

Project Streamlining Technique

PROJECT INITIATION POLICY

Category: Programming

Description

The regional agency adopts an internal “use it or lose it” policy that is more stringent than that imposed by Assembly Bill (AB) 1012 or that mirrors AB 1012 for non-State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funds.

Benefits

- Makes project sponsors more directly responsible to the regional agency to keep project on track
- Allows regional agency to reprogram funding from non-producing projects well in advance of timely use of funds
- Should reprogramming be necessary, gives the sponsor of the new project time to deliver before timely use of funds limits kick in, making it less likely the region would lose money

Issues

- Project sponsors and/or regional agency Boards may be resistant to prospect of reprogramming

Examples

Placer County Transportation Planning Agency (PCTPA) has a timely use of funds requirement that Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) and Transportation Enhancement Activities (TEA) project sponsors must show substantial progress starting one year from award of funds. The status is reported to the Board each April. For those projects that are not showing progress, the sponsor can provide an explanation and revised schedule. Staff provides recommendations, which may include reprogramming of funds.

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) also has regionally imposed obligation deadlines that are in advance of those provided in AB 1012. MTC establishes project screening criteria for each of the various programs funded through MTC to ensure that regional, state, and federal rules, policies, and procedures are followed, particularly in the area completing projects within cost, scope and schedule, thus selecting projects that will best be able to meet deadlines.

Contact

Linda Aeschliman, PCTPA
(530) 823-4090; laeschliman@pctpa.org

Ross McKeown, MTC
(510) 464-7842; rmckeown@mtc.ca.gov

Project Streamlining Technique

ON CALL CONSULTANT LIST

Category: Work Performed by Others

Description

The regional agency develops a Master Agreement with consultants providing specific services, such as design, environmental, or even project administration. Project sponsors can then access these services as needed for their project via Letter of Task Agreement.

Benefits

- Immediate access to needed consultant services
- Saves time to issue Request for Proposal (RFP), select consultant, and negotiate a contract
- Particularly useful for small projects, or sponsors with small staff

Issues

- None identified

Examples

Los Angeles County has Master Agreements with a number of consultants to provide technical services on an as-needed basis.

Contact

Pat DeChellis, Los Angeles County Public Works
pdechellis@ladpw.org

Project Streamlining Technique

**IN-HOUSE PROJECT MANAGER PROVIDED BY
REGIONAL AGENCY**

Category: Work Performed for Others/ Project Management

Description

The regional agency either directly hires or contracts with a person to provide project management as a service to the project sponsor.

Benefits

- Key benefit is to very small jurisdictions/sponsors that do not regularly deal with federal-aid projects and associated requirements
- No learning curve for project manager
- Greater experience with federal-aid projects means that project manager is better able to anticipate problems and keep the project moving
- Relieves burden on often overtaxed staff in small jurisdictions

Issues

- Cost to regional agency to provide staffing
- Project sponsors may not be willing to give up “control” of a project

Examples

Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG) has hired a staff person to provide project management for local sponsors, funded via Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) funds. StanCOG has also hired a full-time staff person with RSTP funds to assist local agencies in meeting federal-aid requirements and preparing grant applications.

Placer County Transportation Planning Agency (PCTPA) has hired a consultant to assist project sponsors through federal-aid requirements, funded via Planning, Programming, and Monitoring funds. On one occasion, at the agreement of the sponsoring agency and PCTPA, this consultant has also taken on direct management of a project.

Contact

Debbie Whitmore, StanCOG
(209) 558-7830; whtmrd@mail.co.stanislaus.ca.us

Celia McAdam, PCTPA
(530) 823-4030; cmcadam@pctpa.org

Project Streamlining Technique

SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT

Category: Team

Description

The project sponsor designates one person as point of contact for the project. All communication is filtered through that one person.

Benefits

- Key benefit is in larger jurisdictions/sponsors or those that have a number of people working on various aspects of a project
- Eliminates confusion and inconsistencies
- Ensures that there is a specific person responsible for the project to move forward
- Makes it less likely that tasks will slip through the cracks because “someone else does that”

Issues

- Not usually effective for small jurisdictions or when the sponsor has few projects

Examples

The City of Modesto has utilized this approach to coordinate local agency communication with Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG), Caltrans, and other federal reviewing agencies.

Contact

Rich Ulm, City of Modesto
(209) 577-5261; rulm@modestogov.com

Project Streamlining Technique

**IN-HOUSE PROJECT MONITORING PROVIDED BY
REGIONAL AGENCY**

Category: Project Management

Description

The regional agency either directly hires or contracts with a person to monitor projects to ensure that they keep on schedule.

