

Micronesia Center for a Sustainable Future

Activities Document #1: 13th Micronesia Chief Executives Summit – 7/15/10

General Background

The Micronesia Center for a Sustainable Future (MCSF) has been conceptually developed within the context of the on-going meetings of the Micronesia Chief Executives' Summit (MCES) and the Micronesia Presidents' Summit (MPS) over the past three years. The Center has been broadly and specifically supported by the Micronesian leadership through these two bi-annual regional Leadership meetings, through Summit communiqués, and in line with an adopted Strategic Development Plan. The MCSF is headed by the Secretary General, who is appointed by the Chief Executives of the member jurisdictions. The initial Secretary General was then Palau President Tommy E. Remengesau. The current Secretary General is Emanuel Mori, President of the FSM. To date, the Center has been primarily staffed by the Strategic Design Team, originally appointed by President Remengesau and confirmed by President Mori in their capacities as Secretary General. Members of the Design Team currently include David Bell, Conchita Taitano and Larry Goddard.

Structurally, the MCES and MCSF interact as follows:

- The MCES is supported by ten committees, ranging in topic from environment, to energy, to labor, to health. Each of the committees, and the Summit as a whole, focus on issues that span jurisdictions and are regional in nature. The ultimate purpose of the MCSF is twofold: first, to serve as a secretariat to the MCES and the MPS, and second, to support committee activities where appropriate value can be added.
- As secretariat to the MCES, the MCSF's role is to ensure that committee commitments made through Summit communiqués are followed through between Summits, and to facilitate the development of conference agendas.

Institutionally, the MCSF is intended to provide technical support and assistance to MCES committee initiatives. This includes such things as pursuing and administering grant awards, recruiting consultant expertise, and providing financial support as funding sources are identified and made available. It should be noted that several committees currently function without any need for additional support—the Micronesia Challenge and the Health Committees (for which PIHOA is the Secretariat), for example. In these instances where the MCSF would not add obvious value, the role of the MCSF will be purely facilitative.

Finally, The MCSF is intended to provide a base of support to international and regional activities and with international and regional organizations. This might include such activities as the establishment of networks for data gathering and communications, fund raising, and project identification.

Organizationally, the MCSF has been incorporated in Guam to establish 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. The MCSF Board is made up of the MCES principals, with the Secretary General as Chairman, the CNMI Governor as Vice-Chairman, and the Guam Governor as Secretary/Treasurer.

To further the development of the MCSF, a grant request was developed by the Strategic Design Team, as directed by the Chief Executives, at the 11th MCES in July of 2009. The Grant was completed during the 12th MCES in December of 2009 with focus on three primary areas:

- Establishment of the organization and its operating systems and protocols;
- Initial program delivery, including the launch of the MCSF information portal; and
- Significant progress toward a strategic framework that involves all nine jurisdictions.

The grant was awarded to the Graduate School and officially announced in late July in a signing ceremony held in Pohnpei, FSM, between the Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs Assistant Secretary Anthony Babauta, and FSM President Emanuel Mori.

The Graduate School

The Graduate School received a contract modification on June 14, 2010, with a one-year period of performance that ends on June 13, 2011. The grant was offered to the Graduate School because of its institutional history administering regional programs like PITI-VITI, and supporting regional communities of practice such as the Association of Pacific Island Public Auditors (APIPA), the Island Government Finance Officers' Association (IGFOA), and the Executive Leadership Development Program (ELDP).

The grant could not be awarded to MCSF directly because, to date, the MCSF is without permanent staff, corporate structures or financial systems needed to administer funds. To the greatest extent possible, the Graduate School will administer the grant "as if" it had been awarded to the MCSF directly, including the MCSF on such activities as consultant recruitment, terms of reference, interim grant reporting, budget management, etc.

Since the contractual relationship is between OIA and the Graduate School, the Graduate School is ultimately responsible for contract deliverables. Given this, the MCSF Board and Secretary General are the Graduate School's primary clients for this contract. Ultimately, any MCSF activities requiring additional contractual support will be executed by the Graduate School; however, the activities under those contracts will benefit the MCSF.

Inception Meeting

Given the activities detailed in the modification, as well as the compressed one-year timeline, preliminary planning activities began prior to, and during, the 13th Micronesia Chief Executives' Summit (MCES). Discussions during this stage of the process were described as preliminary, pending formal announcement of the grant award. However, it was made clear that the Grant was active and expenditures were authorized to be made immediately. Furthermore, due to the short timeline of the grant, activities will proceed immediately, especially in areas relating to the establishment of financial

and legal protocols, structural setup, fund-raising planning, and pilot programs that are time-sensitive and authorized by the Secretary General.

The inception meeting was attended by Jason Aubuchon, Graduate School Program Manager, the MCSF Strategic Design Team, Jay Merrill, who facilitated the development of the MCSF Strategic Development Plan and Kevin O’Keefe, a Graduate School consultant who facilitated the meeting and assisted in the planning process.

