regional solutions** for **areawide** needs and opportunities
- **Prepare plans and strategies** for broad range of regional and local issues
- Strengthen and **assist local governments**
- **Advocate for locals** at federal and state levels

Seven Significant Issues

1. **Relevance**
2. **Convener** of the Region
3. **Ownership** and Governance
4. Relationship with **Local Governments**
5. Relationship with **Federal & State Officials**
6. **Statewide Uniformity** / Capacity
7. **Public Relations** / Image

- **Does your phone ring?**
- **Are you asked to the table** on major regional and local initiatives with public, private and non-profit sector leaders?
- **Are you the convener or forum** for public officials, along with private and non-profit leaders, to work together on problems and solutions for the region?

Convener of the Region

- Are you **proactive** in providing leadership and a vision for the region?
- Are you providing a forum for regional and local leaders to **develop and implement a blueprint** for the region's future?
- Are you **fostering regional collaboration** between local officials, plus public, private, non-profit, civic and philanthropic leaders?

Ownership and Governance

- **Is it clear who owns your regional council?**
 - Local governments
 - Federal, state and local funders
 - General public
 - All of the Above
 - **Note: *It isn't the Executive Director!***
- **Is your organization** board-driven, customer-driven, staff-driven, program-driven or a mix?

- Does your enabling legislation and/or executive order limit your role and functions?
- Is your board structured to attract the “movers-and-shakers” of the region?
- Is your regional council structured to take a “holistic” approach to regional development and overcome *program stovepipes* and *turf battles*?

Relationships with Local Officials

- Most regional councils, by law or executive order, are established as voluntary **councils owned and governed by local governments**
- **HOWEVER, in many cases local officials:**
 - Are unaware of regional council functions & programs
 - Do NOT realize regional councils are set-up to serve them
 - Do NOT consider themselves as owners and operators

Relationships with Local Officials

- As executive director, do you:
 - **Dedicate significant time to personal outreach** to local elected and appointed officials, both county and municipal?
 - **Encourage your local officials** to use your regional council for services, rather than outside consultants?
 - **Participate in statewide and regional associations** of county and municipal officials, as well as interest groups?
This includes serving on task forces and working groups.

- More than **70 percent of the typical regional council budget** originates from federal or state resources, according to NADO research

○ THEREFORE, regional councils must improve relationships and outreach with:

- Governors, state legislators and senior staff**
- State departments and agencies**
- Congressional and agency officials at the federal level, including political and career staff in the field and in Washington, DC**

Public Relations / Image

Regional councils are essentially knowledge workers.

Presentation of data, concepts and ideas are our lifeblood.

We are driven by ideas, innovations and solutions.

Public Relations / Image

- Tradition of “**behind-the-scenes**” player
- **Can NO LONGER** afford to be “**silent partner**”;
Still put elected officials in public view, but also market accomplishments, resources and roles
- **Image is/can be a real impediment** for regional councils at federal, state and local levels
 - *Too often, we let others define who we are!*

○ What is the external image of your council?

- **Respected and valued visionary** for the region
- **Place to bring together** public, private and nonprofit leaders to advance regional goals
- **“Go to” resource** for understanding, tapping into and securing public investments and resources
- **Reliable program administrator** of public funds
- **Valued technical assistance provider** / issue expert on broad range of issues



“Your proposal is innovative. Unfortunately, we won’t be able to use it because we’ve never tried something like this before.”



" I used to lead by example, but it was too much work."