Benefits

- Early identification of project delivery problems
- Can assist in moving projects forward by providing advice and information

Issues

- Cost to regional agency to provide staffing

Examples

Most survey respondents have designated project delivery staff, including Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), Butte County Association of Governments (BCAG), Madera County Transportation Commission (MCTC), San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG), Shasta County Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA), Placer County Transportation Planning Agency (PCTPA), and Tuolumne City/County Planning Council.

Contact

Ross McKeown, MTC
(510) 464-7842; rmckeown@mtc.ca.gov

Debbie Whitmore, StanCOG
(209) 558-7830; whtmrd@mail.co.stanislaus.ca.us

Andy Newsom, BCAG
(530) 879-2468; anewsom@bcag.org

Dan Little, Shasta County RTPA
(530) 245-6819; dlittle@co.shasta.ca.us

Liz Levine, MCTC
(559) 675-0721; lizmctc@psnw.com

Linda Aeschliman, PCTPA
(530) 823-4090; laeschliman@pctpa.org

Richard Chavez, SANDAG
(619) 595-5604; rch@sandag.org

Darin Grossi, Tuolumne
(209) 533-5601; dgrossi@co.tuolumne.ca.us

Dean Delgado, OCTA
(714) 560-5744; ddelgado@octa.net

Project Streamlining Technique

ASSIGNED PROJECT TEAM

Category: Team

Description

At outset of federal-aid project, a team that includes all aspects of project delivery is assigned. That team would include:

- Caltrans Local Assistance
- Caltrans Environmental
- Caltrans Right of Way
- Caltrans Encroachment Permit (if needed)
- Regional agency
- Federal Highway Administration (if needed)
- Project sponsor

Benefits

- Everyone involved in the project meet and review project delivery issues
- Establishes “responsibility” for delivery of the project
- Encourages greater cooperation amongst agencies

Issues

- Staffing changes at agencies may change team composition
- Staffing shortages may make agencies reluctant to assign specific staff to a specific project

Examples

The Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG) holds regular quarterly meetings with Caltrans and local agencies to coordinate implementation of federal-aid projects.

Caltrans District 10 has established quarterly meetings that bring regional, local, state and federal agencies together to review projects before and during the environmental planning process. These meetings are intended to provide direction to local agencies before they begin the environmental planning process to ensure that project work is scoped appropriately to respond to federal and state environmental mandates.

Contact

Debbie Whitmore, StanCOG
(209) 558-7830; whtmrd@mail.co.stanislaus.ca.us

Dana Cowell, Caltrans District 10 Local Assistance
dana_cowell@dot.ca.gov

Project Streamlining Technique

STANDARD INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT

Category: Work Performed by Others

Description

The regional agency or other agency develops standard language for an interagency agreement that allows a larger jurisdiction to provide engineering, design, or other project development services for a smaller jurisdiction.

Benefits

- Key benefit is to very small jurisdictions/sponsors that do not regularly deal with federal-aid projects and associated requirements
- Standardized language means agreements can be executed quickly
- Can relieve burden on often overtaxed staff in small jurisdictions, and makes better use of the expertise available at larger organizations

Issues

- Cost to smaller jurisdiction for services
- Project sponsors may not be willing to give up “control” of a project

Examples

Merced County is providing services to the Yosemite Area Transit System (YARTS) to do design and right-of-way for new passenger staging areas in Merced County and two others.

Contact

Marjie Kirn, Merced County Association of Governments
(209) 723-3153; mkirn@mcag.cog.ca.us

Project Streamlining Technique

POOLING FEDERAL DOLLARS

Category: Programming

Description

The regional agency negotiates a local exchange of dollars, pooling federal funds onto fewer projects.

Benefits

- Concentrates additional efforts required to comply with federal-aid funding requirements onto fewer projects
- Federal funds can be designated to those projects and sponsors that can most easily meet federal-aid requirements
- Projects that do not easily fit federal-aid parameters, or sponsors less able to comply with the requirements, could receive cleaner exchanged funds

Issues

- Negotiating the exchange of funds may be tricky and time-consuming
- Particular care must be taken in documenting these exchanges where Joint Powers Authorities and impact fees are involved to ensure exchanges meet all legal requirements

Examples

None yet.

Contact

N/A

Project Streamlining Technique

PROGRAM PROJECTS IN PHASES

Category: Programming

Description

Fund projects in phases, giving funding priority for federal-aid dollars goes to projects that are construction ready.

Benefits

- No delays due to multiple levels of approvals affecting subsequent work, such as environmental approval delays creating problems in obtaining right-of-way
- Higher degree of confidence that project phase will be completed and funds spent quickly

Issues

- Project sponsors usually prefer to obtain funding commitment for the entire project

Examples

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) is considering programming funds on a tiered basis.