While much of the discussion centered around contracting logistics and consultant recruitment, the group was able to outline program delivery items with some specific detail. In addition, the group developed a scoring methodology which took into consideration the timing (phasing), impact, importance, risk, jurisdictional coverage, and expertise required. Out of this analysis, a preliminary rating of each MCSF project was achieved. It is envisioned that a similar process be undertaken by jurisdictional representatives as part of a Regional Planning Meeting, thereby finalizing the program plan for implementation.

The activities below are specifically listed in the grant award, having been developed and endorsed at the 12th MCES held in Guam in December of 2009.

Organizational Development

The following are the elements of organizational development currently included in the Grant.

Establishment of Necessary Legal Protocols for the MCSF

The MCSF has a corporate identity, registered in Guam as a non-profit corporation, as directed by the Chief Executives at the 11th MCES. Within this context, documents have been filed to gain 501(c)(3) tax exempt status, which should be completed within six weeks.

Work needs to be undertaken to explore the potential need for an intergovernmental charter for the purpose of international recognition, UN based charter recognition, funding opportunities and the related need for intergovernmental legal protocols. It is assumed that this will require a high level outside consultant.

Establishment of a Financial Control System for the MCSF

Like the legal protocols, the financial protocols will require expertise, which is currently being sought from Deloitte and Touche, who has assisted in setting up the request for 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. Discussions revolved around the potential for hiring finance staff, if funds can be identified, to handle financial matters. If funding is not identified, discussion was also had regarding the use of a professional agency, such as Deloitte and Touche, during this set-up phase.

Development of a Facilities and Staffing Plan for the MCSF

Largely due to the lack of identified future funding sources and the need to hold discussions with jurisdictions, the development of a facilities and staffing plan was considered to be a late phase project, of low priority, with minimal risk.

Identification of Grants from Sustainable Funding Sources

Secretary General Mori expressed significant concern regarding the development of a comprehensive funding plan for the MCSF during the MCES. It was therefore agreed that funding be set aside to establish a preliminary plan for fund raising, focusing on sources that will supplement the start-up grant from OIA.

Establishment of Program Evaluation Capacity for the MCSF

This item is intended to establish an evaluation procedure to ensure that programmatic evaluation is undertaken at the beginning of the MCSF project process. The development of this capacity was determined to be undertaken at a later phase, was of high importance, moderate risk and applicable to all jurisdictions.

Program Delivery

At the 12th MCES Summit, a number of pilot projects/programs were identified to be included in the grant request, to demonstrate the ability of the MCSF to deliver regional programs. The following are the currently proposed programs.

MCSF Branding and Website Development

The establishment of a regional website and the branding of the MCSF are considered to be critical to the successful formation of the Center. This program will focus on creating a comprehensive interactive website, focusing on knowledge management and social communication.

Invasive Species Workshop (RISC)

The invasive species workshop is directed at providing training, through a New Zealand based training firm, that has already provided training to the FSM, Palau and the RMI and that was not available to Guam and the CNMI. The training will be held in Guam and trainees from the CNMI will be responsible for their own travel to the training event.

At the Summit, an additional issue of a Biodiversity Convention Conference of the Parties (COP) side event, at the next Biodiversity COP, was placed on the table by the RISC Committee for potential funding and should be further investigated. The Chief Executives supported this initiative in the Summit Communiqué.

Support Women's Summit

This program focuses on a regional follow-up to the up-coming International Women's Conference to be held in Beijing, China. It is intended that this follow-up conference for regional traditional women leaders be tied to the next MCES to be held in Kosrae. The phasing of the meeting is tied to the Beijing UN Conference.

Expand Demographic Data Sets

A demographic poster of the FSM has had great impact and this project seeks to replicate the same in Palau and the RMI. The original poster was prepared by the Island Research and Education Initiative (IREI), located in Pohnpei, FSM.

Support GIS-Based Historical Mapping Analysis

This project is focused on gathering GIS-based historical mapping data on island atolls and analyzing such data regarding land loss and coastal changes from Climate Change. This project is tentatively directed at the services provided by the IREI.

Replicate Best Practice Model for Career and Technical Education on Palau, the RMI and Pohnpei with the Center for Micronesian Empowerment

This program relates to expansion of work completed by the Center for Micronesian Empowerment (CME) for Kosrae and underway in Chuuk, Pohnpei, the RMI and Palau. CME provides job and ESL training, as well as assimilation assistance and training to individuals who move to Guam for work. This private sector initiated program recently graduated 63 Kosraeans and has begun training of a similarly sized group of Chuukese. Training opportunities are expanding, including training by the Federal Highway Administration, GIS mapping and CAD skills. The program will be able to handle the training of 1,000 to 2,000 people over the next two years.

