

VAPDA

# Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies

2011 Statewide Strategic Assessment

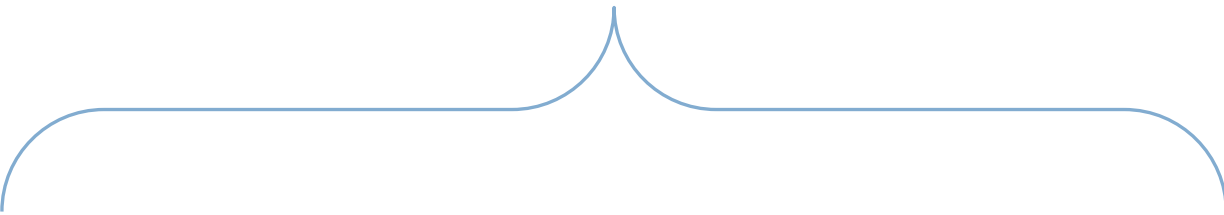


Prepared by the  
National Association of Development Organizations  
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***The Vermont Association of  
Planning and Development  
Agencies (VAPDA)  
is the statewide association  
for the state's 11 regional  
planning commissions.***

***Preparing  
Vermont's Communities  
for a Better Future.***



# 1. Purpose and Scope of the Project

**The Vermont Association of Regional Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA) and its membership of 11 Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) conducted a comprehensive statewide strategic assessment in 2010 and 2011.** The VAPDA strategic assessment was designed to evaluate the capacity and potential of the state's RPC network to serve as a results-oriented, cost-effective and value-added resource for the State of Vermont and its local governments, communities and citizens. The findings and recommendations of this initiative are intended for use by state policy-makers and RPC executive directors and policy boards.

VAPDA has embraced the need for more aggressive and innovative statewide approaches across the broad spectrum of regional planning and development issues. Under a Request for Proposal (RFP) process, VAPDA selected the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) to conduct and facilitate a statewide evaluation and review process for the state's RPCs. As the largest national membership organization serving the nation's 540 regional planning and development organizations, NADO has more than four decades of experience in regional development policy, organizational management and design and state association best practices at the national, state and regional levels.

In partnership with VAPDA, NADO developed an overall assessment framework that includes several core elements. These included:

- **Review of the mission, goals and objectives** of VAPDA and the state's 11 RPCs, including state enabling legislation, Act 250 development review law and other related laws, regulations and administrative directives.
- **Statewide scan of the governance structures, work programs and organizational capacity** of the 11 RPCs, including job descriptions/functions, financial management and accounting standards, policy board

## General Observation

Recognizing the state's economic, social and sustainability challenges and opportunities, the NADO research team observed that the leadership and membership of VAPDA has embraced the need for more aggressive and innovative statewide reforms across the broad spectrum of regional planning and development issues.

The VAPDA statewide assessment initiative is timely and much needed due to several factors. The transition of the state's executive leadership presents a fresh opportunity for new approaches and dialogue with respect to regional planning and development. It also follows on the heels of lessons learned and outcomes from the previous administration's *Challenges for Change* initiative.

More importantly, the severe financial constraints at the federal, state and local government levels are requiring substantial intergovernmental collaboration, a renewed emphasis on regional approaches and shared services across local jurisdictional boundaries, and a major focus on performance measurement, public transparency, and fiscal and programmatic accountability.



functions and responsibilities, personnel policies, and programs and services. This included a review of hard copy manuals and resources, as well as a scan of RPC websites.

- **Development of a statewide matrix of individual RPC programs and services** to assist in the development of a VAPDA strategy for statewide quality controls, service delivery, program efficiencies, cost savings and peer accountability.
- **Evaluation of the viewpoints, experiences and opinions of external stakeholders toward the network of RPCs through a series of in-depth interviews.** This included elected, appointed and career officials at the federal, state and local levels.
- **Comprehensive self-assessment online survey,** based on the NADO Regional Council Self-Assessment Toolkit, of more than 200 RPC policy board officials, executive directors and professional staff.
- **Interviews and one-on-one discussions with RPC executive directors** about their priorities and ideas for improving statewide consistency, outcomes and innovations.

The NADO project team included a mix of regional planning and development practitioners, association research and policy professionals, and university officials with experience in RPC management and policy. These individuals included:

- **Matthew Chase,** Executive Director of NADO and the NADO Research Foundation
- **Deborah Cox,** NADO Director of Government Relations and Legislative Affairs
- **Steve Etcher,** NADO Secretary and Executive Director of the Boonslick Regional Planning Commission in Missouri
- **Russell Harper,** Executive Director of the Kentucky Council of Area Development Districts
- **Michael King,** NADO Board Member and Executive Director of the North Country Council in New Hampshire
- **Kathy Nothstine,** NADO Program Manager for Regional Development Initiatives
- **James Youngquist,** Director of the Institute for Economic Advancement at the College of Business, University of Arkansas at Little Rock and Director of the SouthEast Regional Directors Institute (SERDI) – multi-state professional development association for the 112 regional council executive directors in the southeastern United States

**Between January – March 2011, more than 200 RPC officials covering all of the 11 RPCs completed the exhaustive survey, including 130 policy board officials, all 11 executive directors and 60 professional and administrative staff.**



As part of the statewide assessment process, the research team conducted a series of in-person and phone interviews with a sample of senior-level federal, state and local officials to evaluate their views and perceptions of the state's system of RPCs. Between February 28 and March 2, the group conducted more than 20 interviews in Montpelier, Waterbury and Burlington. Working in small teams, the group met with senior representatives from the:

- Governor's Office and State Legislature
- Offices of U.S. Senator Leahy, U.S. Senator Sanders and U.S. Representative Welch
- Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development
- Vermont Agency of Transportation
- Vermont League of Cities and Towns
- Vermont Department of Public Safety, Division of Emergency Management
- Vermont Agency of Natural Resources
- Vermont Housing and Conservation Board
- Vermont Natural Resources Council
- Vermont's Regional Development Corporations
- Vermont Council on Rural Development
- Vermont Center for Geographic Information, Inc.

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To gain additional feedback and knowledge about the governance structures, operations, programs and focus areas of the RPCs, both individually and collectively, the research team worked with the leadership of VAPDA to develop and implement a comprehensive self-assessment survey based on NADO's Regional Council Self-Assessment Toolkit.

Between January and March 2011, more than 200 RPC officials covering all of the 11 RPCs completed the exhaustive survey, including 130 policy board officials, all 11 executive directors and 60 professional and administrative staff. This exercise was a significant undertaking for the participants and researchers since it takes each survey participant more than 45 minutes to complete the self-assessment questionnaire.

It should be noted that VAPDA is the first state association of regional councils in the nation to ask each and every policy board official, executive director and staff from each RPC to complete the NADO Regional Council Self-Assessment Toolkit. This deserves special acknowledgement.



Over the past four decades, NADO has observed that the most successful RPCs across the nation often share several characteristics. These organizational traits and building blocks were used to frame the statewide RPC evaluation into the following sections:

- **Regional governance**, including engagement and ownership of each RPC policy board
- **Executive leadership and management skills** of the executive director
- **Organizational mission, culture, services and operations**
- **Relationships with state and local government officials**
- **Engagement and collaboration** with external stakeholders such as nonprofits, universities, foundations, and private sector firms
- **Statewide coordination, peer accountability, consistency and performance of services and quality** among all RPCs of the state (while retaining the flexibility and latitude to pursue the specific priorities of each individual RPC region)

The national network of 540 regional planning and development organizations shares a common mission of fostering regional collaboration, partnerships and solutions to improve the quality of life and economic prosperity of America's residents and communities. However, each state has its own structure of local government and system for intergovernmental coordination between state and local government, legislative mandates and financial support for regional planning commissions, culture and commitment to regional planning and development, and balance of urban and rural communities. All of these, and other considerations, were taken into account when assessing the structure, performance and potential of Vermont's 11 Regional Planning Commissions.



## 2. Vermont in a National Landscape

As a New England state, Vermont enjoys many special assets and values that may be considered unique in the United States. This includes strong and direct citizen engagement and ownership of local government at the town and municipal levels, cherished history of compact development and strict local land use controls, and a distinguished record of preserving and protecting cultural and environmental treasures. The NADO research team heard repeatedly from state and local leaders that the state's greatest strength is its quality of place and life.

President Dwight Eisenhower said, “Plans are nothing; planning is everything.” Vermont and its network of RPCs must embrace this principle. The NADO research team found that VAPDA and its membership recognizes that change is not made in the *plan* itself, but in the *process and results* of planning – engaging people and communities to develop and pursue authentic, shared visions and strategies.

Vermont enjoys high/positive rankings in high school graduation rates, percentage of workforce with college or professional degrees, low percentage of citizens in severe poverty, and strong public health conditions. Nationally, the state ranks in the middle on indicators such as household income, average pay per worker and homeownership.

In examining the state's competitive rankings for the New Economy, Vermont ranked 23<sup>rd</sup> in the 2010 State Index by the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation (ITIF) – a highly respected think tank in Washington, DC. The state was rated highly in alternative energy use (#1), patents (#4), workforce education (#5), online population (#6) and online agriculture ventures (#7). However, the state lagged in areas such as IT professionals (#42), manufacturing value-added (#37), scientists and engineers (#34), high-wage traded services (#47) and IPOs (#48).

Like many of America's less populated and more rural states and communities, the State of Vermont has highly attractive and competitive areas, but also regions that are struggling to confront the realities of today's global marketplace and knowledge-based economy. The entire state, including those areas currently enjoying greater prosperity, must constantly overcome obstacles such as those associated with economies of scale, logistical connections to national and global markets, demands for knowledge workers, and costs for the development and maintenance of basic and advanced infrastructure (i.e. broadband, energy, housing, transportation, and water/waste water, etc).

While the state has a strong educational track record and good percentage of educated workers, Vermont ranks at or near the bottom nationally with its percentage of population under 18 and overall population growth in the previous decade. The growth patterns of the state and the ability to attract talent is uneven across the state. According to the U.S. Census





Bureau, three sub-state regions of the state experienced a population loss in the past decade. While there appears to be definite growth pressures from development of secondary homes and sprawl, the state ranked 49<sup>th</sup> in the nation in overall population growth from 2000 to 2010.

According to many senior state officials, the state's low-density settlement patterns and reputation for fostering a strong sense of community may also be masking underlying rural poverty and other social concerns. During the interview phase of the project, state and local officials often expressed mounting concerns with the levels of substance abuse, mental health disabilities and declining workforce preparedness skills across the state. In addition, state and local officials raised their concerns about the immediate need for the state to address pressing issues such as pursuing new energy alternatives to supplement or possibly replace the Vermont Yankee Nuclear facility, deploying more advanced broadband (including redundant, reliable and affordable high-speed broadband options) and other technologies across the state, and maintaining and improving water quality in the Lake Champlain basin and throughout Vermont.

In evaluating the state's RPCs, the NADO research team took these socio-economic, demographic and political factors and realities into consideration. In general, we observed several key factors that may also be influencing the state's community and economic development competitiveness, including the role of RPCs in helping advance the goals and objectives of state and local officials:

- **The lack of a statewide comprehensive economic development strategy** based on regional and local assets, as well as existing and emerging economic innovation clusters, is resulting in uneven development and growth. There is a significant need for stronger state leadership and actions to assist RPCs and others in integrating and coordinating the various federal and state planning processes required of state and local officials. This should include strategies for better statewide and regional alignment of community and economic development, emergency preparedness, energy, affordable housing, technology, telecommunications, transportation and workforce development plans or a combination of these.
- **The state's tradition of strong citizen control of and participation in local government** often results in a more complicated relationship between state and local government officials (especially without strong county government, the large number of small municipalities and/or the lack of full-time chief local elected officials and professional staff).
- **A strong state and local orientation toward separating regional and local land use planning and decisions from regional and local community and economic development planning and implementation is causing unnecessary turf battles.** It is making it harder to leverage program and project resources and to integrate and coordinate various federal and state resources and policies. This reality is creating unnecessary barriers at a time when the state and its communities should be leveraging the state's primary asset of "quality of place" as part of a comprehensive statewide sustainable economic development strategy.



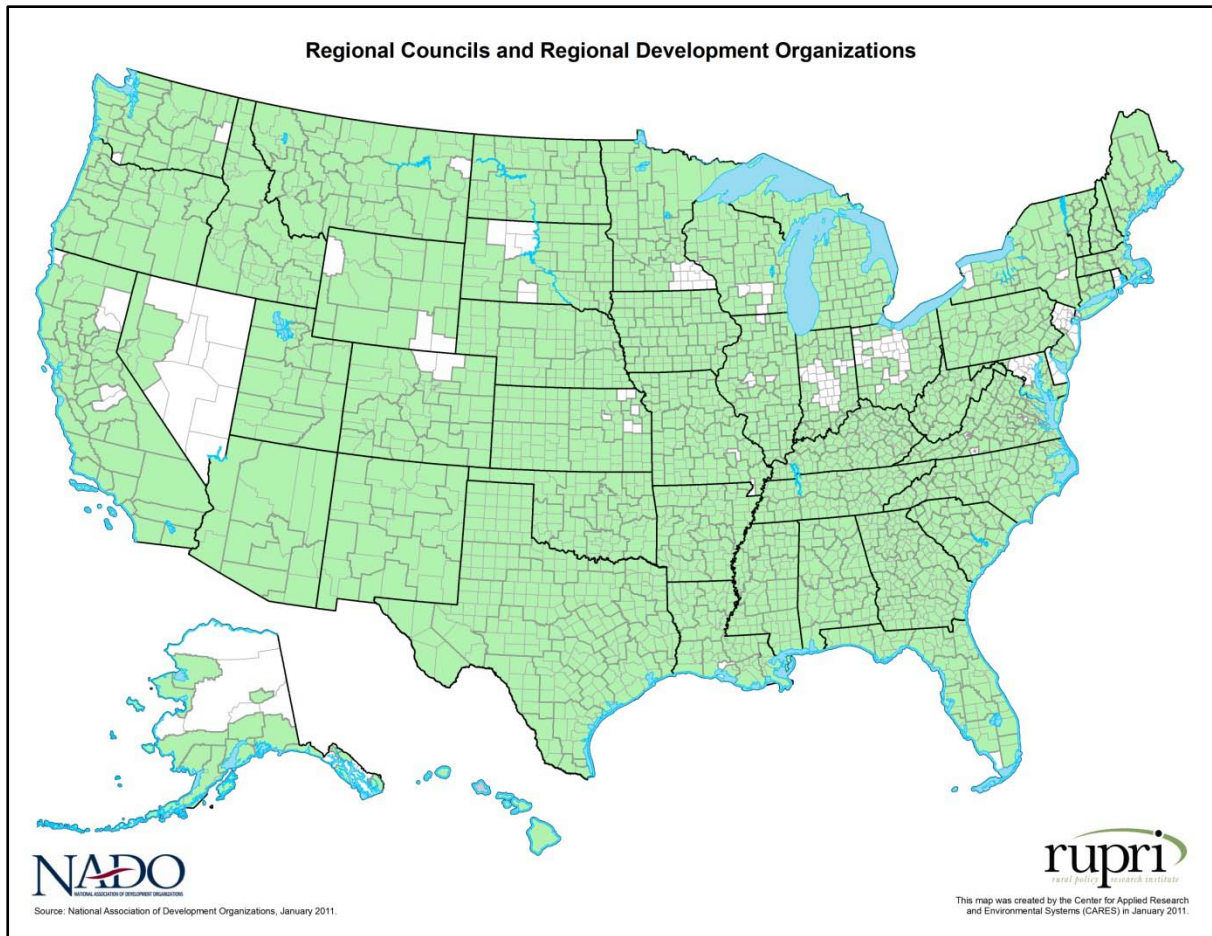
- **The network of Regional Development Corporations appears to lack the organizational capacity, diversity of services, financial resources and organizational scale necessary**, based on the NADO research team's external interviews and knowledge of national counterparts, to realistically drive regional innovation and growth by themselves. In most cases nationally, RDCs and RPCs function under the umbrella of a unified regional planning and development organization, giving the organizations more resources and tools to implement comprehensive development strategies. Specially, many RPCs nationally are increasingly serving as the regional administrators of federally-funded programs for workforce development, transportation (including public transit), business lending, entrepreneurship, disaster planning and recovery, housing and other areas linked to community and economic development.
- **The state has many highly respected institutions of higher education**, yet most of these entities are not actively engaged in leveraging their assets and talents for the greater good of the state's economy. *(Champlain College and Vermont Technical College were identified repeatedly as major exceptions; they were labelled as strong leaders and assets for economic development in the state).*
- **Vermont is a state characterized by a strong sense of community activism**, and as such, benefits from a large number of active, effective state and local community groups and nonprofit organizations that rally around critical state issues such as the environment and housing issues. However, it appears there is an immediate and pressing need for better coordination of these entities as well as a greater emphasis on program implementation and accountability, rather than just planning and process.

