

FHSP Statewide CME Assessment and Sustainability Evaluation

Findings and Recommendations
June 2011



Keeping the Project Relevant

The byway world has changed dramatically since this project began last year

- No budget proposal yet in which the National Scenic Byways Program survives as a dedicated program
- Decisions about the future of the FSHP are less about what FHWA wants/thinks and more about state priorities and goals
- Byway organizations must accept the realities of this new era not only to be sustainable, but to survive



CME Assessment & Sustainability Evaluation

Individual CME Findings

Sustainability remains elusive, but there is some demonstrated success:

- Capable, experienced leaders
- Strong infrastructure
- Community participation efforts that exceed minimum requirements
- “Shining Stars”
- No lack of passion



CME Assessment & Sustainability Evaluation

Findings in Five Critical Areas

Leadership

- CMEs with little formal structure too dependent on individual leaders
- No process for replacing leader
- Leader less informed than consultants and staff
- No written policies, procedures, job descriptions
- CMEs that transition to nonprofit boards are not demonstrating effective governance



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Findings in Five Critical Areas

Finance

- Lack of funding diversity
- Nonprofit boards not fulfilling fiscal responsibility
- Budgets rare
- Grant funds forfeited for lack of match
- CME members not well informed about financial condition of organization
- Obtaining NSBP grants only goal
- Persistent idea that CMEs are not ultimately responsible for funding implementation of the corridor management plan

Findings in Five Critical Areas

Community Participation

- CME member recruitment difficult – never enough people to get the work done
- Community Participation Plans not implemented or are ineffective
- Individuals make assumptions about what others perceive as the CME's purpose/mission
- Failure to see the big picture

Findings in Five Critical Areas

Effectiveness

- Lack of written policies or procedures
- Progress impeded by limited manpower
- Stagnation common with loss of key leaders/members
- When there is paid staff, volunteer members are not as well informed/engaged
- Reluctance to transition from citizen group to effective nonprofit
- Lack of basic communications tools
- No realistic work plan

Findings in Five Critical Areas

Administrative Capacity

- Several do not have dedicated websites
- "Need paid staff."
- Majority do not have dedicated office space or basic office equipment

External Factors Affecting Sustainability

Program Policy

- Were the roles of byway organizations clearly understood as the NSB and FSH Programs were being developed?
- The advent of seed grants caused a shift in focus toward getting money to operate. Did the state program shift to guide/caution CMEs regarding the implications of “free money?”
- Since the mid 1990s, the NSBP has experienced at least three leadership eras. Were the priorities of each leadership era clearly reflected in program materials?

External Factors Affecting Sustainability

Program Communications

- Communication has become murky among the organizations supporting Florida Scenic Highways
- Key policy messages are ambiguous and the intent is diluted by all the messengers byway leaders rely on for advice and counsel
- No clear understanding of the communication chain
- Inconsistent levels of experience and expertise among District Coordinators

Unanticipated Consequences

How do we now address the unanticipated consequences of a program policy focused on designation and not implementation?

- CMEs that struggle with long-term sustainability
- Visitor experience that is inconsistent

Where do we go from here?

Decisions must be made about what the FSHP will be going forward.

- What is the GOAL of the FSHP?
 - Quality visitor experience?
 - Grassroots effort?

Recommendation

Create task team to develop effective post-designation policy for the FSHP.

- Provide clear leadership and communication
- Establish realistic expectations for CMEs that are clearly communicated
- Recognize that the strength of the CME is related to the quality of the visitor experience – **set standards for both**



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