

**MINIMUM STANDARDS AND CRITERIA
FOR
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSIONS
AND
COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENTS
OPERATING IN MISSOURI**

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Prepared by;

The Missouri Association of
Councils of Government
213 East Capitol Avenue
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102
573-634-5337

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Preface

Regional planning commissions across the United States, and in Missouri as well, are known by a variety of names, including councils of government, regional planning commissions, areawide planning organizations, economic development districts, and area development districts. Regardless of their name, there are several basic and fundamental similarities among the organizations. All have been formed by local government in one manner or another. All must have operating budgets in order to be able to function. All must have staff in order to provide for the work that is directed to them by their member governments, collectively or individually, and by various state and federal agencies with which the agency contracts under authority of the board of directors and their membership. In Missouri, regional planning commissions are advisory in nature, and county and municipal governments hold membership on a voluntary basis.

Typically, regional planning commissions address a broad cross-section of issues, including comprehensive planning; economic development, including marketing, industrial park development, operation of revolving loan funds, and coordination with industrial prospects and various agencies and organizations involved in economic development. Most regional planning commissions deal with infrastructural issues, such as public water supply; sanitary sewage collection and treatment; planning for various modes of transportation, including local streets and roads, highways, airports, port development, as appropriate, mass transit, and in some instances, rail. Regional planning commissions are also, from time to time, involved in park, recreational and open space planning and issues; development of various ordinances, such as subdivision regulations, zoning ordinances, mobile home park ordinances and the like; coordination of programs on behalf of county and municipal members with state and federal agencies; solid waste planning; hazardous waste planning; stormwater damage and flood control, including the National Flood Insurance Program; working for improved educational and training facilities; manpower planning and job training issues; health and health facilities needs; and planning for compatible land usage. Most regional planning commissions also prepare grant applications for implementation of various capital improvements and initiation of various programs. Numerous regional planning commissions also assist county and municipal government in administration of grants-in-aid. Some regional planning commissions are also involved in agricultural issues, housing development, and provision of a variety of direct services under an agreed upon basis with member units of government. A number of regional councils provide mapping and drafting services for their memberships.

1

The role of the regional planning commission or council of government varies in each region, depending upon the desires of the member counties and municipalities and their representatives. Nonetheless, the prime role of the regional planning commission is to provide a technical staff, capable to providing sound advice to its membership and to work for coordination of various planning and infrastructural needs among the various counties and municipalities, as appropriate. Many regional planning commissions/councils of government conduct

a considerable amount of research as a matter of course in their day-to-day operations and often have a considerable amount of data and information available for use by their members and citizens of the region. A number of the regional planning commissions in Missouri serve as repositories for census data under an agreement with the Missouri State Library and its Data Affiliate Program. Most of the regional planning commissions have a small technical and planning library which also houses a wealth of data and information about their respective regions and, perhaps, a broader area.

Most of the rural regional planning commissions in Missouri were formed under Chapter 251 of the *Revised Statutes of the State of Missouri*. Some are incorporated separately as not-for-profit corporations, and yet others, particularly in the metropolitan areas, were formed by interstate compact or other incorporating methods. Several of the regional planning commissions, notably East-West Gateway Coordination Council, Mid-America Regional Council and Mo-Kan Regional Council, serve as bi-state regional planning groups for their respective areas. All regional councils in Missouri operate on a not-for-profit basis.

The regional planning commissions across the State of Missouri provide an effective way for local governments to work together to address common problems and to share technical staff for problems that cross border lines or boundaries and need an areawide approach. They also can effectively deliver programs which cannot be afforded on an individualized basis by county and municipal governments, but can be afforded on a collective basis where all share staff and/or resources. The intent of the regional planning commissions in Missouri is to be of service to their member counties and municipalities and to bring an organized approach to addressing a broad cross-section of areawide problems. They also are available to assist their member entities in coordinating the needs of the area with state and federal agencies or with private companies or other public bodies.

The following minimum standards have been developed by the Missouri Association of Councils of Government, the statewide organization of regional planning commissions and councils of government in Missouri. They are intended to set, at a minimum, standards that each regional council or regional planning commission are expected to meet. It is certainly recommended by the Missouri

2

Association of Councils of Government that each regional council/regional planning commission strive to exceed the minimum standards to provide a maximum amount of service to their respective counties and municipalities and to be an important and integral part of substate government in Missouri. It is also intended that, with the adoption of the enclosed standards by the Missouri Association of Councils of Government and its respective member regional councils, that the Missouri Office of Administration, representing state government in the allocation of funds to regional councils and regional planning commissions in Missouri, utilize the standards to judge the various regional councils/regional

planning commissions in the allocation of funds approved by the Missouri legislature as a part of the annual budget.

Organization

- A. The composition of the regional planning commission shall be agreed upon by each individual regional planning commission; however, a majority of the voting representatives of the board of directors and executive committee must represent county and municipal governments, whether they be elected or appointed officials.
- B. Regional planning commissions/councils of government shall meet at least quarterly (monthly meetings are recommended) to conduct the business of the agency and to review activities of the commission.
- C. Meetings of the regional planning commission shall be broadly advertised, and notification, whether by news release, sending copies of meeting notices and agendas or by other acceptable means, shall be provided to all printed and broadcast media simultaneously in the region served by the particular regional planning commissions.
- D. The regional planning commission/council of government shall appoint, at a minimum, committees responsible for personnel, budget, bylaws, nominations and other such special committees as may be deemed appropriate by the membership of the RPC/COG. The committee responsible for personnel shall meet with the executive director on no less than an annual basis to review personnel policies, job descriptions, salary ranges and the agency salary schedule, and to evaluate the performance of the executive director. It will be the discretion of each RPC/COG whether the committee responsible for personnel will have the authority to hire, fire and set salaries, or whether the executive director will have this authority.
- E. The committee responsible for the budget shall meet as frequently as necessary, but at least annually prior to the meeting adopting the operating
3
budget for the regional planning commission. The committee responsible for budget shall consider the various resources available for agency operations for the coming fiscal year and recommend to the commission's membership/board of directors an operating budget.
- F. The regional planning commission/council of government shall have a committee responsible for nominating officers which shall prepare and present a proposed slate of officers and board of directors for the regional planning commission on a regular basis. This is to be carried out in concert with the adopted bylaws of each regional council or regional planning commission.