Historically, Vermont's brand has been quality of life and protection of the state's working landscapes and natural resources. The RPCs are central players in this regard. However, they could be used more aggressively and strategically by state and local officials to pursue sustainable economic development strategies that can preserve the physical and community landscape while also generating new economic development growth opportunities. While these two issues are not mutually exclusive, they are currently being treated this way in many parts of the state and within several levels of state government.

Fortunately, Vermont is positioned to define new directions for regional planning and development in the state. The new Governor's administration presents an opportunity for refreshed leadership at the state level. Additionally, current constraints in federal, state and local government budgets are requiring many leaders to rethink existing approaches to community and economic development service delivery. State challenges of balancing the budget and reduced federal funding opens the door for increased collaboration and a revision of "business as usual" attitudes. By embracing the opportunities at hand, VAPDA and its membership of RPCs offer the state a solid foundation and regional governance platform for stronger program integration, comprehensive regional development and innovation strategies, and forums for areawide problem solving.



### 3. National Perspective of Vermont's RPCs



As noted in the previous sections, Vermont's network of 11 Regional Planning Commissions shares many core principles and underpinnings with the national network of 540 regional planning and development organizations. Following are some broad and specific observations that attempt to put the roles and services of Vermont's RPCs into perspective from a national context.

The common threads between Vermont's RPCs and their national counterparts include:

- **Recognition and establishment through state law or administrative executive order** (or through Memorandum of Agreement of local governments) as being key partners in the nation's intergovernmental system of federal, state and local elected officials
- **Common mission to strengthen America's local governments, communities and economies** by serving as a forum to craft regional strategies and solutions for areawide needs and opportunities
- **Designation and/or administration of various federal and state programs**, including community development, environmental, emergency preparedness and recovery, transportation and water quality planning (*Note: U.S. EDA designation as Economic*

*Development Districts (EDDs) and the function of regional economic development planning is a major missing component in Vermont compared to other parts of the nation.)*

- **Prepare plans and strategies** for broad range of regional and local issues, including compliance with federal mandates and requirements
- ◆ **Strengthen local governments and communities** through technical assistance, public administration support and leadership capacity
- ◆ **Advocate for region and locals** at federal and state levels

**However, the RPCs in the State of Vermont are faced with several unique conditions and obstacles:**

- **Regions are based on multi-town and/or multi-municipality boundaries** rather than traditional form of multi-county RPCs *(New England and limited parts of the Midwest and California are typically viewed as unique with respect to single county RPCs.)*
- **Strong system of local citizen control and participation in town and municipal government governance and operations**, often combined with a lack of full-time chief elected officials and professional staff. *(It was mentioned throughout the interviews that RPCs in Vermont often fill the void of county government in facilitating dialogue between state and local officials, providing regional and local planning services, and tackling a broad array of regional and community development issues. However, they lack the legislative, regulatory and taxing authority of a traditional county government.)*
- **Legislative authority and powers for regional land use review and oversight** (similar to Florida), which results in a perception by some state and local officials (including many RDC leaders) that RPCs cannot/should not be engaged in economic development. In the vast majority of states, RPCs are directly involved in economic development planning as well as project implementation and funding (i.e. business lending and entrepreneurship technical assistance, grant and financial management, ownership of business incubators and office parks, and preparation and analysis of regional and local data and information.) As mentioned earlier, this artificial separation hinders the ability of state and local officials to address issues effectively.
- **Lack of statewide RPC commonality through federal programs and service delivery designations which are typically present in other states.** RPCs across the nation are commonly designated or manage functions such as EDA Economic Development Districts, U.S. Labor's Workforce Investment Boards (WIB), U.S. Health and Human Services' Area Agencies on Aging or U.S. DOT's Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO). Instead, Vermont RPCs are linked under state law and through federal pass-through or state funded programs such as rural transportation planning, all-hazard mitigation planning for local communities, state contracts for broadband planning and energy efficiency and



conservation planning, Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping, and regional watershed planning. Even though some of the resources for these efforts originate at the federal level, they are often project-based rather than official program or organizational designations.

■ **Perception by some that RPCs are legally limited to regional land use planning and other related planning services.** This often results in lost opportunities for stronger integration and leveraging of federal and state resources for broader regional development, such as:

- ◆ **Regional and statewide integration and coordination** of regional and local land use planning with community and economic development, energy, housing and transportation strategies and investments.
- ◆ **Economic development strategies that leverage regional and local assets**, including quality of place for tourism, attraction of knowledge workers and firms, and development of existing and emerging innovation clusters.
- ◆ **Targeting business and commercial development to priority economic development centers** with existing infrastructure and capacity to handle growth and development in a cost effective and sustainable manner.
- ◆ **Regional capacity to administer, deliver and manage an array of federal programs under the umbrella of unified regional development organizations**, including for community and economic development, public and human services, transportation and workforce development programs.

As supported through the online survey data and one-on-one external stakeholder interviews, Vermont's RPCs are viewed as highly professional, dedicated organizations. In general, state officials value their connections with local communities and their ability to remain "apolitical" in a highly charged political environment. There is a general consensus that RPCs are essential since they bring continuity to the local level, have broad knowledge and historical context of their regions and help continue programs and projects beyond election cycles. In addition, RPCs are invaluable since they often help state and local officials think about the long-term impact of their decisions and policies.

As outlined in the next sections of the report, VAPDA and its membership of RPCs must build upon their existing legislative mandates and functions to remain "value-added" resources for the state in today's constantly evolving economic, fiscal and political environment. One of the central needs of the state, yet also an area of intense conflict, is the desire to help state and local officials make and shape more informed and sound land use decisions while also empowering local businesses and communities to grow and prosper.



Similar to their peers across the nation, Vermont's RPCs must continue to build upon their strong history and track record by evolving and exploring new approaches. The following sections will provide more specific recommendations and observations. However, it is important to put these findings into a national context. VAPDA and its members are confronting many of the same challenges and opportunities as their peers across the nation. These issues may be considered "inherent" in the RPC governance model, yet they can and must be addressed nationally, as well as in Vermont. These issues include:

- **Establish a higher level of consistency and performance across the entire statewide network of RPCs** (i.e. policy board engagement, executive director leadership, program quality, financial accountability, and intergovernmental and multi-sector partnerships). State officials routinely judge and label the entire network of RPCs based on their perceptions of the "underperformers", "invisible players", and "folks on cruise control".
- **Even when RPCs deliver common programs and services across the state at a superior level of quality, there is far too often an unacceptable level of diversity in the format and style used by each RPC.** This makes it much more difficult to convert plans or programs into a seamless statewide product.
- **Evolve the mission and scope of RPCs as the issues facing regions and communities become more complex and interconnected.** While the vast majority of RPCs across the nation were founded to advance areawide economic development issues (compared to RPCs in Vermont focused predominantly on regional land use planning), most have significantly broadened their programs and services to link the broad spectrum of regional development issues that impact a region's ability to compete in today's global economy.
- **As RPCs nationwide evolve and expand their programs and services, it is still essential for state and local policymakers to work with RPC executives** to establish and maintain some level of clarity in their mission and purpose. In Vermont, this issue is exacerbated by the absence of a strong county government system, the parallel network of Regional Development Corporations and the apparent conflict between land use planning and economic development within some state agencies and within some areas of the state.
- **RPCs work best when they are not trying to control an issue, but are facilitating improved coordination, communications and actions among local leaders on common issues.**
- **In today's budgetary environment, most policymakers are not interested in funding "planning", "technical assistance", or "capacity building".** RPCs need to balance their core missions of regional planning, convening and coordinating with achieving "real world" or "tangible" results.



Based on the external and internal interviews, the NADO research team recommends that Vermont's RPCs should focus on the three core mission areas of:

- (1) Provide the areawide leadership and neutral forum for the state and individual regions to think long-term about their future, including the social, community and economic development aspects of regional planning and development.
- (2) Provide technical assistance, public administration support and policy and program know-how to plan and implement essential steps and investments to advance the vision and strategies of the state and regions.
- (3) Serve as problem solvers by mobilizing and leveraging resources and actions that translate local needs and assets into performance-driven and publicly accountable actions and investments.

### Snapshot of RPC Governance Issues: National Perspective vs. Vermont

Issue	National	Vermont
<b>RPC Leadership Structure with Local Governments</b>	Strong ownership and participation by county elected and appointed officials, along with varying degrees of municipal government official participation.	Formed as sub-state units of government and by actions of municipalities, yet policy board officials are often primarily citizen representatives appointed by local elected officials.
<b>Regional Scale</b>	Multi-county service area with 3 to 20 counties, allowing for sufficient organizational capacity and resources.	Multiple towns and municipalities within more limited geographic area.
<b>Scope of Planning and Development Services</b>	Founded originally as Economic Development Districts by U.S. Department of Commerce.	Strong role in regional planning, including land use, brownfields redevelopment, emergency preparedness, transportation and watersheds. However, strongly discouraged by some state and local entities from engaging in economic development planning, program delivery and implementation.



## 4. Major Recommendations

The major recommendations outlined below were developed based on the external stakeholder interviews, analysis of the RPC self-assessment survey results and the NADO assessment team's experience and knowledge of national practices. These recommendations are only intended as a guide for enhancing the overall statewide performance of the state's RPC network. Some of the recommendations will require substantial resources, both time and financial, while others are less resource intensive but will require significant leadership and collaboration.

Issue	Recommendation	Resource Requirements
<b>Statewide Standards of Excellence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Establish "minimum standards of excellence" and "code of conduct" to guide general performance expectations of VAPDA members.</li><li>◆ Establish planning document templates and quality standards for statewide plans and products.</li><li>◆ Establish peer review process for all common statewide work products to ensure quality, accuracy, completeness, consistency and timeliness prior to submission to funding partner.</li><li>◆ Continue to develop and implement statewide templates and standards for RPC operations, accounting and governance practices.</li><li>◆ Conduct training and professional development forums and workshops for policymakers, executive directors and staff, especially related to Act 250 requirements for RPCs.</li></ul>	Moderate





<p><b>Peer Accountability, Consistency and Performance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Establish a statewide quality coordinator (either full-time, part-time, consultant or dedicated RPC staff) to assist in the development and implementation of statewide templates, products and consistency. <i>(This could potentially be funded by the state providing additional resources for statewide contracts for peer accountability and review.)</i></li> <li>◆ Conduct peer reviews of statewide work products before submission to federal and/or state funding agencies for quality, consistency and compliance.</li> <li>◆ Implement a confidential annual peer review and mentoring process for each RPC executive director and/or organization, including participation, outreach and networking with adjacent states.</li> <li>◆ Develop a voluntary SWAT team of executive directors to assist RPCs with leadership transition, financial challenges or other performance and leadership issues.</li> <li>◆ Develop a mentoring program for new RPC executive directors.</li> <li>◆ Establish more regular networking and training opportunities for RPC policy officials and staff, both administrative and professional employees.</li> </ul>	<p>High</p>
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<p><b>Statewide Forum for Coordinated Action and Implementation on Regional Strategies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Develop strategies to integrate and leverage existing federal and state resources into a more seamless regional planning and development framework. This includes a national scan of noteworthy practices such as Pennsylvania’s <i>Land Use-Transportation-Economic Development (LUTED)</i> initiative, North Carolina’s emerging initiative, <i>NC Tomorrow</i>, and Alabama’s statewide EDA Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.</li> <li>◆ Partner with the Vermont Council on Rural Development and other thought leaders to move concepts and plans to development and implementation. Potential topics include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Regional innovation cluster ecosystems, including with adjacent states and Canada</li> <li>✓ Alternative and renewable energy</li> <li>✓ Regional and local food systems</li> <li>✓ Utilization of technology and telecommunications for sustainable economic development</li> <li>✓ Linking workforce and economic development for the 21<sup>st</sup> century innovation economy</li> <li>✓ Addressing emerging and existing social and human resource challenges such as substance abuse and mental health</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ Use GIS expertise and capacity to develop and analyze the data needed for state and local policymakers to</li> </ul>	<p>High</p>
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	<p>make more informed and strategic decisions and investments. This includes traditional focus areas such as transportation, emergency management preparedness, broadband and water resource management. However, there are also opportunities with pressing topics such as energy production and usage, infrastructure inventory and capital improvement planning, substance abuse, affordable housing, social services, mental health assistance and other related issues.</p> <p>◆ Regional and local food systems is a well established and prominent field in the state. However, RPCs could provide additional leadership and support related to statewide and regional coordination, data analysis and feasibility studies, and strategies for aggregating demand and processing facilities. There are also significant community development, finance and transportation issues related to this topic. In some cases, brownfields redevelopment could even be linked to establishing locations for local farmers markets.</p>	
<b>Statewide Administrative and Professional Staffing Capacity</b>	<p>◆ Establish a VAPDA RPC circuit rider program or shared services agreement among RPCs – both statewide and substate regions as appropriate. This includes sharing administrative and professional staff and consulting services where and when appropriate, such as planners, grant writers, GIS technicians,</p>	<p>Moderate</p>



	<p>bookkeepers and public administration specialists.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Encourage cross training of RPC staff both internally and statewide to ensure gaps in service and quality are addressed in program start ups, leadership and staff transitions, and under special circumstances.</li> <li>◆ Develop forums, both online or in-person, for sharing of noteworthy practices, problem solving and peer exchanges. This should be for administrative and operational issues, as well as program and policy topics.</li> </ul>	
<b>RPC Policy Boards and Local Officials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Develop statewide templates and training materials for RPC policy board orientation and minimum standards of excellence, including policy board member job descriptions and due diligence checklist. <i>(NADO's Regional Council Self-Assessment Toolkit has sample materials and outline to guide the process.)</i></li> <li>◆ Commit to more pro-active RPC board meeting agendas that are action oriented, less process oriented and command the interest and attention of key regional stakeholders.</li> <li>◆ Use the platform of statewide and regional RPC board meetings or workshops to engage state, regional and local leaders from the education, government, business, nonprofit, philanthropic and community sectors.</li> </ul>	Moderate



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Develop more formal and regular process for RPC board members to report back feedback and updates to local elected officials.</li> <li>◆ Pursue strategy to obtain stronger direct participation by local elected officials in the activities of RPCs, with a goal of establishing majority composition of RPC boards by locally elected officials. <i>(Note: The NADO team recognizes the unique nature and scale of local government in Vermont.)</i></li> <li>◆ Consider the option of expanding RPC boards to include at least one representative of the region's state legislature delegation as an ex officio or formal voting member(s) of the RPC board such as currently the case in Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, South Carolina and Tennessee.</li> <li>◆ Use representatives of RPC policy boards to assist in statewide RPC orientation efforts with state agencies and legislative officials. This is an important part of improving intergovernmental collaboration and partnerships.</li> <li>◆ Hold periodic joint meetings or forums with the policy boards of Regional Development Corporations, Workforce Investment Boards and other regional organizations, (including regionally and statewide), to pursue common goals and objectives.</li> </ul>	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Conduct regular outreach and partnership efforts with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, Vermont Council on Rural Development, Vermont Technical College, Champlain College, University of Vermont and other related organizations to leverage professional development and capacity building resources across the state.</li> </ul>	
<b>GIS: Power of Data and Facts to Inform Policies, Strategies and Investments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Expand the use and application of GIS technology to integrate regional and local plans for current programs, while also exploring value-added GIS services for emerging issues such as:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Health care access</li> <li>✓ Substance abuse planning</li> <li>✓ Mental health planning</li> <li>✓ Integrated strategies for land use, transportation and economic development</li> <li>✓ Affordable housing</li> <li>✓ Energy planning and feasibility</li> <li>✓ Broadband capacity, partnerships and utilization strategies</li> <li>✓ Workforce commuting, development and skills analysis</li> <li>✓ Quality of place indicators</li> <li>✓ Regional innovation cluster ecosystems and strategies</li> <li>✓ Regional and local food systems planning and development</li> <li>✓ Emergency preparedness, including pre-disaster mitigation</li> <li>✓ Brownfields redevelopment</li> <li>✓ Public transportation and school district transportation efficiencies</li> <li>✓ Tourism promotion and asset mapping</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Moderate to High

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Establish protocols for sharing GIS services and technologies across RPC boundaries to fill gaps in service or to leverage the expertise and capacity of those RPCs with stronger GIS capacity.</li> <li>◆ Continue to explore partnerships with federal, state and local agencies, as well as nonprofits, business community, utilities, public schools, universities and colleges and other related entities that could benefit from GIS services and data of RPCs.</li> </ul>	
<b>Act 250: Training, Awareness and Implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Develop and implement internal VAPDA strategy for more uniform awareness and participation in Act 250 proceedings and responsibilities. While respecting local priorities and decision making, VAPDA and the RPCs can still work together on sharing of noteworthy practices, Standard Operating Procedures, and professional development training for policy board members and staff.</li> <li>◆ Engage state agency and legislative officials, representatives of RDCs and other related entities in professional development workshops and training on the regional land use review process, including raising awareness of the actual roles and authority of RPCs in the process.</li> </ul>	Moderate
<b>Coordination with Regional Development Corporations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Continue to pursue partnership opportunities with RDCs statewide and regionally.</li> </ul>	Low



## 5. Vermont RPCs: Strengths

VAPDA and its network of RPCs are composed of talented and driven professionals who offer numerous benefits to the state and their individual regions.

