

To: TWG

From: TWG Chair/Facilitator AHG: Jan Balsom (replaced by Steven Mietz), Kerry Christensen, Bill Davis, Bill Persons, John Hamill, and chaired by Shane Capron.

Subject: Report from the TWG Chair/Facilitator AHG on utility of hiring a facilitator and/or retaining the Chair.

Task from TWG: "To evaluate the benefits and costs of either maintaining the TWG chair or bringing in a facilitator, and if the facilitator is brought in, what are the costs, and how do you change the Operating Procedures. The ad hoc group will weigh the benefits and/or staying the status quo."

The AHG had two conference calls (Aug. 4 and Sept. 29) and continued discussions via email.

Primary questions and recommendations:

Facilitator, chair or both?

This question originally came up before Mr. Capron was elected to Chair the TWG. It is an important consideration long-term however. The committee feels that it is important to retain a Chair for the TWG to help maintain a focused approach by keeping to the pertinent subject matter. A facilitator (facilitator-only option) likely would not understand the intricacies of our technical group and might let the conversations wander too far from the subject at hand. A Chair is needed to help guide the TWG on substantive and technical discussions. The Chair should have the technical background to help focus the group on important issues, provide leadership, and interact with the AMWG at meetings and on other tasks as directed by AMWG (e.g., roles ad hoc group). A facilitator would provide numerous benefits to the chair by focusing on meeting management and procedural issues, thereby allowing the Chair to focus on substantive discussions. This might be helpful during the more contentious meetings and especially when motions are considered. However, there is general agreement in the ad hoc that having a facilitator at all meetings might be unnecessary and some concerns have been voiced that they might hinder the relaxed flow of conversation which the TWG enjoys at most meetings. Thus, we propose a trial period during the first year in which we utilize a facilitator for two to three specific meetings. We intend to determine an appropriate schedule while working on a 1-year workplan for the TWG. During the trial period, in addition to facilitation of the meetings, we would want to work with the facilitator, using their expertise, to help the TWG evaluate its facilitation needs and prepare to choose a more permanent facilitator at the end of the trail period, if that course of action is indicated.

Cost, funding, and authority for Facilitation

The funding for a TWG Chair (\$24,179) remained in the budget and may be available for use by the TWG for a facilitator. However, it will take AMWG approval to use this money for a facilitator instead of a Chair – it is unknown when the next AMWG meeting will be held. In the long-term, if TWG decides that a facilitator is useful, the TWG should consider reprogramming this in the budget for 2010. The cost for each meeting will be about \$5,000 depending upon the amount of prep time needed. For more difficult meetings/decisions we might need an additional \$2,000 (or more) for preparation. There should be adequate funding available in FY 2009 for 2-3 meetings for the proposed trial period.

The process for choosing a facilitator is not as easy as we had hoped. If we choose to hire a facilitator we will have to go through a competitive process, and it is not clear what involvement TWG would have in this. A GSA contractor might provide benefits in avoiding some paperwork but still does not allow us to use a non-competitive process. If TWG decides to hire a facilitator, the next step is to request that AMWG approve the use of the funds and then work with BOR to find a facilitator. We should provide to BOR a description of what we are looking for, skills, time commitment, TWG needs, etc. This is a task the Facilitator ad hoc could work on.

The operating procedures allow the Chair to seek the help of a facilitator as needed for difficult issues. The use of a facilitator for a few meetings in '09 seems to fit within this authority in the short-term. The use of a facilitator on an on-going basis should be accompanied by an update to the operating procedures.

Long-term considerations

The current Chair (Capron) is funded by WAPA and this has made available funds in FY 2009 that may be used to hire a facilitator. In the future, having both a funded Chair and a facilitator would require more money (assuming they would need funding). A long-term facilitation arrangement might make the Chair responsibilities more attractive for TWG members that are nervous about the time commitment and the added stress of Chairing meetings. A facilitator might make having a rotating Chair more palatable for TWG members.

Facilitator and the workplan: they are linked

During our considerations for a facilitator we realized that it is going to be important to have a 1-year workplan to help us plan facilitation needs. We need to understand our tasks, timeline, and determine which meetings require facilitation and which ones can be facilitated solo by the Chair. The Facilitator AHG explored the possibility that this AHG, or another, could be tasked with working on the 1-year workplan, making recommendations on agenda items, and developing facilitation requests for consideration by the TWG. This AHG would allow more input by the TWG into the agenda-setting process.

Recommendations

The Facilitator AHG recommends that: TWG request AMWG to authorize the use of the TWG Chair funding in the 2009 budget to hire a facilitator for TWG. The TWG would like to explore the use of a facilitator through a 1-year trial period in which we determine the most appropriate and efficient use of a facilitator. TWG would like utilize the services of a facilitator for 2-3 meetings in 2009, depending upon need, with a budget cap of \$24,179.

Once approved by AMWG, the Chair will work with BOR to make the contracting arrangements.

The AHG further recommends that the TWG develop a 1-year workplan starting at the October meeting and consider for which meetings a facilitator would be useful. The AHG would then (post-October) continue to work on the workplan, develop agendas, and work with the facilitator to (a) determine how best to facilitate TWG meetings, and (b) work with TWG to determine its long-term facilitation needs and how to meet those needs.