



Visitor Studies Association

Board of Directors Meeting
Phone
December 19, 2014
MINUTES

Present

- President and Chair..... Joe Heimlich
President Elect..... Kim Kiehl
Treasurer..... Sarah Cohn
Secretary..... Randy Roberts
Vice-President, Organizational Development.....Dave Ucko
Vice-President, Professional Development..... Jessica Luke
Vice-President, Outreach Bob Breck
Association Manager..... Eli Bossin

Members:

Kate Haley Goldman, Laura Huerta-Migus, Elisa Israel, Randi Korn, Camellia Sanford

Absent : Marcie Benne, Dale McCreedy, Gina Svarovsky

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Board of the Visitor Studies Association, the President being in the Chair and the Secretary being present, was called to order at 9:00 am Eastern time.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Table with 2 columns: Name, Conflict. Rows include Marcie Benne (Absent), Eli Bossin (None), Bob Breck (None), Sarah Cohn (None), Kate Haley-Goldman (None), Joe Heimlich (None), Laura Huerta Migus (None), Elisa Israel (None).

Kim Kiehl	None
Randi Korn	None
Jessica Luke	None
Dale McCreedy	Absent
Randy Roberts	None
Saul Rockman	None
Camellia Sanford	None
Gina Svarovsky	Absent
Dave Ucko	None

1. Approval of the Minutes of the Board Meeting of July 16, 2014

J. Heimlich asked if there were any corrections to the minutes of the July 16 Board meeting. No changes were offered.

Motion: S. Cohn moved *“That the minutes of the July 16 Board meeting be accepted.”* E. Israel seconded. The minutes were approved.

2. Update on Association Manager search.

As of December 19, eight applications and one letter of interest have been received. Applications will be distributed to the interview committee (K. Kiehl, D. McCreedy, D. Ucko, and C. Sanford). K. Kiehl is working towards making a hiring recommendation by mid-January.

3. Discussion and Approval of the 2015 budget

J. Heimlich opened the discussion by providing an overview of the Executive Committee’s understanding of the Association’s financial state and the EC’s budget recommendation based in that understanding. He stated that:

The proposed budget includes a \$21,000 deficit for which there are currently funds available to draw down. However, we cannot continue to rely on reserve funds to support ongoing operations.

There are three primary sources of revenue: the conference, development, and membership. For the past several years, VSA has also relied on income from federal grants that provided revenue. The intent is to continue seeking appropriate grants revenue, but it cannot be depend upon it at this point.

The Conference is the dominant revenue source and there is a good understanding of income and expenses. The CPC is continually looking at revenue expansion opportunities and ways to control expenses.

Membership is currently not bringing in revenue beyond the expenses required to support member benefits and management. In the current budget proposal, there are one-time expenses and investment in the future for implementation of the strategies the Membership Committee has framed.

Professional Development is an area for potential revenue growth. Revenue budgeted is

estimated conservatively as the Professional Development Committee continues to expand its outreach and revenue generating activities. It is important to note that the workshops coordinated by the PDC are an important component of the revenue related to the overall conference. Additional growth is anticipated, and conservative estimates are appropriate until such time as revenue potential is better understood.

The Development Committee is moving in an appropriate, strategic direction by reshaping the donation structure and aggressively seeking opportunities for expanding the breadth of giving by the membership and beyond. As with the PDC, it is hard to ensure a solid estimate of revenue under the changes without time to test the changes.

The Executive Committee sees the strategic actions of these committees as part of the movement towards a more stable financial condition. In this sense, the \$21,000 deficit in the budget is an investment in these efforts, and the EC supports this short-term risk. However, there are concerns. The Association must reinforce action toward change. The EC, therefore, recommends accepting the budget with a \$21,000 deficit with the following conditions:

1. As a Board, we review the budget on a quarterly basis against actuals and are prepared to adjust spending if not meeting goals. This would mean cuts to committee and Association budgets if necessary.
2. As a Board, we acknowledge that we are investing in strategic changes and seek to ensure that this investment has an ROI that will appropriately balance the expenses over time.
3. We aggressively look at other sources of funding to broaden our revenue streams. And we as a Board agree to commit to action toward building these options and leverage all activities of VSA toward conference attendance, membership, and donations.

S. Cohn walked through the FY2015 budget proposal and FY2014 financial report. Current financial report includes numbers through October close (Nov and Dec not included). Sarah reviewed expenses and revenue projections through end of year.

There were no questions about current status.

S. Cohn summarized changes in the 2015 budget proposal that could have financial implications moving forward including: increased attention to and investment in marketing membership and shift in sponsorship strategy from focus on conference to focus on association. She also reminded the Board of the recommendation to have a group that conducts quarterly financial reviews and makes recommendations for adjustments to the full Board as needed.

Motion: S. Cohn moved that "The board of directors approve the 2015 budget by allocating \$21,084.26 from reserves to balance the budget and plan to review the Association's actual activities against the budget quarterly throughout 2015." D. Ucko seconded.