TOPIC	MAJOR FINDINGS
Linkages	In a state that lacks a strong county government system, the RPCs provide a crucial link between local communities and state leaders. State officials value RPCs for their ability to convene local stakeholders and bring their issues and concerns to the state level. State agencies look to the RPCs as a channel for providing input and sharing information between state and local governments. Likewise, municipalities appreciate that RPCs facilitate intergovernmental connections and inter-municipal coordination.
Depth and History	The history of RPCs and their unique role in the state provide the RPCs with institutional knowledge of regional and local issues and how the regions have evolved over the years. This is deeply valued by state and local officials. The depth and breadth of the RPCs' background allows them to think about the long-term future of their regions and the state.
Apolitical Status	The RPCs are professional organizations that are fortunate to operate outside the realm of state and local partisan politics. As a whole, the RPCs have been remarkably successful because they are seen as apolitical and are able to collaborate with multiple groups and stakeholders.
Services	State and local partners view the RPCs as adept at providing program administration, grant management and regional planning for a number of state agencies in a range of services, including land use planning, regional transportation planning, water quality planning, emergency management / hazard mitigation, and GIS analysis and mapping. Additionally, RPCs offer critical services to local governments, including technical assistance and capacity-building.
Network	VAPDA offers a stable network for federal and state officials to share information and resources with local officials. Interview participants also noted that the RPCs communicate well with each other and support one another to ensure that staff has access to necessary resources.





## 6. Vermont RPCs: Opportunities

Vermont's RPCs have the ability to take on additional challenges that will better define their importance to the state, and help them to deliver stronger results for their communities and partners. Some of these opportunities are outlined below.

TOPIC	MAJOR FINDINGS
Mission and Scope of Operations	<p>While the RPCs received high marks for fulfilling their basic required duties on a statewide basis, stakeholders highlighted an opportunity for the RPCs to put forth a more pro-active agenda and to address a major lack of consistency. VAPDA's partners recognize that the RPCs are an ideal platform for linking land use, transportation, housing, community and economic development, environmental protection and other matters, and they can provide a forum for better integrating these processes. VAPDA and its membership are situated to develop a long-range vision with actionable steps for Vermont's future. A strategic planning process that expresses both a vision for Vermont's future as well as a refined mission for the RPCs would build more credibility and support for the RPC network. Additionally, the RPCs can identify specific opportunities and roles that they can deliver for the state, and should present these to the Governor, legislature, state agencies, and other partners.</p>
Branding	<p>In Vermont, RPCs are well known entities, especially those with strong personalities and visibility of their executive directors. However, RPCs are often (mis)perceived as "only regional land use planners" or "just planners." There is a general lack of understanding of how the RPCs work in issue areas such as brownfields, housing, transportation and GIS data and mapping is part of regional community and economic development. The issue of statewide inconsistency and/or a lack of performance by specific RPCs is also a major barrier to strengthening the RPC statewide brand.</p> <p>VAPDA must improve the RPCs' branding and better promote awareness of statewide RPC values, services and capacity. Additionally, VAPDA should establish product standards and work more collaboratively to ensure greater consistency across its network. Stronger work product standards would not only create better results for the clients and partners of RPCs, but would also further promote the RPCs as a consistent brand that can be depended upon for high-quality work in the broader arena of regional development.</p>

<b>Advocacy and Leadership</b>	Because the RPCs form a critical link between state and local governments in Vermont, the RPCs are well-positioned to become stronger advocates for municipalities at the state level. They can also offer statewide and regional leadership on a range of emerging issues, such as energy, emergency management, food systems, health care access, social services and affordable housing, among others. The RPCs excellence in GIS, planning and program administration indicates that they could develop increasingly advanced mapping, data analysis and program management services, thereby expanding their network of state, local and regional partners.
<b>Professional Development and Training</b>	To address staffing inconsistencies as well as policy board participation, VAPDA's leadership should explore training and other opportunities to address weaknesses, as well as foster better interagency collaboration and intergovernmental links with federal, state and local partners.
<b>Act 250</b>	The role of RPCs in the oversight and implementation of specific Act 250 regional land use planning requirements is a major issue facing the RPC network statewide. In some cases it has branded RPCs as only regional land use planners and in other cases it has created a strong and powerful perception that RPCs are anti-development or major barriers to economic development. There is a major opportunity for RPCs to more aggressively educate and raise awareness about their roles and mandates under Act 250. Since federal and state officials are also focused on establishing stronger quality of place strategies and performance measurements, as well as promoting better integration of economic development, housing, land use and transportation planning, VAPDA and its RPCs are in a unique position to advance these concepts.
<b>Geographic Information System (GIS) and Data Services</b>	VAPDA should explore specific strategies to expand the use and application of GIS technology to integrate regional and local plans for current programs, while also exploring value-added GIS services for emerging issues. This was a major theme of state agency officials.

<b>Regional Development and Innovation</b>	<p>A major strength of the State of Vermont is its reputation for quality of place and sense of community. However, there are clear economic indicators that show major gaps and threats to the state. There is a much needed role for the RPCs to play a stronger partnership role in helping the state and its local communities address the fundamental building blocks for competitive regions and communities, such as infrastructure, access to capital, workforce development, housing and technology. The RPCs should pursue a much more aggressive role in regional development planning and implementation, particularly related to fostering regional collaboration, packaging resources, co-locating programs and developing more sophisticated regional economic data and cluster analysis.</p>
<b>Statewide and Regional Planning and Program Coordination and Integration</b>	<p>With budget cutbacks at the federal and state levels, there is an immediate need to lower program administration costs, leverage remaining public sector resources for more strategic investments and implement more aggressive and transparent accountability standards. With the current program diversity and capacity of most RPCs, VAPDA is uniquely positioned, from the standpoints of governance structures, staff capacity and organizational flexibility, to fill the leadership and administrative gaps in bringing various federal and state programs closer together.</p>

## 7. Vermont RPCs: Weaknesses

While Vermont's RPCs are valued and trusted partners of public officials, there are critical gaps in performance and service delivery that must be enhanced to provide even more valued and effective benefits to the state and individual regions. The following section highlights areas that require attention:

TOPIC	MAJOR FINDINGS
<b>Statewide Consistency</b>	The RPCs lack consistency in multiple dimensions. While it is expected that organizations representing different regions will have varying priorities and inherent strengths and weaknesses, the RPCs as a group need to demonstrate more consistent, reliable effort to produce more high-quality services and improve their reputation with state and local partners. The information gleaned from the project team's interviews with stakeholders indicated that while the RPCs tend to produce high-quality work, the products are sometimes dissimilar and would be stronger as a whole if they used a more uniform approach. Additionally, it was noted that some RPCs reliably deliver solid results, while others tend to fall short of the mark more frequently, further indicating the inconsistencies across the network and the need for greater accountability.
<b>Peer Accountability</b>	VAPDA has clearly made major strides in addressing the issue of peer accountability in recent years. While recognizing that the executive director and staffs of each RPC are directly accountable to their policy board and region, there is still a pressing need to develop more advanced and aggressive strategies to strengthen peer accountability. Currently, there is a clear understanding / perception by external partners about the performance and value of RPCs, with the group being divided into high performers, average and non-performing.
<b>Communication and Follow Up</b>	Stakeholders noted gaps in consistent communication with the RPCs, commenting that some are more difficult to engage in dialogue and action than others. Partners at all levels within and outside of state government noted that VAPDA relies much too heavily on a couple of executive directors to represent the group. While these leaders are overwhelmingly effective on behalf of the state association, it often results in a lack of personal connections and knowledge about the performance, services and accountability of the other RPCs.

<b>Clarity of Mission and Scope of Purpose</b>	<p>As the role of RPCs in Vermont and nationwide have diversified and expanded, the Vermont RPCs have struggled to clearly define, communicate and brand their role and mission statewide. This is largely due to the fundamental design structure of RPCs as being locally governed and controlled by local elected and appointed officials. While regional land use planning and general purpose planning have been the traditional mission and core focus of RPCs, VAPDA and its RPC network are clearly engaged in a much broader array of regional community and economic development services and programs today.</p>
<b>Act 250</b>	<p>The RPCs are inconsistent with their approach to Act 250 review and implementation. While some RPCs are deeply committed and engaged in their Act 250 responsibilities within the region, others are perceived to be disengaged or failing to properly address their responsibilities to participate as statutory parties (i.e. allowing too much development / sprawl and/or being too anti-development or restrictive). VAPDA and its membership need a clearer strategy and a statewide standard of how RPCs should address Act 250. At a minimum, VAPDA should work with state and local officials on professional development training, peer exchanges and sharing of noteworthy practices. Some RPCs are viewed as pro-development while others are perceived as major roadblocks to economic growth and development.</p>

## 8. APPENDIX I: REGIONAL COUNCIL INNOVATIONS AND NOTEWORTHY PROGRAMS & PROJECTS

The following section offers a brief snapshot of the diversity of regional council or RPC programs and initiatives around the nation. These noteworthy projects and programs are only intended to offer ideas and thoughts on ways RPC are advancing the community and economic competitiveness and goals of their regions.

### ALABAMA

- **Statewide ballot initiative was developed and passed by the Alabama Association of Regional Councils that provided \$1 million for each of the state's twelve regional councils to establish revolving loan funds (RLFs)** to assist entrepreneurs and businesses.
- **Alabama Association of Regional Councils established a pilot program with the state DOT to test the concept of Rural Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs)** at the West Alabama Regional Council, which already housed and staffed a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO); The pilot was successful, giving the state DOT the confidence to form and house RTPOs statewide within the other regional councils.

### ARIZONA

- **The rural Councils of Governments (COGs) and small urban Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in Arizona have collaborated to hire a full-time government relations and quality control director to staff the Arizona Rural Transportation Advisory Council.** The coalition sponsors a joint annual transportation summit to enhance the professional development and education for planning staff, elected officials, technical committee members and other rural transportation stakeholders in the state. The advisory council provides a unified voice on regional transportation issues facing small metropolitan and rural areas of the state. The group also provides vital training and technical assistance that helps rural local officials to be more effective and knowledgeable participants in the statewide transportation planning process. (rtac.net)

### FLORIDA

- **South Florida RPC served as a pilot for EDA's Atlanta Regional Office in transferring management of four underperforming RLFs** from local governments and a nonprofit to the regional council (which is an Economic Development District); RLFs are now fully functioning and have nearly doubled to \$8.2 million.
- **Southwest Florida RPC has a LEED-certified planner on staff** to assist local governments, industry (including builders) and nonprofit partners with "green" building techniques and planning. With a planner accredited by the U.S. Green Building Council, the RPC has the



credibility and knowledge to assist local communities and industry. **Southwest Florida is also one of seven pilot regions in the United States selected to work with Climate Prosperity Project (CCP)** to help generate sustainable urban development. CCP is an economic development partnership that works to promote energy independence, reduce the impacts of climate change, and protect the environment.

- **Northeast Florida Regional Council manages and coordinates the statewide regional emergency preparedness activities** for the state's eleven regional councils. This includes coordination of table top exercises and scenario planning, including economic impact analysis of natural and man-made disasters.

## IDAHO

- **Statewide consortium of six economic development districts (EDDs)** received U.S. EPA funding to establish a \$3 million statewide brownfields revolving loan fund to help local businesses and organizations clean up and reuse contaminated properties for economic and community benefit. ([www.idahobrownfields.com](http://www.idahobrownfields.com) | [www.growingidaho.org](http://www.growingidaho.org))
- **Several EDDs in the state played a key leadership role in forming the Idaho Nevada Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI)** for rural Idaho and Nevada in 1999, an important source of capital for businesses and entrepreneurs. Two of the RPC/EDD executive directors continue to serve on the Idaho Nevada CDFI board of directors.
- **The East Central Idaho Planning and Development Agency maintains a diverse portfolio of business development finance and micro loan programs**, including SBA, USDA, EDA and locally-based loan funds. To complement these funds, **the group established five entrepreneurship development centers around its region** and also helped create two others to provide the facilities, professional assistance and resources for existing businesses and start-up firms.
- One of East Central's E Centers is a textbook example of how to build effective regional and multi-sector partnerships that support business development. **The partnership includes the Wasatch Venture Fund, Idaho National Lab, BYU-Idaho University, Eastern Idaho Angels and the other economic development districts across the state.** Each partner brings a special skill set to the table to assist researchers, entrepreneurs and businesses within the region, including deal structuring, tapping into venture and angel investors, writing an effective business plan, conducting market research, and transforming research ideas and products to the private marketplace (commercialization), etc.



## IOWA

- **Three Councils of Governments (who all serve as Rural Transportation Planning Organizations) and one MPO, along with Iowa DOT, joined forces to develop the Trans-Iowa-Illinois Freight Corridor Study in 2007.** The consortium is studying the feasibility of marketing an alternative trucking route to alleviate pressures on the crowded segments of I-80 from Des Moines to I-74 in Western Illinois. This partnership has resulted in greater public participation than the organizations would have achieved alone, as well as enhancing the level of information made available to decision makers at the state and local levels. ([www.seirpc.com](http://www.seirpc.com))

## KENTUCKY

- **Twelve of the state's 15 Area Development Districts (ADDs) provide the management and staff support for regional and local Workforce Investment Boards;** All 15 ADDs serve as Area Agencies on Aging (AAA); 14 of 15 ADDs are EDA Economic Development Districts; All 15 serve as Rural Planning Organizations for transportation planning, as well as five serving as Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).
- **Under a partnership with Kentucky Infrastructure Authority, all 15 ADDs are involved in implementing and overseeing water and sewer infrastructure projects.** This includes developing and maintaining a database for all water and wastewater utilities located in each ADD service area, collecting information and data, and developing project profiles for all infrastructure projects identified by local utility staff; Each ADD is also charged with ranking project importance and creating a priority list for funding consideration by state legislators and policy officials.
- **Manage various aging and health care services programs,** including Consumer Directed Option (CDO) program through Medicaid, Family Caregiver Support program and Aging Disability Resource Market program.
- **Buffalo Trace ADD launched a GIS Subscription Service for local governments and other partners within the region.** Using GegoSync XG, a GIS viewing software, the ADD provides GIS data to local governments, special districts, water districts, health departments and others. The ADD maintains data layers from each agency, distributes the shared data to all users in each agency and provides the technical support and data maintenance to ensure accuracy among user agencies. This annual subscription allows smaller, rural counties to use GIS for a low-cost fee.
- **Lake Cumberland ADD has partnered with area counties, community and technical college system and South Kentucky Rural Electric Cooperative to build the Kentucky Regional High Growth Training Center** to train current and future electric utility workforce, as well as meet the growing training needs for water, wastewater and telecommunications jobs. With roughly half





of the power industry workforce eligible to retire within the next five to 10 years, this is a high priority issue for the region.

- In an effort to keep young people in local communities, the **Green River Area Development District** hosted the **Extreme Entrepreneurship Tour** for all counties in its region. Over 200 individuals from area high schools and colleges attended this event. The tour brings together the country's top entrepreneurs to share the concept of entrepreneurship at a grassroots level. Local entrepreneurs were incorporated to show that it is possible to stay in one's hometown and be successful. Whether aspiring to start a business or just looking to the future, young people leave inspired to begin the journey of the rest of their lives.

## MAINE

- In 2010, Governor announced a new statewide initiative, *Mobilize Maine*, as a fresh approach to community and economic development that builds on indigenous strengths and authentic assets of Maine's people, places and businesses. The new asset-based strategic planning project is funded by the state, Fairpoint Communications, state's six Economic Development Districts, local governments and other private and nonprofit sector partners. **Most importantly, the Governor tapped the state's six regional councils as the primary facilitators and coordinators of the statewide economic development project.**
- **Northern Maine Development Commission serves as an invaluable resource in the northern portion of the state, a very rural and vast region.** The group has several noteworthy designations, including USDA Rural Empowerment Zone, Maine Pine Tree Development Zone, Small Business Development Center, and a Manufacturing Extension Partnership field office. The commission also supports a regional tourism marketing initiative, staffs the Aroostook Partnership for Progress, developed a digital video training program for local officials, developed a regional brownfields initiative ([www.northernmainebrownfields.org](http://www.northernmainebrownfields.org)) and assists in scenic byway corridor management planning. The commission also has extensive community and economic development planning and project management capacity, including EDA, SBA and USDA IRP lending programs.