Tier I – Construction/Right-of-way: only if environmental has been completed or is an Exempt type project

Tier II – Design: when the environmental phase has not started or is not complete

To provide incentive for agencies, the environmental expenditures would be considered an eligible local match (OCTA typically requires a higher match than the federally required 12 percent, therefore, this “credit” can be applied to the project.)

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) also has a policy which encourages programming of projects in phases.

Contact

Dean Delgado, OCTA
(714) 560-5744; ddelgado@octa.net

Ross McKeown, MTC
(510) 464-7842; rmckeown@mtc.ca.gov

Project Streamlining Technique

LOCAL ASSISTANCE LIAISON DOCUMENT REVIEW

Category: Team

Description

The project sponsor's point person arranges to meet with the Caltrans District Local Assistance Engineer or point person when submitting paperwork for a project. They jointly review the paperwork for completeness, discuss any discrepancies or issues, and come to agreement about what, if anything, is still needed.

Benefits

- Eliminates the back and forth paperwork needed for the project submittals to be complete that often results when papers are submitted by mail.

Issues

- None identified.

Examples

Many agencies and project sponsors do this on an informal basis.

Contact

District Local Assistance Engineers

Project Streamlining Technique

SHADOW DAY

Category: Team

Description

Have local agency staffer and the District Local Assistance Engineer shadow each other for a day to get a sense of the demands of each others' position.

Benefits

- Enhanced communication. There is nothing that provides so graphic an understanding of another than to walk a mile in their shoes.
- Potential streamlining

Issues

- With staffing shortages, it is difficult for each party to find a day to spare to shadow the other.

Examples

Currently an arrangement exists where a Caltrans Area Engineer is working six weeks each with the City of Sacramento, Sacramento County, and the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG). The arrangement has allowed the Caltrans employee to gain a better understanding of day to day business operations for other agencies by experiencing the priorities and limitations that they face. Further, status questions and other issues are answered more readily.

Contact

Terry Abbott, Caltrans Local Assistance
terry_abbott@dot.ca.gov

Winton Emmett, Caltrans Local Assistance
winton_emmett@dot.ca.gov

Teresa Arnold, City of Sacramento
tarnold@cityofsacramento.org

Olin Woods, SACOG
owoods@sacog.org

Project Streamlining Technique

CITY MANAGER INVOLVEMENT

Category: Project Management

Description

For small jurisdiction project sponsors, contact the City Manager if projects begin to slip, particularly if it looks like it might become an ongoing problem.

Benefits

- In many smaller jurisdictions, the City Manager is more directly involved in assigning staff to various tasks. When they are aware a project could be in danger, the City Manager can reprioritize work assignments to get it back on track.

Issues

- None identified

Examples

Many regional agencies do this on an ad hoc basis.

Contact

N/A

Project Streamlining Technique

FEDERAL-AID PROJECT MATCH RESERVE PROGRAM

Category: Programming

Description

Use State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) match reserves as an incentive for local project delivery. Match reserves are allocated only to those local agency projects that are delivered during the original programming year.

Benefits

- Provides an incentive for local agencies to get their projects completed in the original programming year
- Offsets all or a portion of the local match required for federal-aid projects
- Raises the priority of federal-aid projects relative to other projects due to risk of losing valuable funding

Issues

- Requires dedication of a portion of the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) funds that could otherwise be used to construct major transportation projects
- Requires careful monitoring and project tracking
- Requires significant coordination with the Caltrans District and Headquarters

Examples

Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG) has developed an incentive program using a sliding scale based on historical project delivery. Local agencies that have achieved 90 percent delivery or more in the previous two-year cycle received 100 percent of the required local match. Agencies that have delivered less than 90 percent of the program received 70 percent of the required local match. Local agencies have responded well to the program and consider it a major factor in on-time project delivery.

Contact

Debbie Whitmore, StanCOG
(209) 558-7830; whtmrd@mail.co.stanislaus.ca.us

Project Streamlining Technique

PREPLANNING SCOPING MEETING

Category: Team/Programming

Description

Enhance application procedures to improve the cost, scope, and schedule for federal-aid projects. The approach may include pre-programming field reviews, enhanced application procedures, and detailed work plans to ensure that local agencies are aware of federal requirements in advance and consider these requirements in developing cost, scope, and schedule for projects.

Benefits

- Local agencies better understand how federal requirements affect cost, scope, and schedule
- Regional agency programs funding in the proper year
- Caltrans can help the local agency establish more realistic expectations about potential impacts and procedures that will be required of each project

Issues

- Takes more time for local agencies to develop applications
- For large regions, the process may be quite cumbersome due to the volume of projects. The process would have to be focused on projects with the highest risk
- More up-front cost to the local agency

Examples

Many agencies are developing enhanced application procedures that incorporate all or some of these approaches.

Contact

Terry Abbott, Caltrans Local Assistance
terry_abbott@dot.ca.gov