J. Luke facilitated the budget discussion.

R. Korn asked if all committees had been conservative in projecting expenses and if there is any possibility of further reducing expenses.

S. Cohn described the budget process, which included revisiting committee budget proposals based on questions regarding reducing expenses and/or increasing revenue projections. Other than Conference and Communications committee, whose projections were in line with previous years' activities and expenses, all other committees were asked to and did reduce projected expenses. Due to nature of these activities overseen by these committees, there does not seem to be opportunity for reducing Conference and Communication Committee expenses.

J. Luke clarified that the EC's recommendation is based in a strategy of drawing down \$21,000 to close the budget gap as an investment in VSA's future. An alternate – and more conservative approach – is to try to reduce the gap by cutting expenses. At this point the EC has not taken this approach.

R. Korn acknowledged that growth investment is one way of moving forward, but expressed concern, as Chair of the Development Committee, that the increased funds needed may not be available on an ongoing basis. She noted the importance of reducing expenses as well as increasing revenue. D. Ucko agreed that it is wise to focus on managing expenses, but stated that VSA needs to grow revenue to become more financially stable. He noted a need to be more creative and aggressive in bringing in funds. R. Korn reminded the Board that this will require the full participation of all Board members in bringing in more revenue from multiple sources.

L. Huerta-Migus agreed and acknowledged the call to action in J. Heimlich's framing of the EC's budget recommendation. She suggested that the \$21,000 might not need to be used if revenue exceeds projections and suggested that the possibility of using these funds be thought of as a motivator rather than a risk.

C. Sanford discussed the Conference Committee's work to date on increasing revenue potential including strategies for getting local people involved in the conference and VSA. She invites ideas and discussion, but noted that the conference Committee has been actively pursuing ideas to increase revenue.

E. Israel agrees that it will be useful to review budgets on a quarterly basis, but wonders if the timing of revenue generating activities, particularly the conference, allows for productive adjustments. She also noted the need to ensure that there are adequate procedures and oversight in place to make sure that VSA is collecting all revenue due in a timely manner (for example an active and timely renewal process). She also reviewed the Professional Development Committee's hopes that webinars will continue to be very successful. The PDC has also added early registration rates for pre-conference workshops to help increase registration numbers.

J. Luke summarized the sense of the group is that the organization won't grow by cutting expenses, but there are appropriate concerns about spending more than is affordable.

Strategies that have been suggested include:

- The need to dedicate time to articulating revenue generating strategies and activities
- The need to revisit and/or clarify our financial processes

B. Breck raised a question about what areas potentially could be cut once we're into the year. Is it realistic that financial adjustments could be made based on quarterly reviews?

J. Heimlich clarified that quarterly review is against cash flow projections by month. Committees are first line of review and would suggest cuts if necessary.

D. Ucko suggested that it might be useful to examine the fiscal year and determine if a different fiscal year might serve VSA better in terms of budget adjustments. Although this has been considered and rejected in the past, with a Finance Committee now in place this might be an appropriate time to reconsider.

J. Luke summarized the discussion: there does not seem to be strong opposition to moving forward by closing the budget gap through using surplus funds, but there is a lot of interest in strategizing how to move forward toward a more financially sustainable structure.

R. Korn brought up thinking about how this direction might shape the Board as new members are brought in. L.Huerta-Migus agrees that the Board Development Committee should think about this as they consider Board composition.

J. Luke checked for further questions/discussions. There being none, S. Cohn called the question. The motion was read and a vote was taken.

The budget was unanimously accepted as proposed.

4. Proposal to contract for temporary assistance to support the conference committee (J. Luke)

J. Luke asked the Board to consider allocating funds to hire a contractor on a short-term basis to support the work of the conference committee during transition to a new Association Manager. Elee Wood, Conference Chair, has offered to take the lead in recruiting someone in her region (Indianapolis) to work with her until an Association Manager is in place. Funds remaining in the AM contract budget should be available to cover this cost.

It was agreed that the need is urgent and time sensitive in this area. The Board agreed that VSA should hire a short-term contractor to cover conference needs on a temporary basis.

E. Israel raised concerns about how daily functions of the Association are being attended to during the gap in Association Manager coverage.

L.Huerta-Migus suggested that we put together a list of tasks and activities that need to be covered so we can think about how to move forward. E. Bossin will post a Writeboard in Basecamp with the list of activities that he developed and Committee Chairs and other Board Members can add to that list. Committee Chairs should indicate what activities they and the committees are able to manage short term and what activities need immediate support. Once tasks are posted, J. Heimlich will bring EC together to determine coverage for immediate needs. Board Members are asked to send J. Heimlich suggestions for contractors who could help with interim support.

S. Cohn and J. Heimlich thanked all committee chairs for their work on the budget.

4. Meeting adjourns

S. Cohn moved *“That the Board Meeting be adjourned.”* K. Haley-Goldman seconded. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 1:55 pm Eastern time

Randy C. Roberts
Secretary
December 21, 2014