## MASSACHUSETTS

- **The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) developed the Pioneer Valley Clean Energy Plan**, under a project funded by the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative. The plan identifies specific actions for stakeholders in the region to take to increase energy conservation, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and develop new sources of clean energy. The two regional planning agencies have been working closely with a regional advisory committee comprised of experts in renewable energy, sustainable development, and planning and have conducted a series of educational sessions involving speakers with expertise in solar, wind, biomass, and bio-diesel technologies. The plan contains many implementation activities which towns, regional planning agencies,



businesses, non-profits, and individuals can undertake to reduce energy consumption, decrease greenhouse gas emissions and to encourage siting of appropriately scaled renewable energy facilities.

- **The Pioneer Valley Regional Commission is leading the Knowledge Corridor Passenger Rail Study**, with support from the Vermont Agency on Transportation. The corridor is the cluster of communities between Springfield, Massachusetts and White River Junction, Vermont located along I-91 within the Connecticut River Valley. The communities consist of a mix of high-density and more rural areas that feature a multitude of important cultural, educational, business and medical facilities. Expansion of passenger rail services along the Knowledge Corridor is viewed as a significant economic revitalization asset.
- **The Merrimack Valley Planning Commission completed the Merrimack Valley Priority Growth Strategy**. This locally-driven plan links local land use, transportation and economic development priorities within the region. The group is also involved in working with local municipalities to convert old mills into mixed-use facilities and to implement a “brownfields to brightfields” effort to use more than 100 acres of landfills within the region as solar farms.

## MICHIGAN

- **The Northwest Michigan Council of Governments worked with a consortium of community leaders in economic development, education and outreach, energy and local government to produce a new regional strategy, Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency and Water Resources: Opportunities for Northwest Lower Michigan.** The

## MINNESOTA

- The **Headwaters Regional Development Commision’s Center for Community Stewardship** implemented **Bemidji Leads!** to identify and empower community leaders as stewards working to bring the community together behind a collective vision for Bemidji, and align resources to reach that vision. After one year of listening to community members, Bemidji Leads! stewards challenged the community to step up and move the community forward. As a result, an \$80 million events center is currently under construction; downtown is undergoing revitalization; newly formed Bemidji Day at the Capitol brings over 150 community members to the capitol to lobby for top issues; the Bemidji Education Council was born; and the city and surrounding townships came to an historic joint planning and annexation agreement. Currently, over 400 community members are involved. The stewardship model has now spread from Bemidji to seven other Minnesota communities.



## MISSISSIPPI

- **Three Rivers Planning Development District** formed and supports the **PUL Alliance**, a consortium of three rural counties who agreed to pool their limited resources to build a state-of-the-art mega-industrial site to attract a major automobile manufacturer. Three counties also agreed to share any tax revenue generated from the site. *(Note: Toyota is now building a facility to manufacture the Prius at the site.)*
- **The members of the Mississippi Association of Planning and Development Districts (MAPDD) and the Mississippi Forestry Commission have partnered to provide a statewide process for preparing Wildfire Prevention Plans and Fire Cause Analysis Plans.** This partnership allows the PDDs with the most at-risk counties to develop statewide forest fire protection plans, with the PDDs using GIS technology to better integrate and enhance data collection and planning processes.

## NEBRASKA

- **The staff of the West Central Nebraska Development District** partnered with area community colleges, business groups and the state to visit more than 1300 businesses to evaluate their needs and conditions. The initiative focused on helping local businesses and entrepreneurs with business transition planning, which is a major issue since 40 percent of local business owners plan to retire or transition out in next five years (without the next generation of workers and owners, many of the businesses will lapse).

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

- The Dartmouth Regional Technology Center is a 32,000 square foot business incubator owned and managed by the Grafton County Economic Development Council and the **North Country Council, an EDA EDD headquartered in** Bethlehem, NH. The center offers education and infrastructure support programs to assist researchers and entrepreneurs in refining business plans, identifying investment resources and providing them with basic business infrastructure and support. The center's current space is already occupied, and a significant backlog exists with demand continuing to grow. To prevent new technology companies from locating out of the region, the North Country Council is already working to double the center's existing lab and work space.
- **The Southwest Regional Planning Commission (NH)** assisted the City of Keene with a new Climate Change Mitigation Plan, which is part of a broader national campaign, *Cities for Climate Protection Campaign (CCP)*, administered by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI).



## NEW MEXICO

- **New Mexico Association of Regional Councils (NewMARC) partnered with New Mexico First and New Mexico DOT to sponsor a three-day statewide town hall, “Sustainable Transportation: Paying Our Way From Here to There.”** The state’s regional councils and the broader coalition are now working with public, private and community partners to implement specific recommendations for making sure the state has the transportation infrastructure and services to compete in the global marketplace.
- **With a pool of \$874,000 in state support each year, the state’s seven regional councils provide technical assistance, planning and capital improvement planning support.** Each regional council assists its local governments and other partners with Infrastructure Capital Improvement Program planning, which is a prerequisite for project funding under the state’s legislative capital outlay fund.
- **The Mid-Region Council of Governments serves as the fiscal agent and manager of the New Mexico Rail Runner Express,** a five-year, \$400 million commuter rail project along the Rio Grande corridor. The project moved from concept and planning to implementation in record time, with MRCOG completing the project in record time and at a far lower cost per mile than any new start transit project in the United States. ([www.mrcog-nm.gov](http://www.mrcog-nm.gov) | [www.nmrailrunner.com](http://www.nmrailrunner.com))

## NEW YORK

- **The Southern Tier West Regional Planning and Development Board led a long-term effort to prevent the abandonment of a 145-mile rail stretch connecting six counties in New York and Pennsylvania.** The group has spearheaded the revitalization of this vital freight rail line by piecing together \$24.9 million in new investments, which has created close to 1,000 new jobs and generated an additional \$4 million in private sector capital from three shipping firms. In 2000, when a new partnership was formed as the Western New York & Pennsylvania (WNYP), the line operations began with only one customer, a manufacturer of specialty ceramics, with only 75 carloads a year. By the end of 2007, WNYP had an even dozen customers and traffic volume was up to almost 55,000 carloads.



## NORTH CAROLINA

- **The Land-of-Sky Regional Council in Ashville manages a Waste Reduction Partners program** that is supported by retiree volunteers with experience in trades such as engineering, science and architecture. Through the program, the experienced volunteers work with local governments, private businesses and nonprofits to identify specific solutions and ideas for reducing energy and water waste. The program has helped reduce energy consumption by over 64,000 megawatt hours and saved over 78 million gallons of water through efficiency projects since 2000.
- **The Mountain Landscape Initiative in southwestern North Carolina** is a powerful regional planning initiative spearheaded by the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina and the Southwestern Commission. In partnership with public, private and nonprofit partners, the two groups have produced a highly detailed, publically driven resource guide, *Region A Toolbox: A Pilot of the Mountain Landscapes Initiative*. The toolkit was developed after six months of public outreach, including the active participation of more than 1,000 people at various charrettes, workshops, community meetings and personal interviews in a seven county region. With assistance from nationally-recognized architecture, transportation, design and engineer firms, the final product features visuals on feature design and community models for community planning, site and building design, environmental protection, sustainable transportation, open space conservation, affordable housing, farmland preservation and regional food systems, and economic development.

## OHIO

- **The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission in Columbus has established the Center for Energy and the Environment.** The new research and technical assistance center is focusing on “making green easy” for its 40 local government members. The program focuses on cross-disciplinary issues such as air quality, water quality, sustainable growth planning and clean energy. Staff offer energy assessments to local governments, provide more in-depth data for local leaders and offer educational resources on energy efficiency and clean energy.

## OKLAHOMA

- **The Southwest Oklahoma Impact Coalition received an EDA University Center grant to serve a 20-county region of the state. The organization is governed by the five higher education institutions** (Cameron University, Western Oklahoma State College, Southwestern Oklahoma State University, University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, and Redlands Community College) **and the two regional councils of governments** (Association of South Central Oklahoma Governments and South West Oklahoma Development Authority) in southwest Oklahoma. The regional economic development consortium is focusing on developing the quantity and quality of its workforce, sector and industry cluster strategies, and addressing key issues such as



intermodal transportation, health care, broadband, water quality and quantity, electrical services, and childcare for working families. ([www.soiconline.org](http://www.soiconline.org))

## OREGON

- **The Southern Oregon Regional Economic Development, Inc helped establish an angel investor network and venture network within its region.** The Jefferson Grapevine Entrepreneurial and Angel Network was formed in 2007 based on successful entrepreneurship networks in Bend and Portland. The network encompasses four key partners, 12 organizations and hundreds of community leaders. A team of 10-12 local angel investors have been willing to invest equity in aspiring entrepreneurial businesses by financing startup costs. The Southern Oregon Regional Economic Development, Inc. serves as the fiscal agent and administrative support staff for the angel network, along with core partners (Small Business Development Centers, Senior Core of Retired Executives, Rogue Community College and Southern Oregon University). Local businesses also provide sponsorships and support.

## PENNSYLVANIA

- **Seven ARC local development districts** in the state have a broad portfolio of programs and services, including export trade assistance; enterprise development and business development finance; broadband mapping, demand analysis and education; energy audits, analysis and conservation; GIS data and mapping; infrastructure planning and development; government procurement resource centers; and rural transportation planning.
- **Under a state pilot program, the seven LDDs were involved in a program to better integrate and coordinate land use, economic development and transportation planning (LUTED).** Each LDD and their regional and local partners, in collaboration with state officials, were tasked with developing LUTED regional action plans that identify specific short- and long-term strategic priorities.
- **Northwest Commission was instrumental in forming the Northwest Pennsylvania GIS Users Group to share ideas, technical data and resources.** The commission provides a full range of GIS services ranging from data and mapping services to coordinating GIS training to providing on-site technical assistance. It has established a Neighborhood GIS program to allow for increased GIS capacity at the local government level, created a GIS subcommittee for the Northwest Emergency Response Group, and offers fee-based GIS services to area businesses.
- **SEDA COG's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) gold-rated, new 14,000 sq. ft. Energy Resource Center's High Performance Building is serving as a "living laboratory and classroom,"** encouraging the region's adoption of cost-saving, energy conservation, pollution-preventing best technologies, design and construction practices. The new SEDA COG building is estimated to use at least 40 percent less energy than conventionally-constructed buildings of this size. The building is sited to maximize passive solar gain and its materials and design employ

state of the art technologies to minimize energy consumption and pollutants. The site's innovative stormwater management system accommodates zero-discharge of stormwater via bioswales, a vegetated room, porous pavers and other elements. A 75-person conference room and displays within the building are used to educate the public on these features.

## **SOUTH CAROLINA**

- **The South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments is a partner in InfoMentum**, a GIS-based tool that supports regional economic development. The partnership, which includes county governments, businesses and utilities throughout the six county Upstate region, has used InfoMentum to provide integrated research tools for business attraction since the mid-1990s. Services provided by InfoMentum include customized GIS applications, an industrial properties database, fact finder database, special reports, technical assistance and InfoMap, a Web-based interactive mapping tool.

## **TENNESSEE**

- **The Southeast Tennessee Development District, along with the Coosa Valley Regional Development Center and the Northeast Alabama Community College, spearheaded the formation of the Tri-State Regional Workforce Alliance.** With more than 60 partners (including economic development corporations, educational institutions, businesses and philanthropic groups), the alliance takes a regional approach to producing a local, high-skilled workforce that can attract new businesses and retain existing companies and workers. Since its launch in 2006, the alliance has created a Web-based resource ([tristateworkforce.com](http://tristateworkforce.com)), sponsored a regional workforce summit and participated in the U.S. Department of Labor's National Business Learning Partnership project.
- **The Upper Cumberland Development District, through its regional development corporation, provides comprehensive efforts to address housing issues in its region.** The group operates 14 housing units, provides homebuyer education classes, operates a continuum of care / homeless management information system and a post purchase program. Among its innovative programs, the UPDD is building eight apartments in a rural community for low-income grandparents who are raising their grandchildren.



## TEXAS

- **The 24 Councils of Governments in Texas are involved in a variety of noteworthy COG activities.** These include:
  - ✓ Serving as the primary planning and coordinating entities for emergency 9-1-1 communications for most of the state
  - ✓ Partnering with the Governor's Division of Emergency and Homeland Security to coordinate and improve regional homeland security preparedness, planning and response activities
  - ✓ Texas Association of Regional Councils administers the federal Citizen Corps program in partnership with the state and 24 COGs
  - ✓ COGs in hurricane impacted regions receive direct allocation of HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds from the state
  - ✓ Provide training to law enforcement personnel through regional training academies
  - ✓ Develop and maintain an inventory of municipal solid waste landfills, conduct regional planning activities and maintain regional solid waste management plans
  - ✓ Serve as HHS Area Agencies on Aging, EDA Economic Development Districts and Metropolitan Planning Organizations, as well as provide staff support for Workforce Investment Boards

## VIRGINIA

- **Virginia's Region 2000 Partnership is a unique regional branding consortium** of the regional planning council, economic development council, technology council and workforce investment board within the greater Lynchburg region. The partnership serves as a single point of contact to the public and private sector for regional planning services, economic development, marketing and workforce development. While each organization within the consortium has its own executive director and staff, the groups share an office complex and administrative services, as well as have cross representation on their governing boards. They also have a regional coordinating council. ([www.region2000.org](http://www.region2000.org))
- **Cumberland Plateau Planning District partnered with Bristol Virginia Utilities to address the shortage of high-speed broadband capacity within its rural region.** With support from EDA and the state's Tobacco Commission, the groups have extended and developed the region's fiber-optic backbone by more than 250 miles, including wiring technology and business parks. CPC OptiNet currently serves more than 200 businesses and the group expects to have more than 750 customers by 2010. The CPC OptiNet network consists of two types of architecture: A Passive Optical Network, which is ideal for voice and data to business and residential customers; and Private Ethernet, which is ideal for transparent LAN application and high-bandwidth IP-based services. ([www.cppdc.com](http://www.cppdc.com))





## RPC STATEWIDE MATRIX OF SERVICES

provided in last three years or in next year

Programs/Services/Projects	ACRPC	BCRC	CVRPC	CCRPC	LCPC	NVDA	NRPC	RRPC	SWWRPC	TRORC	WRC
<b>Regional/Municipal Planning &amp; Assistance</b>											
Regional Plans	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Municipal Plans	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Bylaws	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Special Designations assistance	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Grant Application and Administration	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Municipal Consultations/Confirmations	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Development Review Assis.		X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X
Inter-municipal Services/Projects	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Inter-regional Planning Projects	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Capital Improvement Program		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Regional Workshops	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Municipal Board training	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
VIT w/VLCT training	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
TOEC training	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Permits/Assistance training	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Demographics/Census/Special Requests	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sponsorships	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Geographic Information System GIS</b>											
Regional Mapping Projects	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Municipal Mapping Projects	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Capacity Analysis/Studies	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Build-out Analysis	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Infrastructure mapping	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Indus/Commercial Sites Data Base		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Natural Resources	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parcel updating	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Transportation</b>											
Transportation Plan or Element	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
VTrans - Transportation Planning Initiative	X	X	X	ccmpo	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rural Transportation Planning Organization	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Metropolitan Planning Organization				ccmpo							
Project Priority Ranking	X	X	X	ccmpo	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Infrastructure Assessments	X	X	X	ccmpo	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Traffic Counts, Analysis, Speed Ordinances	X	X	X	ccmpo	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Transportation Advisory Committee	X	X	X	ccmpo	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Public Transit Advisory Committee	X	X	X	ccmpo	X	X	X	X	X		X
Scenic Byways	X	X	X	ccmpo	X		X	X	X	X	X
Project Management	X	X	X	ccmpo	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Project Reviews	X	X	X	ccmpo	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Brownfields</b>											
Hazardous Site Assessments	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Petroleum Site Assessments	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Site Remediation						X	X	X	X	X	X
Revolving Loan Fund		X							X		
Site Specific Grant	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
State/Regional Coordination	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
<b>Emergency Management</b>											
Public Safety Plan or Element	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
LEPC	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Municipal Emergency Operation Plans	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
All Hazard Mitigation Plans (PDM)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
NFIP assistance	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Fluvial Erosion Hazards FEH (PDM)	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
HMEP	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
HMGP	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Inter-Regional Coordination	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
RERP	X									X	X