Support COHAB Health Bio-Diversity Project

Cohab is a United Nations based initiative that seeks to bridge the gaps in awareness of the connection between Biodiversity and Human Health. Human health represents one of the most important indicators of sustainability – a healthy human population is dependent upon a healthy natural environment. The ecosystem approach to health recognizes the intimate links between ecosystem services, human and animal health, biological diversity, and social and economic development, and recognizes the need for integrated public health policies and development programs that view the protection of ecosystems as an important part of achieving their objectives. The initial MCSF COHAB program of action will focus on developing posters that communicate the importance of biodiversity to preventing birth defects in the FAS, with a focus on Chuuk State. This initiative will be developed in conjunction with the UOG Western PACIFIC Tropical Research CENTER, The College of Micronesia and MicSem.

Remittance Study for the FAS States

This is an add-on project which seeks to use \$10,560 of Grant funding to leverage external funding of approximately \$90,000 to conduct a remittance study for the Freely Associated jurisdictions (Palau, the FSM and the RMI). The proposed provider is the Micronesian Seminar and the potential outside funding sources include Australia, New Zealand and Canada. The 13th Communiqué directly supported this project and requested this outside funding.

PIRRIC Website

This small add-on project arose at the Summit and is directed towards providing funding to reinitiate the PIRRIC website.

PIHOA/Regional Health District Concept

This project supports a PIHOA-proposed regional project that currently has limited funding to establish a position paper for a proposed Regional Health District.

Regional Strategic Framework

The development of a Regional Strategic Framework is intended to provide socio-economic data to supplement and augment the existing Strategic Development Plan and establishing representative structural foundations to support cooperative decision-making.

Establishment the MCSF Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG)

The original DOI grant request called for the establishment of the SIRG and set aside funding to accomplish this work. Support for such a representative group to review, on behalf of the Chief Executives, the grant and other related issues of forward movement became very evident at the 13th Summit. It has therefore been determined that the designation and gathering of representatives must occur as soon as possible.

MCES and MPS Support

Because the MCSF is intended to serve as the Secretariat for both the Micronesia Chief Executives Summit and the Micronesia Presidents' Summit (MPS), grant funding has been designated for this purpose.

Compile Millennium Development Goal (MDG) and Parallel Socio-Economic Data Set

This project requires the compilation of data from existing MDG reports in the FAS states and the identification of parallel data from the CNMI and Guam to establish the foundation data to develop an analytical socio-economic matrix for the region. This would serve as a basis for program development in the future. In terms of phasing, this compilation is subject to the completion of MDG studies in the FAS states.

Develop Analytical Socio-Economic Matrix

As mentioned above, this matrix will be based upon the successful compilation of parallel data.

Develop Methodology for Socio-Economic Impact Assessments

Development of a methodology is critical to bring the studies together and to providing a foundation for a successful assessment upon which programs will be developed. Phasing for this component of data collection and analysis is considered high, the importance is considered great, the risk is moderate to high and the jurisdictional coverage is complete.

Design and Deliver Regional Strategic Framework

This is the final delivery component of the strategic assessment process. It is therefore phased at the end of the grant and follows the completion of the other components, as described above. Coverage applies to all jurisdictions.

Conclusion – The Way Forward

The vision of a fully operational MCSF is ambitious, and in addition to questions regarding purpose and structure, there were many questions from the leadership including the future physical location of the Center, staffing, and future funding sources. The grant was not designed to provide operational funding for the specifics above, but rather, to develop a framework through which these needs can be clarified and supplemental funding sources identified. Clearly, the overall success of the grant will be especially dependent on the identification of viable funding sources. However, the OIA Start-Up Grant is not the first such source.

From an administrative perspective, the grant was designed to balance organizational development (legal protocols, financial systems, program evaluation), with some initial program delivery. In general, program delivery activities are regional in nature and add value to MCES committee initiatives. Ideally, program delivery activities will be leveraged with additional funding sources.

Ultimately, in spite concerns over process, the MCES leadership reaffirmed their commitment to the MCSF and its goal of regional collaboration. They also reaffirmed the need to ensure tasks are coordinated among the various MCES standing committees.

The next steps in establishing the MCSF will be for each chief executive to designate a representative to function as regional coordinators and participate in a regional planning meeting. The ideal regional coordinator will work closely with their respective Chief Executive and across committee areas of expertise. The goal of the regional planning meeting will be to seek endorsement of the vision and mission of the MCSF and ownership of the project plan.

Due to the short duration of the grant, it is also critical that immediate activity be undertaken to implement projects and programs deemed important and in need of immediate implementation, as assessed above.

There are some clear risks to the success of the MCSF. As one governor noted, the North Pacific has been trying to create a regional organization for years without success. The most obvious risk lies in the identification of operational funding to support the MCSF—especially if the vision of a fully operational MCSF entails full-time staff and facilities.