



Idea Exchange

NACo Annual Conference

Los Angeles County / Long Beach, California

Sunday, July 24, 2016

12:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Hyatt Regency: Shoreline A

List of Attendees:

Name	Jurisdiction / Organization	Name	Jurisdiction / Organization
Todd Leopold	County of Adams, Colorado	Al Vanderberg	County of Ottawa, Michigan
Susan Muranishi	County of Alameda, California	Verdenia C. Baker	County of Palm Beach, Florida
Gary Vetter	County of Brown, South Dakota	George Johnson	County of Riverside, California
Tom Lundy	County of Catawba, North Carolina	Cheryl Hadsall	County of Saginaw, Michigan
Wendy Tyler	County of Colusa, California	Barbara Thompson	County of San Benito, California
David Twa	County of Contra Costa, California	Rebecca Wachsberg	County of Sonoma, California
Peter Crichton	County of Cumberland, Maine	Veronica Ferguson	County of Sonoma, California
Darryl Martin	County of Dallas, Texas	Patrick Thompson	County of St. Croix, Wisconsin
Gordon Hikel	County of Dallas, Texas	Rita Ossolinski	NACA & ICMA
Terence E. Arrington	County of Darlington, South Carolina	Robert C. Donnan	NACA & ICMA
Gene Smith	County of Dunn, Wisconsin	Ryan Baird	eCivis
Brian Olson	County of El Paso, Colorado	Kristi More	The Ferguson Group
Henry Yankowski	County of El Paso, Colorado	Bill Ferguson	The Ferguson Group
Kevin Carunchio	County of Inyo, California	Roger Gwinn	The Ferguson Group
Gwen Kennedy	County of Loudon, Virginia	Star Wilbraham	U.S. Small Business Administration
Tim Harper	County of Marion, South Carolina	Paul Campbell	United Healthcare
Peter B. Austin	County of McHenry, Illinois	Sheri Harmon-Butts	United Healthcare
Mark Eisenbarth	County of Muskegon, Michigan	Paul Norman	United Healthcare
James Jayne	County of Navajo, Arizona		

➤ Introduction & Guest Speakers:

- Peter Austin, NACA President, opens the floor and discusses the value of NACA
- Dr. Emilia Istrate, NACo liaison to NACA, discusses latest NACo polls, SteppingUp Program, appointed county administrator surveys and analysis, and the CountiesWork Program
- Peter Austin announces board member appointments for the upcoming year and discloses the NACA budget.
 - Incoming board and budget are approved by the current board
- Friends of NACA are given the floor.
 - eCivis
 - Grant-searching tool
 - County A
 - Grant processes are piecemeal – handled by various departments
 - Grants are pursued to offset costs of provided service
 - The process could be better coordinated
 - Organizational oversight assigned to a particular person would be helpful for smaller counties as it is currently a part of someone else's job
 - Grant opportunities are likely missed.
 - eCivis Representative A
 - Founder of eCivis – internet-based grant service program.
 - Took over grant-writing services of the Ferguson Group
 - Dealing with procurement issues and funding issues
 - Trying to create a program within the eCivis construct that will provide an ongoing grant-writing process
 - Yearlong or longer contract to procure and write grants for local governments
 - NACA could be consortium.
 - Avoid lengthy grant writing process
 - Create agenda with client
 - Local jurisdiction would be able to spend money from grant and discuss uses for grant
 - Service that is more regularized so that local governments that don't have the capacity for grant writing could call on eCivis for grant writing services: e.g. editing, writing, identifying, etc.
 - Set agenda ahead of time – non-call basis allows for prompt service.
 - eCivis Representative B
 - Shortening time period from notification to due time for federal grants is the core challenge of current stage
 - Develop program ahead of time to address
 - County B
 - Use of eCivis in the past has been successful with transportation grants, disaster recovery grants, second chance grants (felon assistance), etc.
 - County C
 - Utilization of grants can be tricky

- eCivis Representative A
 - Not tricky if one goes about it strategically and looks closely at indirect costs and compliance
 - Benefits to grants: e.g. – keeping people out of jails is a huge cost avoidance
 - County C
 - Many government leaders competing for grants are losing to governments that don't necessarily know how to use funds secured
 - County D
 - Small counties have a tendency to go after funds for funds sake
 - Need to strategize grant applications
 - County E
 - In South Carolina, a variety of entities work on grant seeking process
 - South Carolina decided that seeking 3rd party support was unnecessary
 - County F
 - Ferguson Group has been very helpful in grant seeking and securing process in the past
 - Sought grant in past and failed but Ferguson helped secure the very grant.
 - County G
 - County lost grant-seekers on staff due to recession
 - Elected officials encouraged grant seeking through Ferguson Group
 - Balance between use of internal and external resources tricky
 - U.S. SBA Representative
 - Worked for US treasury in past
 - Grants are all about leveraging the dollar
 - Often came from partnerships
 - Applications often had no tie to local governments
 - Community partnerships oftentimes very helpful.
- NACA President introduces United Healthcare (UHC): retiree benefits health coverage – bridging the gap
 - UHC Representative A
 - Retiree solutions called for by NACo survey
 - Want to launch product that counties need
 - UHC Representative B
 - Group Medicare advantage PPO plan has had great success
 - Offers in and out-of-network providers for the same cost
 - Health and Wellness programs
 - Chronic Condition Programs
 - Silver Sneakers program
 - Renew Rewards Program
 - Specialty Programs
 - Advocate for Me Program
 - UHC Representative A