## RPC STATEWIDE MATRIX OF SERVICES

provided in last three years or in next year

Programs/Services/Projects	ACRPC	BCRC	CVRPC	CCRPC	LCPC	NVDA	NRPC	RRPC	SWWRPC	TRORC	WRC
<b>Energy</b>											
Energy Plan or Element	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
EECBG Grant	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Energy Committee	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X
Project development	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Municipal Audits	X		X			X	X	X		X	
<b>Economic Development</b>											
Economic Development Plan or Element	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
CEDS		X		X	X	X	X		X	X	
Infrastructure Planning	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Coordination w/RDC, Others	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Commercial/Industrial Sites Data Base		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Project Development Assistance	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Permit Assistance	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tourism assistance	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Value-added agriculture	X	X				X	X	X			
<b>Infrastructure (non-transportation)</b>											
Water/Sewer Plan or Element	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Solid Waste Plan or Element	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X
Telecommunications Plan or Element	X	X		X	X	X	X	X			X
Coverage Plans/Studies	X	X			X			X	X		X
Project Development/Support		X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Technology Teams > Outreach	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Service Provider Outreach		X					X	X	X		X
<b>Natural Resources &amp; Agriculture</b>											
Natural Resources Plan or Element	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Agriculture Plan or Element	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Basin Planning	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X
604(b) water quality	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Stormwater/water quality program	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Fluvial Erosion Hazards	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Forest Stewardship	X	X	X		X			X	X	X	X
Recreation Facilities/Trail Maps	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Natural Resource Mapping	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Regional & Local	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Forest/Farmland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wildlife/Unique Habitats	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wetlands	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Floodplains	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Air Quality		X	X	X					X		
Climate Change		X	X	X			X	X	X	X	
RC & D Council	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Food Systems Planning	X	X	X	X		X	X				
<b>Housing</b>											
Fair Housing training	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Affordable Housing planning	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	



## RPC STATEWIDE MATRIX OF STAFF BY JOB TITLE

JOB TITLE	ACRPC	BCRC	CVRPC	CCRPC	LCPC	NVDA	NRPC	RRPC	SWWRPC	TRORC	WRC	TOTALS
Executive Director	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Assistant Director OR Assistant Executive Director OR Associate							1	1			1	3
Assistant Director/GIS Data Manager	1											1
GIS Manager			1					1		1		3
GIS Planner OR GIS Specialist OR GIS Technician			1		1	1	1	1				5
GIS Services/IT Systems Administrator				1								1
Planning Manager						1						1
Project Manager												0
Projects Specialist		1				1						2
Special Projects Manager OR Special Projects Planner		1			1						1	3
Senior Planner			1	2		2			1	2	3	11
Associate Planner				1								1
Staff Planner				2								2
Planner								1	1	1		3
Assistant Planner									2		2	4
Emergency Management Planner	1		0.5	1		0.5						3
Transportation Planner	1		1		1	1				1		5
Transportation/GIS Planner							1					1
Land Use Planner	1						2					3
Economic Development Specialist						0.5						0.5
Energy and Brownfields Planner	1											1
Energy Coordinator			0.5									0.5
Regional Planner/Transportation Program Manager		1										1
Regional Planner/Environmental Program Manager		1										1
Regional Planner			1		1		1	1		1		5
Office Manager and Bookkeeper OR Office Manager	1	1							1		1	4
Office and Grants Manager			1									1
Business Manager OR Bookkeeper				1	1	1						3
Executive Assistant OR Administrative Assistant				1		1						2
Office Administrator							1					1
Finance Administrator OR Financial Administor OR Finance Manager								1	1	1	1	4
<b>Total Staff</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>87</b>



# Vermont Regional Planning Commissions Municipal Survey Template

Please answer the following questions pertaining to your experiences with the *<insert name of RPC>*.

## Respondent Information

1. Which of the following most closely describes a position that you hold:

- ☐ <RPC> delegate/board member or alternate
- ☐ Municipal official (elected)
- ☐ Municipal official (appointed)
- ☐ Municipal staff member
- ☐ Staff or board member of another RPC
- ☐ State official
- ☐ State legislator
- ☐ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

## PART 1: <RPC> PERFORMANCE REVIEW

### Section A: Overall Performance

1. How would you rate the overall performance of <RPC> as an organization?

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Below average

2. Please indicate how you would rate the <RPC> in terms of the following areas:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Don't Know/Not Applicable
Administration and operations, including financial management	1	2	3	4	5
Availability as a resource to you and your community	1	2	3	4	5
Long-term and strategic planning efforts for the region	1	2	3	4	5
Technical assistance to member municipalities	1	2	3	4	5
Advocacy for regional needs	1	2	3	4	5
Staff competency	1	2	3	4	5
Responsiveness to	1	2	3	4	5



3. In your opinion, how well does the <RPC> board represent your concerns for the region?
  - ☐ Very Well for Most Issues
  - ☐ Pretty Well for Most Issues
  - ☐ Adequately
  - ☐ Not Often on Most Issues
  - ☐ Rarely on Most Issues
4. Would you like to see <RPC> play a more active role in coordinating relationships between towns?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Don't know
5. Would you like to see <RPC> play a more active role in coordinating regional activities among state agencies?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Don't know
6. <RPC> maintains a professional land use planning staff with expertise in various subject areas. How frequently do you rely on staff assistance?
  - ☐ Very Frequently
  - ☐ Often
  - ☐ Sometimes
  - ☐ Not Usually
  - ☐ Rarely
7. How satisfied with the level of information or service you receive from the <RPC>'s staff?
  - ☐ Very satisfied for Most Issues
  - ☐ Pretty satisfied for Most Issues
  - ☐ Adequate
  - ☐ Generally less satisfied on Most Issues
  - ☐ Rarely or never satisfied on Most Issues
  - ☐ I've never requested information or services from RPC staff.
8. How often do you use the <RPC>'s Regional Plan?
  - ☐ Every Month
  - ☐ Most Months
  - ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Never
9. Do you find the content of the <RPC>'s Regional Plan to be useful to your own planning projects?
  - ☐ Very Useful
  - ☐ Somewhat Useful



- ☐ Not Useful
10. What changes would you suggest <RPC> make regarding the Plan (check all that apply)?
- ☐ Be more strategic
- ☐ Make the analysis shorter
- ☐ Include more graphics
- ☐ Include more maps
- ☐ Include more analysis
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
11. Have you attended any <RPC> meeting(s) in the past year?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
12. If so, did you find the meetings to be informative and productive?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
13. How would you suggest improving <RPC> meetings?

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## Section B: Program and Service Delivery

1. Please indicate how you would rate the <RPC> program and service delivery in the following areas:

*NOTE: Individual RPCs can revise these items to reflect their specific services and programs.*

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Don't Know/Not Applicable
Regional land use planning	1	2	3	4	5
Municipal land use planning, zoning, and land use regulations	1	2	3	4	5
Development review assistance	1	2	3	4	5
Municipal board training	1	2	3	4	5
GIS mapping and analysis	1	2	3	4	5
Transportation planning	1	2	3	4	5



<b>Brownfields assessments and remediation</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Emergency management planning</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Natural resources planning</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Energy planning</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Economic development</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Housing planning</b>	1	2	3	4	5

2. Are there other specific RPC programs or services with which you have experience? If so, please comment on the <RPC>'s performance in those areas.

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### Section C: Local Technical Assistance

1. Are you familiar with any recent revisions to your Municipal Plan and/or Zoning Code and/or Subdivision Regulations, or other land use regulations or codes?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If no, please skip to Section D.

2. Which planning document did your Municipality most recently revise? (Check all that apply.)
- ☐ Municipal Plan
- ☐ Zoning Regulations
- ☐ Subdivision Regulations
- ☐ Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
3. Did your Municipality receive assistance from the <RPC> on the above document?
- ☐ <RPC> was actively involved as the Planning Consultant
- ☐ <RPC> was consulted, as needed, by the Municipality
- ☐ <RPC> was not consulted during the revisions
- ☐ Don't know



4. If <RPC> was involved, how satisfied were you with the assistance you received?
- ☐ Very Satisfied
  - ☐ Reasonably Satisfied
  - ☐ Barely Satisfied
  - ☐ Not Satisfied
  - ☐ Don't know/Not applicable
5. How would you rate the timeliness of <RPC>'s response to this project?
- ☐ Very Satisfied
  - ☐ Reasonably Satisfied
  - ☐ Barely Satisfied
  - ☐ Not Satisfied
  - ☐ Don't know/Not applicable
6. How would you rate <RPC>'s customer service and attentiveness with this project?
- ☐ Very Satisfied
  - ☐ Reasonably Satisfied
  - ☐ Barely Satisfied
  - ☐ Not Satisfied
  - ☐ Don't know/Not applicable
7. How would you rate the level of knowledge and the quality of the assistance provided by the staff of <RPC> with this project?
- ☐ Very Satisfied
  - ☐ Reasonably Satisfied
  - ☐ Barely Satisfied
  - ☐ Not Satisfied
  - ☐ Don't know/Not applicable
8. What planning services do you intend to contact <RPC> for in the future? (Please check all that apply.)
- ☐ Municipal Planning
  - ☐ Zoning Regulations
  - ☐ Subdivision (Land Use) Regulations
  - ☐ Grant Applications
  - ☐ Build-Out Analysis
  - ☐ GIS Mapping
  - ☐ Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ None





## Section D: Education and Training

1. What types of Training/Workshops/Programs would you like <RPC> to offer? (Check all that apply.)
  - ☐ Land Use
  - ☐ Energy
  - ☐ Housing
  - ☐ Transportation
  - ☐ Natural Resources
  - ☐ Emergency Management
  - ☐ Economic Development
  - ☐ Grant writing
  - ☐ Legislative issues
  - ☐ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you use <RPC>'s website?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
3. If so, have you found <RPC>'s website to be helpful and appropriate?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
4. What other information would you like to see provided? (Check all that apply.)
  - ☐ More information about <RPC>'s plans and programs
  - ☐ More information about member municipalities
  - ☐ Upcoming agendas and meeting dates
  - ☐ All meeting minutes
  - ☐ Interactive mapping
  - ☐ Grant information and application deadlines
  - ☐ Planning policy and legislation updates
  - ☐ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

*NOTE: Following questions applicable only if you send out a newsletter or another form of regular communication:*

5. Do you read our <monthly> newsletter?
  - ☐ Every Month
  - ☐ Most Months
  - ☐ Rarely
  - ☐ Never
6. Do you find <RPC>'s newsletter useful and/or informative?
  - ☐ Very Useful
  - ☐ Somewhat Useful
  - ☐ Not Useful



7. What types of information would you like to see in our monthly newsletter (check all that apply)?

- ☐ Calendar of Events
- ☐ Grant Application Information and Deadlines
- ☐ Planning Conferences and workshops
- ☐ General Planning News
- ☐ Town-Specific Planning News
- ☐ Fundraising Ideas
- ☐ Planning Policy Updates and Legislation Under Review
- ☐ Other information (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

## **PART TWO: ROLE AND PRIORITIES OF <RPC>**

*NOTE: Individual RPCs can revise these items to reflect their specific services and programs.*

Please indicate the level of priority that you think <RPC> should give to the following tasks:

### **Regional Planning**

	High Priority	Moderate Priority	Low Priority
Assist municipalities in defining and managing growth and development	1	2	3
Regional land use studies and plans	1	2	3
Regional housing studies and plans	1	2	3
Natural resource planning	1	2	3
Regional transportation planning	1	2	3
Regional emergency management planning	1	2	3
Regional energy plans	1	2	3
Regional economic development	1	2	3
Regional infrastructure planning	1	2	3
Develop/update regional database and perform data analysis, including GIS mapping and analysis	1	2	3



## Inter-municipal Coordination

	High Priority	Moderate Priority	Low Priority
Consult and meet with local officials and local planning boards to coordinate local and regional planning efforts and promote inter-municipal cooperation	1	2	3
Confirm local planning efforts to maintain local eligibility for state planning funds	1	2	3
Provide facilitation/mediation services to address inter-municipal disputes	1	2	3
Participate in Act 250 and Public Service Board (Section 248) hearings	1	2	3
Promote coordinated planning with governing authorities of neighboring states, regions, counties and municipalities	1	2	3
Support/participate in the efforts of related local, regional and statewide groups including economic development, solid waste, housing, transit, emergency planning, environmental, local government and planning interests	1	2	3
Coordinate with legislators and representatives with regard to local and regional planning and development efforts and needs	1	2	3



## Local Technical Assistance

	High Priority	Moderate Priority	Low Priority
Review draft municipal plans, bylaws, and ordinances for comments	1	2	3
Provide technical assistance regarding land use regulations (zoning, subdivision regulations, etc)	1	2	3
Draft/update municipal plans and land use regulations	1	2	3
Advise municipalities with regard to public financing and grant opportunities	1	2	3
Prepare planning handbooks, model bylaws/ordinances	1	2	3
Assist towns with GIS mapping and analysis	1	2	3
Provide workshops on land use related issues	1	2	3
Assist towns and private property owners with brownfields assessment and cleanup	1	2	3
Assist towns with infrastructure planning	1	2	3
Assist in the development of revolving loan programs	1	2	3
Assist towns with affordable housing planning	1	2	3
Assist towns with obtaining federal and state funds for town projects	1	2	3
Assist towns in developing watershed management plans	1	2	3



	High Priority	Moderate Priority	Low Priority
Assist towns in addressing surface water and wetlands issues	1	2	3
Assist towns with open space and river access issues	1	2	3
Assist in downtown revitalization activities	1	2	3
Assist towns with the creation of conservation commissions	1	2	3
Provide technical assistance to towns on transportation planning	1	2	3
Provide assistance with enhancement and scenic byway grants	1	2	3
Assist towns with public transportation facilities/services	1	2	3
Support towns in the development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities	1	2	3
Assist towns in developing or updating local emergency plans	1	2	3
Assist towns in incorporating emergency planning into town plans and zoning	1	2	3
Provide assistance with homeland security and other emergency grants	1	2	3

Are there other items not listed here that should be high priorities for <RPC>? If so, please list here:

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Thank you for your time. Your input will help us to improve our service delivery and set priorities for the coming year!



## Zoomerang Survey Results

# Vermont Regional Commissions Self-Assessment

Response Status: Completes

Filter: No filter applied

Jun 17, 2011 6:32 AM PST

### Vermont Regional Commissions Self-Assessment

This assessment is composed of four sections, intended to help you evaluate your Regional Commission's unique roles, functions and strengths within your state and region. The checklist is based on the theoretical principles of

#### 1. Organization Name:

Addison County Regional Planning Commission	14	7%
Bennington County Regional Commission	14	7%
Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission	15	7%
Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission	26	13%
Lamoille County Planning Commission	16	8%
Northeastern Vermont Development Association	17	8%
Northwest Regional Planning Commission	19	9%
Rutland Regional Planning Commission	23	11%
Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission	9	4%
Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission	18	9%
Windham Regional Commission	30	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 2. Title:

Regional Commission Board Member	130	65%
Executive Director	11	5%
Staff	60	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Section 1: Evaluating Your Regional Commission's Role in a Modern Era of Regionalism

This section should be completed by the following groups: Regional Commission Board Members Executive Directors Staff Members Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the



## Regional Governance

3

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Our organization maintains and periodically reviews vision and mission statements with specific policies and	8 4%	13 6%	32 16%	83 42%	60 30%	4 2%
Our organization has modified our culture over the years to continue serving local governments, yet also	5 3%	7 4%	28 14%	69 35%	78 39%	12 6%



#### 4. Regional Governance / Comments and Notes:

52 Responses

#### Process

5

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Our organization has developed strategic objectives, including a shared regional vision, comprehensive	5 2%	9 4%	49 24%	78 39%	50 25%	9 4%
Our organizational focus is attuned to results and outcomes, rather than organizational structures, control	1 1%	13 7%	30 15%	82 41%	64 32%	8 4%





## 6. Process / Comments and Notes:

37 Responses

**Open Access and Boundaries EDITOR'S NOTE:**  
Even though the issue of multi-regional collaboration and resource sharing can be very sensitive and controversial, it is becoming increasingly difficult, from a credibility perspective, for regional commissions to promote regional

7

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Our organization actively promotes the mission of multi-jurisdictional collaboration among local governments	5 3%	10 5%	27 14%	72 36%	76 38%	9 5%
Our organization strives to promote open access and participation in our activities with our local government	2 1%	4 2%	14 7%	58 29%	121 61%	0 0%
Our organization works to foster collaboration across local jurisdictional boundaries, including with our	5 3%	11 6%	28 14%	74 38%	73 37%	6 3%
Our organization focuses on fostering regional collaboration among private, nonprofit and philanthropic	3 2%	9 5%	38 19%	84 42%	57 29%	8 4%
Lack of organizational expertise, state creation of new regional service delivery areas and limitations of public	7 4%	26 13%	42 21%	66 33%	26 13%	31 16%
Our Regional Commission is increasingly sharing staff, providing back office support to neighboring regions and	17 9%	38 19%	47 24%	41 21%	26 13%	28 14%
Our organization defends its core service delivery territory and our turf with other Regional	47 24%	54 28%	40 21%	22 11%	10 5%	21 11%
Our organization is more receptive today to partnering and sharing staff/organizational resources/programs	3 2%	5 3%	25 13%	81 41%	57 29%	28 14%
Our board members are reluctant to allow staff to partner with neighboring Regional Commissions.	90 46%	46 23%	12 6%	8 4%	0 0%	41 21%



## 8. Open Access and Boundaries / Comments and Notes:

49 Responses

### Collaboration

9

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Our organization focuses on regional collaboration through voluntary agreements of equals, rather than the	3 2%	8 4%	28 14%	80 41%	53 27%	25 13%
Our organization places more emphasis on various players bringing resources, expertise and knowledge to	4 2%	4 2%	26 13%	81 41%	56 28%	26 13%
Our organization only tends to participate in activities where we are the lead player or the controlling interest.	93 47%	64 33%	24 12%	6 3%	6 3%	3 2%
Our organization is comfortable collaborating with other statewide, regional and local entities and leaders,	1 1%	3 2%	10 5%	63 32%	119 60%	1 1%
Our local government board members encourage our management and staff to pursue partnerships with	2 1%	5 3%	40 20%	62 31%	74 38%	14 7%
Private sector organizations and leaders are interested in working with our organization.	3 2%	16 8%	48 24%	67 34%	49 25%	13 7%
Our organization is an active participant and associate of business, industry and educational associations and	3 2%	19 10%	42 21%	65 33%	60 30%	8 4%
Our organization is an active partner of community-based organizations and philanthropic entities within our	4 2%	13 7%	37 19%	76 38%	58 29%	10 5%



## 10. Collaboration / Comments and Notes:

32 Responses

### Trust

11

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Our processes and procedures often make it difficult for us to participate in new regional partnerships and	92 47%	62 31%	19 10%	3 2%	0 0%	21 11%
Our organization is focused on building trust and credibility with new partners, including private, nonprofit	5 3%	4 2%	39 20%	75 38%	64 32%	11 6%
Our organization welcomes new regional players and actors.	2 1%	2 1%	23 12%	81 41%	87 44%	3 2%
Our organization plays a specific role and function within our region, allowing us to more comfortably partner with	2 1%	4 2%	34 17%	66 33%	86 43%	8 4%



## 12. Trust / Comments and Notes:

26 Responses

Please check your answers. Once you click "Submit", you will be directed to Section 2 and will not be able to return to this section.