- G. Each regional planning commission shall have a written annual work program describing the work that is proposed to be undertaken in the ensuing year. The annual work program shall be submitted to the full membership of the regional planning commission for review, approval and adoption, and upon adoption, a copy shall be submitted to the Missouri Office of Administration. This work program may be included as a part of the budget document or may be separate.

Fiscal Operations

- A. The executive director shall ensure that an annual budget is prepared for the regional planning commission/council of government. It shall be submitted to the committee responsible for budget by the executive director prior to required board approval, and to the full board membership by the committee responsible for budget prior to required board approval. The budget will include all anticipated sources of revenue for the agency, total agency expenditures and narrative statements explaining the agency's program operations for the coming fiscal year.

The executive director shall have prepared, at a minimum, the average percentage change in personnel costs for the coming year included in the proposed budget, and submit this to the committee responsible for personnel and/or budget. It shall be the decision of each agency's board as to what level of detail the personnel budget is prepared which is submitted to the committee responsible for personnel and/or budget. A copy of the budget, upon adoption by the regional planning commission/council of governments, shall be submitted to the Office of Administration.

- B. The executive director shall ensure that a cash receipts log is kept by the person he/she designates to receive funds. (This function shall be kept separate from all other cash functions, such as preparation of deposits, bank reconciliations and vouchers for payment; signing checks; and the responsibility of entry into the accounting records at any level.) The log is to

4

include, at a minimum and when applicable, the date of receipt, date of check, check number, payor, payee and what the payment is for. It is also recommended that an annual cost allocation plan be prepared and updated periodically.

- C. The executive director shall ensure that a self-balancing set of books using double-entry accounting are maintained and kept up-to-date at all times. It is recommended that the accrual basis of accounting be used. These books shall accurately reflect revenue and expenditures for all programs operated by the agency. He/she shall ensure that regular fiscal reports (including a minimum balance sheet and a statement of revenues and expenditures) are submitted to

the designated committees and/or full board membership. Regular is deemed to mean a minimum of quarterly reports.

- D. The executive director shall ensure that bids are issued for annual comprehensive audits of the agency. It is recommended that bids be taken for no less than a three-year period. The completed audit shall be made available by the Certified Public Accountant performing the audit to the membership of the regional planning commission/council of government for acceptance. Copies of the approved audit shall be submitted to the State of Missouri's Office of Administration and other local, state and federal agencies as required. The approved audit shall become a matter of public record.
- E. It is recommended that the agency prepare and annually update a written inventory of the equipment, office furnishings and property of the regional planning commission/council of government.
- F. It is recommended that after the office equipment, office furnishings and property inventory is conducted, insurance coverage be reviewed in order to ensure that sufficient coverage is available and to minimize loss to the regional planning commission/council of governments.

Communication

- A. Each regional planning commission shall have a public relations and communications program. This is to allow the public and various agencies and organizations to know of the activities of the commission and to learn more about their capabilities and the services that they render.
- B. Each regional council or planning commission shall have a written agenda and a meeting notice giving an overview of items to be discussed at the regional planning commission meeting. The meeting notice and agenda shall be mailed to the commission membership one week prior to the commission meeting. Copies of the meeting notices and agendas are to be sent simultaneously at
5
the time of mailing of the agenda to the membership to all broadcast and print media located within the region. Regional planning commissions may wish to consider sending copies to the news media which are not physically located within the region, but which serve the citizens of the region.
- C. Each regional planning commission shall submit an annual report to its membership, to members of the State Legislature representing any portion of the region, to the Missouri Office of Administration, and to any other State of Missouri departments or divisions and to any federal agencies that are deemed appropriate. Copies shall also be submitted to the U.S. Congressmen representing the counties in the region and to the U.S. Senator serving the State of Missouri.

- D. Each regional planning commission shall ensure that they and their staff are available for radio and television interviews in order to present information concerning projects and programs being operated by the regional planning commission/council of governments or programs and projects affecting member units of government in their area.
- E. Each regional planning commission shall have a speakers bureau which shall make available board and staff members knowledgeable of the commissions programs to make appearances before various civic clubs, Chambers of Commerce and other economic development organizations, church groups, or any organizations wishing to have presentations.
- F. Each regional planning commission shall issue periodic news releases concerning various aspects of the agency's operations or situations that arise that the regional planning commission is involved with and addressing.
- G. Each regional planning commission shall keep a file displaying news releases and other publicity efforts so that they are available for review by interested agencies and organizations.

Programs

- A. Regional planning commissions should investigate various activities and services that they can provide with the approval of their county and municipal governments on an areawide basis which will assist county and municipal governments in carrying out their functions and responsibilities and provide for cost-effective programs that will assist in minimizing expenditures for county and municipal governments through cooperative efforts.
- B. Programs are to be developed in accordance with a professional code of ethics.
- C. It is recommended that county and municipal governments utilize the available expertise from their regional council/regional planning commission as opportunities arise to perform various services and to address various plans and documents needed by county and municipal government. It is anticipated that this may require additional funding on an individualized basis to assist in paying for the actual costs for provision of programs.