- Program is launched
- Procurement processes have not been refined
 - Looking at joint membership policies
- Collective bargaining agreements are a possibility – undecided but possible
- Call for feedback and potential NACA relationship
- NACo Liaison
 - Mental health of detainees – **SteppingUp Program**
 - Cheaper to keep people out of jail
 - County jails impacted heavily by mental health
 - Provides resources for mental health and substance abuse issues
 - Helps provide alternatives for the mentally ill and those suffering from substance abuse issues
 - County specific – all counties are unique
 - County A
 - Brought to county board
 - Initial hesitation from board due to potential costs
 - Performed inventory of practices
 - Realized many practices were already in place
 - Forced recognition and discussion of mental health issues and the criminal justice system
 - Led to much positive press
 - County B
 - Great success
 - County C
 - Found that 22% of inmates had mental health issues
 - Discovered that a massive cost came from the law enforcement end
 - Booking, arresting, waiting the patients in hospitals
 - NACo Liaison
 - Crisis prevention centers opening to save costs associated with law enforcement
 - First responders can take patients to centers and save time & money
 - 25% of inmates have mental health issues
 - 75% of those have substance abuse issues as well
 - Next steps for SteppingUp
 - Substance abuse is top health challenge and threat to public safety for many counties
 - Opioid task forces are developing in many communities
 - NACo is moving into a new building with the National League of Cities and across the street from ICMA and NACA
 - Closer to Congress and the White House
 - More meeting space for larger group discussions

- Counties are more likely to provide retiree health benefits than other employers
- New web portal to help diversification of economies – especially in coal reliant counties
- Research on administered counties – 1322 counties have professional administrators (43%)
 - 44% of those have administrators with high authority
- Encouragement for county administrators to join NACo policy committees
- NACoGrants.org – database of grants available to counties

Topics:

1) Push for Open Government: Discretionary Funds

- Open information on website
 - Discretionary funds clarification
 - What is mandated and what is not (truly discretionary)
- County A
 - Did this before – became too difficult
 - Too much interpretation – stopped using
- NACo Liaison
 - TX Association of Counties has analyzed discretionary funds in past
 - NACo interested
 - How much of the county budget is mandated?
 - Not simple to classify what is mandated and what is not
 - Would be a useful exercise for counties to perform analysis of budgets
- County B
 - Has a breakdown online of what is discretionary and what is not
 - \$3.6 billion budget but relatively little of that is discretionary
 - 84% of discretionary funds go to departments (e.g. the board, the extension, the police department)
- County C
 - Problem that is hard to resolve: within mandated services, services aren't mandated
- UHC Representative
 - One county (Leon County) developed a board game to show constituents how a budget is passed
 - Offering it for free to other counties
- County D
 - Hard to simplify a county budget to one or two page handout to make it accessible
 - Creates more confusion than is necessary
- County E
 - Program reviews performed every four years when a new board is established
 - Gives board a picture of all the programs that the county is working on

- Provides a snapshot of what those programs do
- NACo Liaison
 - Snapshots are helpful when going to the Hill because a story helps engage the committees, even if simplifications aren't entirely accurate

2) Maintaining Political Neutrality while Faced with a Polarized Electorate

- 2.a) What are the impacts of the recent polarization of the electorate?
 - County A
 - Lost a longtime commissioner in a stunning election result
 - County B
 - Decided not to propose a new sales tax due to expected failure
 - County C
 - Referendum being placed on ballot took a great deal outreach to various factions of the community for preliminary activism
 - County D
 - Radical political factions needed to be engaged to explain why state and federal funds are accepted
 - Most needed an explanation of how county budgets work
 - Groups became advocates for county budgetary actions after explanation was given
- 2.b) State budget impasses and/or reduction of state funding
 - County A
 - County programs being cut in anticipation of funding being cut in future budget
 - County B
 - Foster care ages changed and led to higher expenses without supplementing increase in costs
 - County C
 - Programs cut
 - County D
 - Counties sued the state for funding to pay for mandated programs
 - Case was settled and counties were reimbursed for costs

3) Staff Input on Strategic Planning

- County A
 - 3-year strategic plans
 - Staff engaged leading up to board proposal
 - Staff department heads engaged
 - Would like to engage more staff
 - Multiple meetings throughout the county to open the door for input are planned
 - Strategic plan kept on webpage with tracking for public view
- County B
 - Brought in a futurist to research demographics and economic trends to anticipate 10-year trends

- Used to update strategic plans
 - Town hall meetings and “hack-a-thons” held to bring employees together and discuss strategic plans going forward and pitch efficiency ideas
 - Some basic, some complex, many useful
- County C
 - Survey of staff every year using a third party
 - Brown bag lunches with staff
 - Encourage face time with staff

4) Preparing for the Zika Virus

- County A
 - Negatively impacts tourism
 - Low-flying mosquitos (ankle biters) make the prevention of bites challenging
 - Sprays are not very affective
 - Long sleeves help
 - The dumping of standing water is essential
 - A toolkit for residents was developed along with a packet that hotels give to guests

5) Gun Violence

- Starting the conversation about gun violence
 - County A
 - Very conservative board
 - Heavily influenced by NRA
 - Open shooting prevalent and board will not act to restrict gun use
 - Armed guard present in board meetings and wand used on attendees
 - County B
 - Gang violence common on freeway
 - Combination of handguns and long guns
 - Got approved budgeting for cameras, plate readers, and shot spotters placed on highways
 - Stray bullets common and creating safety hazard
 - County C
 - Courthouse shooting in rural county
 - Security perimeter not breached
 - Citizens and employees engaged about process for transparency
 - County D
 - No metal detector on county building
 - Some employees carry firearms into building
 - County E
 - Firearms allowed in county buildings
 - County F
 - County proposed “no gun” policy but was unwilling to put metal detectors in place