**Section 2: Seven Significant Issues Facing Regional Commissions** This section should be completed by the following groups: Regional Commission Board Members Executive Directors Staff Members Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements by selecting the

**Issue 1: Relevance** The following section is intended to help evaluate your Regional Commission's current mission, purpose and focus within your sub-state area. It provides a general framework to evaluate if your organization is a key player within your state and region. ~~mission, purpose and focus within your sub-state area. It provides a general framework to evaluate if your organization is a key player within your state and region.~~

							13
Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A	
Our Regional Commission is a key resource for moving our region forward in the 21st century.	2 1%	6 3%	28 14%	67 34%	96 48%	0 0%	
Our board members are engaged in setting the agenda and priorities for the organization.	3 2%	15 8%	41 21%	71 36%	61 31%	8 4%	
Our board members can relay and explain to others the work, goals and accomplishments of our Regional	4 2%	14 7%	46 23%	86 43%	38 19%	11 6%	
The mission and focus of our Regional Commission is clearly defined, updated to today's environment and	2 1%	12 6%	37 19%	78 40%	66 34%	2 1%	
Our phone rings! Our state officials are eager for our organization to take a leadership role and to be a	1 1%	10 5%	40 20%	74 37%	49 25%	24 12%	
Our phone rings! Our local officials are eager for our organization to take a leadership role and to be a	1 1%	10 5%	35 18%	69 35%	69 35%	12 6%	
We are asked to participate in regional and local initiatives with non-governmental partners and leaders,	3 2%	12 6%	28 14%	87 45%	59 30%	6 3%	
Our organization often serves as the primary convener or forum for public officials to work together on problems	5 3%	16 8%	31 16%	81 41%	62 31%	3 2%	
Our organization often serves as the primary convener or forum for public officials to work together with private	7 4%	20 10%	48 24%	76 38%	42 21%	5 3%	



**14. Our executive director engages with each of the following key sectors within the region:**

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Local governments, including municipal elected and appointed officials as well as city managers, program	3 2%	5 3%	11 6%	60 30%	112 57%	7 4%
Private sector business and industry, including chambers, economic development councils, growth	1 1%	8 4%	13 7%	62 31%	102 52%	12 6%
Education sector, including K-12, community colleges and four year institutions, as well as workforce training	9 5%	26 13%	52 26%	56 28%	24 12%	31 16%
Nonprofit organizations, including aging, business development finance and technical assistance,	4 2%	8 4%	26 13%	79 40%	66 34%	13 7%



## 15. Relevance / Comments and Notes:

40 Responses

**Issue 2: Convener of the Region** The following section is intended to help evaluate your Regional Commission's role as a respected convener and actor within the region, both with the traditional constituency of local governments as well as a broader audience of regional leaders such as

16

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Our executive director is proactive in providing leadership and a vision for the region.	3 2%	6 3%	29 15%	67 34%	88 45%	4 2%
As a Regional Commission, our organization is focused on providing the leadership and vision necessary for the	4 2%	7 4%	42 21%	76 38%	63 32%	6 3%
Our organization provides a forum for regional and local leaders to develop and implement a blueprint for the	4 2%	9 5%	44 22%	79 40%	57 29%	5 3%
Our organization fosters regional collaboration between local officials within the region.	4 2%	5 3%	23 12%	76 39%	81 41%	8 4%
Our organization fosters regional collaboration between local officials and private, philanthropic and nonprofit	3 2%	14 7%	47 24%	75 38%	43 22%	13 7%
Our organization is aggressive in tapping into any available resource to advance the region, including	4 2%	12 6%	34 17%	75 38%	66 34%	6 3%
Our organization develops and offers sound proposals and plans for our local officials and other regional	3 2%	16 8%	35 18%	66 34%	68 35%	9 5%
Our organization has earned a reputation as a leader and consensus builder within the region, offering a team	5 3%	9 5%	36 18%	74 38%	57 29%	15 8%



## 17. Convener of the Region / Comments and Notes:

38 Responses

**Issue 3: Ownership and Governance** The following section is intended to help evaluate ownership and governance issues facing your Regional Commission. Please provide specific responses and comments for each question and statement.

## 18. It is essential to have a clear understanding of who owns your Regional Commission. How would you rate the level of ownership and control held by each of the following over your organization:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Local elected and appointed officials	9 5%	19 10%	44 22%	77 39%	40 20%	9 5%
Federal agency funders	20 10%	50 25%	59 30%	29 15%	15 8%	24 12%
State agency funders	8 4%	26 13%	60 30%	63 32%	25 13%	16 8%
Federal lawmakers	39 20%	54 27%	45 23%	21 11%	11 6%	28 14%
State legislators	15 8%	39 20%	62 31%	51 26%	18 9%	13 7%
Governor	31 16%	51 26%	53 27%	31 16%	9 5%	23 12%
Business sector leaders	32 16%	49 25%	60 30%	30 15%	12 6%	15 8%
Executive director of Regional Commission	7 4%	8 4%	40 20%	87 44%	49 25%	6 3%
Regional Commission Board Members	4 2%	3 2%	37 19%	83 42%	65 33%	5 3%
General public	43 22%	48 24%	65 33%	18 9%	13 7%	10 5%



Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Our organization has modernized and modified our governance and leadership structure over the years to	4 2%	16 8%	35 18%	66 33%	57 29%	20 10%
Our organization has formed new nonprofits and other affiliates to accommodate new programs and services,	26 13%	39 20%	29 15%	38 19%	24 12%	43 22%
Our organization has placed a heavy emphasis on implementing checks and balances to maintain proper	6 3%	11 6%	41 21%	62 31%	62 31%	17 9%
Our organization has limited itself to the same programs and services outlined in State statute.	37 19%	54 27%	38 19%	26 13%	7 4%	36 18%
Our Regional Commission board is structured to attract the "movers-and-shakers" of the region, including	18 9%	42 22%	63 32%	34 18%	21 11%	16 8%
Our organizational bylaws are very prescriptive on the allocation of board slots, especially with specific	10 5%	21 11%	32 16%	54 27%	42 21%	38 19%
Our bylaws have evolved to give us some flexibility to identify and select thoughtful leaders and decision	12 6%	25 13%	37 19%	69 35%	26 13%	30 15%

## 20. Our organization is best described as:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Board driven	4 2%	24 13%	53 28%	82 43%	22 12%	5 3%
Customer driven	6 3%	29 15%	60 32%	68 36%	19 10%	7 4%
Staff driven	2 1%	12 6%	61 32%	91 48%	20 11%	4 2%
Program driven	1 1%	2 1%	48 25%	103 54%	33 17%	4 2%
Grant driven	1 1%	10 5%	46 24%	90 48%	36 19%	6 3%
Combination of the above	0 0%	3 2%	27 14%	58 30%	99 51%	7 4%





Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Our board meetings are "must attend" events within the region.	40 20%	59 30%	56 28%	31 16%	5 3%	6 3%
Our board struggles to obtain a quorum at our regular meetings.	67 34%	50 25%	39 20%	29 15%	8 4%	5 3%
Our board is open to exploring new techniques and formats to make sure board meetings are productive	5 3%	15 8%	44 22%	77 39%	45 23%	12 6%
Our organization evaluates and monitors the benefits and value that local elected and appointed officials and	9 5%	27 14%	57 29%	56 28%	20 10%	28 14%
Our organization has designed our board meetings and other activities to shape aggressive and progressive	14 7%	30 15%	48 24%	61 31%	32 16%	13 7%

## 22. Our board members attend our meetings to:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Network with other board members	5 3%	25 13%	50 25%	71 36%	27 14%	20 10%
Advance personal agendas	42 21%	65 33%	48 24%	14 7%	9 5%	20 10%
Protect interests of locality	4 2%	18 9%	55 28%	81 41%	29 15%	11 6%
Listen to staff reports	9 5%	15 8%	59 30%	82 42%	20 10%	11 6%
Engage in informative policy and program discussions and problem solving for the region	0 0%	12 6%	28 14%	101 51%	50 25%	7 4%
Learn about new and existing federal and state funding resources	3 2%	20 10%	56 29%	81 41%	27 14%	9 5%
Learn about new and existing federal and state regulations and rules	2 1%	23 12%	53 27%	84 42%	27 14%	9 5%
Gain Regional Commission support and assistance with local projects	10 5%	19 10%	51 26%	75 38%	30 15%	12 6%
Other	10 8%	0 0%	7 6%	6 5%	6 5%	95 77%



**23. If you chose other, please specify:**

17 Responses

**24. Our board meetings are designed to:**

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Promote board member networking	15 8%	34 17%	61 31%	57 29%	18 9%	10 5%
Provide a forum for the pursuit of regional activities and initiatives	2 1%	9 5%	31 16%	83 42%	67 34%	4 2%
Allow staff to give program reports	1 1%	14 7%	47 24%	91 46%	41 21%	2 1%
Seek federal and state grant money	20 10%	56 29%	59 30%	37 19%	10 5%	14 7%
Attract high-level thought leaders, mover-and-shakers and decision-makers from the region	18 9%	47 24%	50 26%	49 25%	21 11%	10 5%
Other	6 6%	0 0%	4 4%	9 10%	4 4%	71 76%

**25. If you chose other, please specify:**

13 Responses



## 26. Ownership and Governance / Comments and Notes:

32 Responses

**Issue 4: Relationships with Local Governments** The following section is intended to help evaluate your Regional Commission's relationship with local governments. Please provide specific responses and comments for each question and statement.

27						
Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Municipal elected and appointed officials within our region are actively engaged in our Regional	5 3%	28 14%	62 31%	63 32%	37 19%	3 2%
Municipal elected and appointed officials tend to designate others to participate in our organization rather	23 12%	39 20%	52 26%	49 25%	22 11%	13 7%
Our organization has worked to evolve our programs and services to meet the shifting needs and	0 0%	5 3%	27 14%	91 46%	69 35%	5 3%
Our executive director dedicates significant time each week to meet or talk with chief elected and	5 3%	16 8%	34 17%	46 23%	51 26%	45 23%
Our executive director dedicates significant time each week to network, meet and talk with municipal managers	4 2%	12 6%	30 15%	51 26%	52 26%	49 25%
Local governments within our region turn to our Regional Commission for assistance, advice and	2 1%	13 7%	25 13%	72 37%	66 34%	18 9%
Our organization tries hard to interact, network and partner with local economic development corporations.	0 0%	4 2%	28 14%	74 37%	87 44%	5 3%
Our executive director actively attends and participates in statewide and sub-state regional associations of	1 1%	6 3%	18 9%	52 26%	79 40%	41 21%
Representatives of our organization serve on committees, task forces and working groups related to	4 2%	7 4%	26 13%	82 41%	59 30%	20 10%
Our Regional Commission provides specialized training, networking opportunities and forums for local	2 1%	18 9%	40 20%	84 42%	47 24%	7 4%
Our organization measures the outcomes of our board meetings and board involvement.	24 12%	40 20%	49 25%	39 20%	12 6%	33 17%
We set specific goals and objectives for our board and staff to pursue each year.	10 5%	19 10%	43 22%	63 32%	47 24%	14 7%



**28. It is clear who owns our regional organization:**

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
It is still exclusively local government	19 10%	25 13%	52 27%	47 25%	30 16%	18 9%
It has evolved to include private, nonprofit and other sector leaders	27 14%	39 20%	43 22%	48 24%	18 9%	21 11%
There is the traditional tug-of-war between local officials vs. federal and state funders, officials and oversight	47 25%	40 21%	39 20%	18 9%	10 5%	37 19%

**29. Our executive director is on a first-name basis with key leaders, policy-makers and decision-makers within our region, such as:**

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Local elected and appointed officials	0 0%	6 3%	14 7%	59 30%	105 54%	12 6%
Municipal managers	0 0%	5 3%	11 6%	41 21%	125 64%	13 7%
Federal legislative staff	3 2%	11 6%	21 11%	45 23%	72 37%	43 22%
Chamber of commerce leaders	1 1%	2 1%	13 7%	49 25%	108 55%	22 11%
Community college and university leaders and executives	7 4%	16 8%	39 20%	42 22%	36 18%	55 28%
Bankers	8 4%	13 7%	41 21%	46 24%	26 13%	60 31%
Local economic developers	2 1%	13 7%	19 10%	58 30%	77 40%	25 13%
Major businesses and industry executives and senior managers	6 3%	18 9%	35 18%	57 29%	35 18%	43 22%
Other regional organizations	1 1%	2 1%	10 5%	48 25%	114 59%	19 10%
Other	2 2%	1 1%	3 3%	4 4%	6 7%	73 82%



**30. If you chose other, please specify:**

8 Responses

**31. Relationships with Local Governments / Comments/Notes:**

36 Responses

**Issue 5: Relationships with Federal and State Officials** The following section is designed to help you and your Regional Commission perform an honest self- assessment of your commitment and success in forging strong professional ties with key federal and state policy makers and program

**32. Our organization spends considerable time and energy to build relationships with:**

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Governor and key gubernatorial staff	9 5%	26 13%	40 21%	40 21%	39 20%	41 21%
State legislators and key legislative staff	2 1%	10 5%	30 15%	62 32%	75 38%	17 9%
State agency directors and senior program staff	0 0%	9 5%	29 15%	67 34%	73 37%	17 9%
Members of Congress and their staff in Washington and in the region	12 6%	26 13%	39 20%	38 19%	35 18%	46 23%
Federal agency leaders, both political and career staff, at HQ and field offices	12 6%	32 16%	36 18%	41 21%	30 15%	45 23%



Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Our organization collaborates with our federal and state officials to develop a strategic vision and action plan for	16 8%	32 16%	48 25%	56 29%	19 10%	24 12%
Our executive director serves as the "closer" for our organization in securing contracts and projects with our	2 1%	6 3%	21 11%	68 35%	65 33%	35 18%
Our organization has a clear strategy for building credibility, trust and awareness with our federal and	2 1%	14 7%	36 18%	55 28%	49 25%	39 20%
Our federal and state policymakers (including staff) rely on our organization to learn about and keep track of key	3 2%	13 7%	29 15%	59 30%	53 27%	37 19%
Our organization participates in national and state trade and membership associations to advance and keep	1 1%	26 13%	34 17%	47 24%	35 18%	52 27%
Our executive director spends considerable time reading reports and literature, participating in legislative	8 4%	20 10%	32 16%	35 18%	34 17%	67 34%
Our federal and state elected leaders from the region know and respect our organization and call on us for	3 2%	10 5%	33 17%	62 32%	60 31%	27 14%

#### 34. Our Regional Commission:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Invites federal and state elected officials to attend and participate in our regular board meetings, special events	9 5%	23 12%	40 20%	60 30%	50 25%	15 8%
Meets with federal elected officials at least once each year in Washington, DC and with our state officials at	30 15%	25 13%	31 16%	28 14%	22 11%	60 31%
Conducts on-site tours with our federal and state elected officials as a follow-up to ribbon-cutting ceremonies to	21 11%	40 21%	28 14%	30 15%	24 12%	51 26%
Provides recognition and appreciation for our members of Congress.	18 9%	35 18%	29 15%	29 15%	27 14%	55 28%
Implements a clearly defined and updated strategy for expressing our appreciation and support for federal and	19 10%	34 18%	38 20%	23 12%	16 8%	63 33%
Offers to hold informal brainstorming or strategy sessions (or serve as kitchen cabinet resource) to help	14 7%	21 11%	34 18%	33 17%	23 12%	69 36%



### 35. Relationships with Federal and State Officials / Comments and Notes:

35 Responses

**Issue 6: Statewide Uniformity and Capacity** Our Regional Commission and the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA) are tackling issues such as:

36

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Common skills and capacity of executive directors, program staff and boards	5 3%	7 4%	41 21%	56 29%	32 16%	53 27%
Peer accountability, mentoring and information exchanges	5 3%	6 3%	36 19%	64 33%	31 16%	52 27%
Statewide branding, marketing and message delivery	7 4%	18 9%	30 16%	52 27%	24 12%	62 32%
Multi-region collaboration, including joint program delivery and sharing of staff resources and expertise	4 2%	10 5%	40 21%	62 32%	41 21%	36 19%
Statewide program and planning product templates, such as Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)	2 1%	9 5%	29 15%	63 32%	56 29%	37 19%
Professional development standards, ethics and training, focusing on financial management, board	6 3%	19 10%	39 20%	51 26%	32 17%	46 24%



### 37. Statewide Uniformity and Capacity / Comments and Notes:

22 Responses

**Issue 7: Public Relations and Image** The following section is designed to help your Regional Commission evaluate your attention to promoting a world-class image and appearance in today's modern communications era.

38

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Our Regional Commission executive director places a high priority on building a solid public relations image	4 2%	10 5%	28 14%	59 30%	89 45%	7 4%
Our organization has the internal capacity to develop first-class publications, reports and Web sites, including	7 4%	21 11%	51 26%	57 29%	50 26%	10 5%
Our organization invests/contracts with professional marketing and design specialists to help us create and	39 20%	40 21%	29 15%	30 15%	9 5%	47 24%
Since Regional Commissions are in the business of building regional consensus, using data and analysis to	16 8%	32 16%	58 30%	54 28%	17 9%	19 10%
Our Regional Commission reports, publications and other communications NO LONGER place such a heavy	9 5%	23 12%	58 30%	51 26%	17 9%	37 19%
Our organization studies and evaluates the public perceptions that key stakeholders may have towards our	20 10%	32 16%	42 22%	50 26%	15 8%	36 18%





### 39. Our organization is taking steps to:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Make a successful first impression, including through a professionally-designed Web site, regional plan,	4 2%	11 6%	33 17%	64 33%	79 40%	5 3%
Present a professional image in newsletters, grant applications, annual reports and other print and online	3 2%	8 4%	31 16%	63 32%	88 45%	4 2%
Participate in statewide, regional and local coalitions, alliances and organizations, including public, private and	2 1%	5 3%	23 12%	64 33%	91 46%	11 6%
Exhibit a willingness to staff and support special initiatives or incubate new organizations and programs.	2 1%	7 4%	32 16%	73 37%	74 38%	8 4%
Establish a culture of innovation, entrepreneurship and calculated risk-management with new ideas, programs	5 3%	17 9%	47 24%	71 36%	39 20%	16 8%
Serve as a valued thought leader for the region.	2 1%	4 2%	39 20%	69 35%	77 39%	6 3%

### 40. Our Regional Commission has a specific strategy and action plan for building the reputation, capacity, willingness, leadership and culture of being a regional leader. This includes working towards being a:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Respected and valued forum for local officials and leaders to address area wide issues through regional	4 2%	12 6%	29 15%	78 40%	66 34%	7 4%
Place to bring together public, private and nonprofit leaders to strengthen regional collaboration across	3 2%	12 6%	35 18%	80 41%	58 30%	7 4%
"Go to" resource for understanding, tapping into and securing federal and/or state community and economic	1 1%	11 6%	25 13%	73 37%	81 41%	5 3%
Reliable program administrator of federal and state funds.	1 1%	4 2%	16 8%	55 28%	109 56%	9 5%
Valued technical assistance provider to meet current regional and community goals and needs.	0 0%	3 2%	11 6%	57 29%	119 61%	5 3%



#### 41. Public Relations and Image / Comments and Notes:

27 Responses

Please check your answers. Once you click "Submit", you will be directed to the next section and will not be able to return to this section.

#### 42. Section 3 should be completed by Regional Commission Board Members and Staff. Please select your title below. If you select Executive Director you will be automatically directed to Section 4.

Regional Commission Board Member	130	65%
Executive Director	11	5%
Staff	60	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Section 3: Managing An Effective Regional Commission Board** This section should be completed by the following groups: Regional Commission Board Members Staff Members A major asset of Regional Commissions is the involvement, ownership and connections of local elected and

#### 43. Establish Policy Our board:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Focuses on meeting the overall needs of our region, not just their own individual communities.	0 0%	6 3%	23 12%	76 41%	77 41%	5 3%
Sets the policies and strategic direction that guide our Regional Commission to run effectively, legally and	0 0%	7 4%	28 15%	70 37%	76 41%	6 3%
Advocates the use of our Regional Commission to serve as a primary convener, regional planning expert and	0 0%	9 5%	12 6%	66 35%	94 51%	5 3%
Has developed the policy and governance framework that is needed to allow management and staff to	2 1%	5 3%	21 11%	68 37%	77 41%	13 7%



#### 44. Establish Policy / Comments and Notes:

16 Responses

#### 45. Establish a Partnership with the Regional Commission Executive Director Our board:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Sets overall policies and guidelines that govern the authority, responsibility, accountability and performance	3 2%	5 3%	27 14%	57 30%	80 43%	15 8%
Provides the support necessary for the executive director and staff to succeed in advancing the goals and	0 0%	4 2%	28 15%	62 33%	83 45%	9 5%
Allows the executive director to manage the day-to-day operations of the Regional Commission, without	0 0%	3 2%	8 4%	39 21%	130 70%	7 4%
Remembers that our Regional Commission is NOT always under the same rules and restrictions as local	0 0%	2 1%	22 12%	56 30%	66 35%	40 22%

#### 46. Partnership with Executive Director / Comments and Notes:

13 Responses

#### 47. Regional Vision Our board:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Shares a common vision, sense of mission and clearly identified goals at the board level.	3 2%	16 9%	41 22%	74 40%	41 22%	12 6%
Takes the long-term view with incremental performance measures to evaluate progress of the Regional	5 3%	19 10%	40 21%	67 36%	42 22%	14 7%
Places an emphasis on developing a regional development roadmap with performance benchmarks	12 6%	30 16%	47 25%	38 20%	24 13%	35 19%
Focuses on putting difficult decisions into the larger regional context and perspective, rather than just	1 1%	13 7%	37 20%	61 33%	59 32%	16 9%
Remembers that organizational risk taking is essential for progress and innovation.	10 5%	24 13%	32 17%	58 31%	32 17%	30 16%



**48. Regional Vision / Comments and Notes:**

18 Responses

**49. Direction through Strategic Planning Our board:**

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Conducts regular outreach and feedback sessions with members, municipal officials and local citizens.	14 8%	35 19%	46 25%	39 21%	32 17%	20 11%
Limits input and feedback only from members of the board.	76 41%	52 28%	16 9%	11 6%	4 2%	25 14%
Conducts regular and thorough strategic planning retreats and visioning sessions to establish long-term	45 24%	50 27%	41 22%	17 9%	7 4%	25 14%
Assesses our organizational opportunities, threats, weaknesses and strengths on a regular basis.	19 10%	49 26%	39 21%	44 24%	16 9%	18 10%
Places a major emphasis on the implementation of our organization's strategic plan, including personal	14 8%	34 18%	43 23%	48 26%	21 11%	25 14%

**50. Direction through Strategic Planning / Comments and Notes:**

23 Responses

**51. Financial Integrity of the Organization Our executive board:**

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Makes sure board members have a firm grasp on the financial conditions, integrity and operations of the	0 0%	5 3%	8 4%	50 27%	112 60%	11 6%
Delegates the day-to-day financial management to the executive director, yet maintains appropriate internal	0 0%	1 1%	15 8%	50 27%	103 55%	18 10%
Monitors financial outcomes and performance, including financial reports at every board meeting and review of	1 1%	4 2%	24 13%	41 22%	104 56%	12 6%
Maintains appropriate controls and oversight of nonprofit affiliates of the Regional Commission.	3 2%	10 5%	23 12%	35 19%	35 19%	80 43%
Thinks long-term and big-picture about building the organization's financial foundation, not only annual profit	2 1%	11 6%	21 11%	46 25%	82 44%	25 13%



**52. Financial Integrity / Comments and Notes:**

18 Responses

**53. Participate Responsibly Our individual board members:**

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Commit the time necessary to serve as a board member.	2 1%	12 6%	53 28%	77 41%	35 19%	8 4%
Keep local politics in perspective to regional needs and priorities.	1 1%	10 5%	42 23%	81 44%	41 22%	11 6%
Review agenda materials prior to the meeting and are prepared to ask informed questions and provide good	1 1%	13 7%	41 22%	82 44%	35 19%	14 8%
Conduct their homework on the organization's activities, plans and programs, along with understanding the	2 1%	14 7%	52 28%	80 43%	26 14%	13 7%
Keep the board working on a policy level, rather than micromanaging staff level decisions.	0 0%	2 1%	17 9%	66 35%	90 48%	12 6%
Address serious management issues that require board action or attention.	2 1%	7 4%	25 13%	53 28%	63 34%	37 20%
Are open to involving committees, advisory working groups and staff in the organization.	1 1%	1 1%	23 12%	65 35%	90 48%	7 4%
Take special assignments willingly and enthusiastically when asked.	1 1%	15 8%	46 25%	74 40%	29 16%	21 11%
Serve as goodwill ambassadors for the organization at the national, state, regional and local levels.	0 0%	18 10%	41 22%	59 32%	41 22%	28 15%
Actively participate in membership retention and outreach.	9 5%	34 18%	45 24%	40 22%	22 12%	35 19%
Support the organization's public policy, programmatic and project agenda through advocacy.	4 2%	19 10%	42 23%	65 36%	28 15%	25 14%
Attend events and activities, including the annual conference, board meetings, educational seminars and	2 1%	13 7%	54 29%	71 38%	36 19%	10 5%
Speak for the board or the organization only when authorized and appropriate.	0 0%	4 2%	27 15%	63 34%	35 19%	55 30%
Maintain confidentiality of issues discussed in executive decision-making sessions.	0 0%	1 1%	14 8%	33 18%	86 46%	52 28%
Serve the whole organization, rather than any special interest group or constituency.	0 0%	6 3%	32 17%	73 39%	60 32%	15 8%
Avoid even the appearance of conflict of interest, especially on funding and personnel decisions.	2 1%	1 1%	28 15%	55 30%	81 44%	18 10%
Disclose any possible conflicts in a timely and open fashion.	1 1%	2 1%	24 13%	52 28%	71 38%	36 19%
Commit to continuous improvement of the organization.	0 0%	3 2%	35 19%	69 37%	67 36%	11 6%



**54. Participate Responsibly / Comments and Notes:**

17 Responses

**55. Member Commitments Our individual board members:**

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Know the goals, mission and programs/services of the organization.	0 0%	10 5%	41 22%	92 49%	37 20%	7 4%
Have defined roles and responsibilities as a board member, as outlined in a board member job description.	6 3%	11 6%	40 22%	84 45%	29 16%	16 9%
Provide constructive and timely feedback.	1 1%	9 5%	43 23%	77 42%	40 22%	15 8%
Respect and value diversity of thought and opinion of board members, executive director, staff and	0 0%	4 2%	20 11%	77 42%	75 41%	9 5%
Develop trust and fight fair with other board members, management and staff.	0 0%	6 3%	20 11%	76 41%	65 35%	19 10%
Pitch in to help advance the mission of the organization.	2 1%	7 4%	44 24%	71 38%	46 25%	15 8%
Know how to solve problems and work toward solving problems and issues.	0 0%	6 3%	46 25%	82 44%	42 23%	10 5%
Focus on achieving positive results for the region and the Regional Commission.	0 0%	5 3%	21 11%	74 40%	76 41%	8 4%

**56. Member Commitments / Comments and Notes:**

16 Responses

**Regional Commission Boards: Basic Governance Practices of Effective Organizations** Respond to each of the following statements with a yes/no answer, followed by offering brief written comments based on your personal experience. If you are not sure about a question, you may skip it.



**57. Board sets specific performance goals and benchmarks for the organization, including holding the organization accountable for reaching key milestones and performance targets?**

Yes	118	69%
No	53	31%
<b>Total</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>100%</b>

**58. Board meets at least bi-monthly with a regular meeting time and date?**

Yes	147	82%
No	33	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100%</b>

**59. Board has strong attendance and no trouble meeting quorum requirements at regular meetings (which is the basic measurement of the value placed on the organization by local officials)?**

Yes	143	80%
No	35	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>100%</b>

**60. Board focuses on policy level issues, including issues of regional significance, and identifies overall goals and strategies for making the region more economically competitive with a higher quality of life?**

Yes	164	92%
No	15	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>100%</b>

**61. All board members have copies of the state law and regulations, bylaws and other written policies and procedures that govern the organization and its affiliates?**

Yes	129	78%
No	36	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100%</b>



**62. Board operates according to state law and regulations, organizational bylaws and other written policies and procedures?**

Yes	181	100%
No	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>100%</b>

**63. The board or its executive committee normally plans and reviews the board meeting agenda in advance of the meeting?**

Yes	156	91%
No	15	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>100%</b>

**64. Board meetings are typically conducted in the allotted time?**

Yes	176	98%
No	3	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>100%</b>

**65. Minutes, committee meeting information/results and staff reports are distributed to the board members at least a week in advance of board meetings?**

Yes	174	96%
No	8	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>100%</b>

**66. There are written job descriptions for members of the board, committees, working groups and for staff?**

Yes	128	80%
No	33	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>100%</b>





**67. There are conflict of interest guidelines for members of the board, committees, working groups and for staff?**

Yes	138	90%
No	15	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>100%</b>

**68. Board members receive regular financial reports and monitor the performance of the organization in relation to its budget, assets and liabilities?**

Yes	173	97%
No	6	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>100%</b>

**69. Board members receive the annual audit report by an independent accounting firm, and the board has an audit committee to serve as a liaison with the auditors?**

Yes	154	92%
No	14	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>100%</b>

**70. There is a policy manual containing all of the organization's written policies and procedures, including accounting, human resources/personnel, conflict of interest guidelines and grant management standards?**

Yes	149	91%
No	14	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>100%</b>

Please check your answers. Once you click "Submit", you will be directed to the next page and will not be able to return to this section.

**Section 3: Managing An Effective Regional Commission Board (continued)** This is page 2 of Section 3. This section should be completed by the following groups: Regional Commission Board Members Staff Members Respond to each of the following statements with a yes/no answer followed



**71. Board has adopted quality of service goals and standards for the organization to follow?**

Yes	84	61%
No	54	39%
<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>100%</b>

**72. Board has adopted quality of service goals and standards for the organization to follow?**

Yes	74	61%
No	48	39%
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100%</b>

**73. Board members regularly solicit the opinions, views and feedback of non-board member local government officials?**

Yes	122	84%
No	24	16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100%</b>

**74. Board members regularly solicit the opinions, views and feedback of federal and state policy makers and funders about the performance and services of the organization?**

Yes	64	51%
No	61	49%
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>100%</b>

Please check your answers. Once you click "Submit", you will be directed to the next section and will not be able to return to this section.



**75. Section 4 should be completed by Executive Directors only. Please select your title below. If you are not an Executive Director, you will be automatically directed to the end of the survey. Title:**

Regional Commission Board Member	129	68%
Executive Director	0	0%
Staff	61	32%
<b>Total</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Section 4: Regional Commission Executive Directors** This is the final section. It should be completed by Executive Directors only. The following is a basic self-assessment guide to evaluate the internal management and operations of your Regional Commission. Please indicate the

**76. General Management** As executive director, I:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Am clear about the purpose, goals and objectives of our Regional Commission.	0 0%	0 0%	4 36%	3 27%	4 36%	0 0%
Clearly communicate these goals and objectives to our employees, as well as the board and external	0 0%	1 9%	4 36%	5 45%	1 9%	0 0%
Focus on implementing a long-range plan for the development and management of new and existing	0 0%	1 9%	4 36%	3 27%	3 27%	0 0%
Maintain a management transition plan for my successor, as well as for replacement/turnover of board	5 45%	2 18%	3 27%	1 9%	0 0%	0 0%
Set and evaluate short-range objectives and goals. Make adjustments as necessary. Take time to write	0 0%	5 45%	3 27%	2 18%	1 9%	0 0%
Remember to mentor and engage new regional leaders in our organization, including board officials, committee	0 0%	5 45%	1 9%	4 36%	1 9%	0 0%
Develop and implement specific opportunities and actions for staff to participate and contribute to the	0 0%	2 18%	2 18%	6 55%	1 9%	0 0%



**77. General Management / Comments and Notes:**

3 Responses

**78. Organizational Structure As executive director, I:**

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Maintain a clear organizational structure (including organizational flow chart).	0 0%	2 18%	2 18%	4 36%	3 27%	0 0%
Establish clear lines of supervisory control, reporting, responsibility, authority and accountability without	0 0%	0 0%	3 27%	7 64%	1 9%	0 0%
Evaluate need/preference for a more hierarchical structure with many layers of management versus a	1 9%	1 9%	3 27%	5 45%	1 9%	0 0%
Maintain and implement proper checks and balances to oversee operations, finances and staff of our Regional	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	6 55%	4 36%	0 0%
Make sure the finance officer reports directly to me as executive director.	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	1 9%	9 82%	0 0%
Periodically review job descriptions for each employee, including for clarity, legal protections and staff flexibility.	0 0%	3 27%	2 18%	1 9%	5 45%	0 0%
Establish written job descriptions for board members, committees and advisory boards.	0 0%	5 45%	3 27%	1 9%	2 18%	0 0%
Foster open communications with and among management personnel, making sure to build a culture	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	2 18%	7 64%	1 9%

**79. Organizational Structure / Comments and Notes:**

3 Responses



### 80. Management Philosophy As executive director, I:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Am sure to follow a basic management philosophy that is open, flexible, team oriented and results oriented. I	0 0%	0 0%	2 18%	3 27%	6 55%	0 0%
Am careful about making hasty and impulsive decisions (especially personnel terminations or other significant	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	5 45%	5 45%	0 0%
Try to give board members and staff the background and information needed to obtain full buy-in and support,	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	4 36%	6 55%	0 0%
Work to establish professional trust and confidence in the abilities, skills and agendas of our board members,	0 0%	0 0%	2 18%	5 45%	4 36%	0 0%
Conduct staff performance assessments on a regular basis, rather than waiting for annual performance	0 0%	1 9%	1 9%	5 45%	4 36%	0 0%
Encourage employees to provide "anonymous" feedback and recommendations to improve the	0 0%	7 64%	0 0%	2 18%	2 18%	0 0%
Create a comfortable and open atmosphere so board members, staff and external partners provide me with	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	7 64%	3 27%	0 0%

### 81. Management Philosophy / Comments and Notes:

2 Responses

### 82. Facilities and Equipment As executive director, I:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Invest the resources needed for adequate office space, technology and equipment required for the	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	7 64%	3 27%	0 0%
Designate a lead staff member as the technology coordinator / leader within the organization, who is	1 9%	0 0%	2 18%	2 18%	6 55%	0 0%
Allocate the resources, time and training needed for employees to take advantage of new technologies and	0 0%	1 9%	1 9%	6 55%	3 27%	0 0%
Ensure the organization has installed and tested a computer backup system(s) to protect data and	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	4 36%	6 55%	0 0%
Have a long-term plan for office space maintenance, whether we own our facility or rent/lease office space.	2 18%	0 0%	2 18%	4 36%	3 27%	0 0%



### 83. Facilities and Equipment / Comments and Notes:

2 Responses

### 84. Program Development As executive director, I:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Try to develop new programs and projects that address needs identified at the regional or local level, rather than	0 0%	0 0%	3 27%	6 55%	2 18%	0 0%
Develop and implement fee-for-service programs to address specific regional needs and opportunities. This	0 0%	1 9%	6 55%	3 27%	1 9%	0 0%
Place major emphasis on empowering staff to think about, design and pursue the development of new	0 0%	0 0%	3 27%	6 55%	2 18%	0 0%
Try to avoid setting a culture in which new ideas and innovations are driven only by me as the executive	0 0%	0 0%	2 18%	6 55%	3 27%	0 0%
Ensure our programs and services are evaluated, modified, terminated and/or reformed on a regular basis	0 0%	4 36%	4 36%	3 27%	0 0%	0 0%
Strive to build enough reserve funds and cash flow to support existing programs in times of political or funding	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	3 27%	7 64%	0 0%
Focus on developing cash reserves so our organization can afford to launch new programs, including the	0 0%	1 9%	2 18%	4 36%	4 36%	0 0%
Establish rewards and incentives for staff to attempt/pursue new ideas and programs.	0 0%	2 18%	7 64%	2 18%	0 0%	0 0%
Secure program development funding support from non-traditional sources, including foundations, private sector,	2 20%	3 30%	3 30%	1 10%	1 10%	0 0%
Work to build the board culture so board members have the trust and confidence to support existing and new	0 0%	2 18%	2 18%	3 27%	4 36%	0 0%
Develop a comprehensive strategic plan to help position our organization for the next year, five years and	2 18%	4 36%	2 18%	3 27%	0 0%	0 0%
Avoid constantly operating in crisis mode or reacting to the fad of the moment. I try to be strategic and strive to	0 0%	0 0%	2 18%	6 55%	3 27%	0 0%

### 85. Program Development / Comments and Notes:

1 Responses



### 86. Project Management: Negotiating and Contracting As executive director, I:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Make sure programs, projects and fee-for-service contracts are maintained, monitored and implemented	0 0%	0 0%	2 18%	2 18%	7 64%	0 0%
Make sure our organization has developed and follows a standard checklist for program compliance. This	1 9%	1 9%	1 9%	4 36%	4 36%	0 0%
Maintain regular oversight of employees and/or departmental compliance with federal and state funding	0 0%	1 9%	2 18%	5 45%	3 27%	0 0%
Keep our board informed of new programs, as well as problems with existing projects/programs.	0 0%	1 9%	1 9%	4 36%	5 45%	0 0%
Remember to have legal counsel review contracts and agreements.	5 45%	1 9%	3 27%	2 18%	0 0%	0 0%
Review and monitor all contracts and funding agreements to make sure our organization is capable of	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	4 36%	6 55%	0 0%

### 87. Project Management: Negotiating and Contracting / Comments and Notes:

2 Responses

### 88. Project Management: Project Planning and Management As executive director, I:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Make sure staff develop and follow a written scope of work, with program deliverables, goals, timelines and	0 0%	1 9%	2 18%	4 36%	4 36%	0 0%
Make sure project work plans and schedules are reviewed on a regular basis, including with senior	0 0%	0 0%	4 36%	3 27%	4 36%	0 0%
Am sure to inform the board of any compliance and liability issues.	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	4 36%	7 64%	0 0%
Put the necessary checks and balances in place to monitor and control program deliverables, including	0 0%	0 0%	2 18%	7 64%	2 18%	0 0%
Balance staff workloads to ensure experienced and qualified employees are assigned to each major	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	6 55%	4 36%	0 0%
Make sure staff document and coordinate all schedule, cost and scope of work changes with funders, oversight	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	8 80%	2 20%	0 0%
Require work segments or phases (data collection, preliminary development, grant applications, regional	0 0%	0 0%	2 18%	7 64%	2 18%	0 0%



**89. Project Management: Project Planning and Management / Comments and Notes:**

3 Responses

**90. Project Management: Quality Management Procedures As executive director, I:**

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Establish quality management standards and procedures to guide our organization's activities, both	2 18%	3 27%	2 18%	4 36%	0 0%	0 0%
Implemented a formal process and procedures to check and proof all report drafts, analysis, financial	1 9%	6 55%	4 36%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
Use our state association network to monitor, implement and design quality control standards for statewide	2 18%	5 45%	2 18%	2 18%	0 0%	0 0%
Make sure our managers review oral and visual presentations by staff, including PowerPoint	2 18%	4 36%	4 36%	1 9%	0 0%	0 0%
Place an emphasis on producing products and communications that are clean, easy to read and	0 0%	1 9%	4 36%	3 27%	3 27%	0 0%
Stress to staff that information is our primary source of credibility and influence as a Regional Commission.	1 9%	2 18%	1 9%	4 36%	3 27%	0 0%
Have set aside the necessary resources so we can use a professional graphic designer (in-house or consultant)	2 18%	6 55%	1 9%	1 9%	1 9%	0 0%
Make sure contracts, work plans and products are amended over time to adjust for lessons learned,	0 0%	1 10%	1 10%	6 60%	2 20%	0 0%
Meet regularly with funding partners to communicate and evaluate our progress and to explore opportunities	0 0%	2 18%	3 27%	4 36%	2 18%	0 0%

**91. Project Management: Quality Management Procedures / Comments and Notes:**

2 Responses





**92. Project Management: Project Communication and Records As executive director, I:**

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Make sure our organization maintains and stores project files, communications and records, including financial	0 0%	0 0%	3 27%	2 18%	6 55%	0 0%
Maintain and implement board approved written policies and standards for project communications and record	1 9%	0 0%	1 9%	4 36%	5 45%	0 0%
Use an off-site or safe storage location to maintain dormant files with adequate retrieval time, good storage	3 27%	0 0%	3 27%	3 27%	2 18%	0 0%
Emphasize the importance of accurate and well documented communications, including electronic and	0 0%	2 18%	3 27%	2 18%	4 36%	0 0%
Worked with staff to develop and maintain a handbook and training materials for employees to learn about the	2 18%	5 45%	2 18%	1 9%	1 9%	0 0%

**93. Project Management: Project Communication and Records / Comments and Notes:**

1 Responses

**94. Project Management: Project Closeout As executive director, I:**

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Make sure staff uses a standard checklist to assist in closeout of grants and contracts with each funding	3 27%	2 18%	3 27%	1 9%	2 18%	0 0%
Make sure our organization maintains and follows a written or standard policy concerning what materials are	1 9%	2 18%	2 18%	5 45%	1 9%	0 0%
Conduct surveys, exit interview conferences and/or focus groups to evaluate and monitor our organization's	1 9%	6 55%	2 18%	1 9%	1 9%	0 0%

**95. Project Management: Project Closeout / Comments and Notes:**

1 Responses



**96. Human Resources and Professional Development: Training and Professional Development** As executive director, I:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Encourage continued learning, professional development and training for each employee, including	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	5 45%	5 45%	0 0%
Recognize and encourage advanced degrees or professional certifications for professional staff,	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	5 45%	4 36%	1 9%
Reserve and provide financial assistance, along with adequate time, for employees to participate in	0 0%	0 0%	3 27%	4 36%	4 36%	0 0%
Institute a systematic process or plan to provide employees with professional development assistance.	1 9%	5 45%	3 27%	2 18%	0 0%	0 0%
Encourage continuing education, conferences, workshops, on-the-job training and self-study to help	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	4 36%	6 55%	0 0%
Ensure employee evaluations include the level of participation by employees in professional development	0 0%	2 18%	3 27%	6 55%	0 0%	0 0%
Encourage training for employees to assist in the development of professional writing and presentation	1 9%	4 36%	2 18%	4 36%	0 0%	0 0%

**97. Human Resources and Professional Development: Training and Professional Development / Comments and Notes:**

2 Responses



### 98. Human Resources and Professional Development: Human Resources As executive director, I:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Maintain a standard written policy or procedures for recruiting new employees. We work to ensure	3 27%	1 9%	2 18%	2 18%	3 27%	0 0%
Make sure our organization has a written personnel manual and policies, including procedures for hiring,	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	3 27%	7 64%	0 0%
Develop and implement written policies for handling resumes, responding to unsolicited applications, and	6 55%	1 9%	0 0%	4 36%	0 0%	0 0%
Verify certifications and degrees and conduct thorough reference checks for new employees, including obtain	3 27%	2 18%	0 0%	3 27%	3 27%	0 0%
Provide new employees with an organizational orientation, including copies of personnel, financial and	0 0%	1 9%	2 18%	4 36%	4 36%	0 0%
Require new and existing employees to sign the organization's personnel handbook and agree to terms	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	3 27%	7 64%	0 0%
Talk with each employee about their potential career path, professional development and organizational goals	1 9%	1 9%	1 9%	5 45%	3 27%	0 0%
Try to avoid significant staff turnover within the organization, since this can be costly, result in	0 0%	1 9%	1 9%	6 55%	3 27%	0 0%
Conduct periodic evaluations of employee performance. We also make sure employees receive a written record	0 0%	1 9%	3 27%	3 27%	4 36%	0 0%
Evaluate the organizational management structure on a periodic basis, including strengths and weaknesses of	1 9%	3 27%	2 18%	4 36%	1 9%	0 0%
Maintain a salary range/schedule and job description for each position within the organization. I review salaries	1 9%	0 0%	4 36%	4 36%	2 18%	0 0%
Educate employees about their full compensation package, including value of retirement benefits, health	0 0%	1 9%	2 18%	2 18%	6 55%	0 0%
Evaluate and monitor the perceptions among employees concerning salary and performance awards and	0 0%	0 0%	3 27%	4 36%	4 36%	0 0%
Strive to maintain competitive salaries and benefits for the region. We conduct or obtain compensation surveys	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	6 55%	4 36%	0 0%

### 99. Human Resources and Professional Development: Human Resources / Comments and Notes:

2 Responses



### 100. Financial Management: Measures of Financial Performance As executive director, I:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Establish a clear and transparent system for measuring and monitoring our organization's financial performance,	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	10 91%	0 0%
Maintain a logical and easy way to follow an audit trail, providing for cross-checking and verification of all	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	4 36%	7 64%	0 0%
Review monthly financial reports for the organization and each program (and with our board and/or executive	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	3 27%	8 73%	0 0%
Provide regular updates to the board on the organization's annual budget, including specific	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	2 18%	8 73%	0 0%

### 101. Financial Management: Overhead Control and Audits As executive director, I:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Make sure the organization maintains an updated and detailed chart of accounts and program codes, which	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	2 18%	9 82%	0 0%
Make sure our overhead and/or indirect costs are reviewed, adjusted and monitored on a regular basis to	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	10 91%	0 0%
Stress that all staff, including finance and senior program managers, must be adequately familiar with	1 9%	0 0%	2 18%	5 45%	3 27%	0 0%
Ensure our organization bids the contract for our auditor at least every three years or at least rotate our on-site	1 9%	0 0%	1 9%	3 27%	6 55%	0 0%
Established an audit committee of board members to serve as a liaison with our auditors. We make sure our	2 18%	0 0%	3 27%	2 18%	4 36%	0 0%
Submit our annual audit report and any findings to the federal audit clearinghouse and related federal and state	1 9%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	10 91%	0 0%



**102. Financial Management: Billing Procedures As executive director, I:**

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Make sure Invoices, reimbursement requests and financial progress reports are prepared in an orderly,	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	2 20%	8 80%	0 0%
Implemented a system so that invoices, reimbursement requests and financial progress reports are double-	1 9%	0 0%	0 0%	4 36%	6 55%	0 0%
Direct staff to use standard federal forms or other standard forms as required and to conform to grant or	0 0%	1 9%	0 0%	4 36%	6 55%	0 0%
Make sure write-offs and write-ups are handled in a manner appropriate to the organization in a systematic	1 9%	0 0%	0 0%	6 55%	3 27%	1 9%
Monitor accounts receivables, including making sure that overdue invoices are pursued and collected with the	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	3 27%	8 73%	0 0%

**103. Financial Management: Management of Expenses, Cash and Security As executive director, I:**

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not so much	2	3	4	Totally!	Don't Know or N/A
Work with staff to make sure financial and accounting policies and procedures are written and available to all	0 0%	1 9%	4 36%	4 36%	2 18%	0 0%
Work with staff to make sure expense account forms are easy to use, track and monitor. Expense forms and	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	4 36%	6 55%	0 0%
Monitor our operating budget and expenses monthly, including individual projects, programs, contracts and	0 0%	0 0%	1 9%	4 36%	6 55%	0 0%
Ensure cash flow projections are prepared routinely. (Written policies or goals may be useful for cash	1 9%	1 9%	0 0%	3 27%	6 55%	0 0%
Store key organizational records in a secure location. We make and store duplicate copies of the most	3 27%	1 9%	2 18%	4 36%	1 9%	0 0%
Use a reputable software vendor for our accounting system. We test our accounting software or systems to	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	5 45%	6 55%	0 0%

**104. Financial Management / Comments and Notes:**

0 Responses

Please check your answers. Once you click "Submit", you will be directed to the end of the survey and will not be able to return to this section.





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***REGIONAL STRATEGIES, PARTNERSHIPS AND SOLUTIONS TO  
ADVANCE AMERICA'S ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS AND QUALITY OF LIFE***