

The SouthEast Regional Directors Institute



Process for Regional Councils Hiring
an
Executive Director

Adopted by the SERDI Council of Peers
May 2006

SERDI PROCESS FOR REGIONAL COUNCILS FOR HIRING AN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The SouthEast Regional Directors Institute (SERDI), a professional development association for regional council executive directors in the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia, has developed a process for regional councils hiring an executive director. It is a process designed to assist the regional council's policy board assess the current status of the council, issues facing the region, and, the projected role for the regional council in addressing those issues and opportunities, and, enabling search criteria to be developed for traits that would be valuable for a successful candidate for the executive director's position.

During its development, two executive director searches were conducted using the process at the Kerr-Tar Council of Governments (NC) and the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments (SC). The flexibility of the process can be seen by the ways each council designed various segments to best suite their needs. These approaches are highlighted in the document to give examples of how the process can be used.

Getting Started

As adopted by the SERDI Council of Peers, upon the announcement of an executive director leaving his/her post, the state association should encourage the regional council to follow the SERDI Process. Since the Council of Peers has requested that each state association adopt the process and encourage its use, the regional council should be aware of its existence.

The regional council will officially request assistance from SERDI to design and conduct an executive search. The cost is \$6,500 plus travel expenses incurred by the SERDI staff in conducting the search.

The Process

Focus Groups/Interviews

The first step in the process will be for the council to decide whether it would like to glean information from regional leaders via the scheduling of focus groups and/or individual one-on-one interviews. This segment will be scheduled over a three-day period. It will be the decision of the regional council board chair/executive committee to determine who will participate in the focus group sessions and/or interviews.

Kerr-Tar COG

*Focus groups were conducted with
(1) COG staff (2) City & County Managers
and County Economic Development Directors
(3) County Aging Directors and other AAAs
(4) Workforce Development Interests*

BCD COG

*One-on-One interviews with
selected board members, local
government managers, SC DOT,
and selected elected officials*

Board Work Review Session

On the final day of the initial site visit, SERDI staff conducts a review session with the regional council board of directors. The findings of the focus group work and interviews are shared without identification of source as to the perceptions of status and role of council in the region, quality of service provision, current and future roles desired, and the qualifications that they desire in a new executive director. The session also can allow for additional input from board members. The work session concludes with an agreement on timeframe for the process and options for search committee review and interview logistics.

Qualifications, Advertisement, and Job Description

Based on agreements made at the Board Work Review Session, SERDI staff will prepare a job description and position announcement, advertisement schedule, and, a description of review and ranking system. *An example of these documents can be found in the appendix.*

Kerr Tar COG

- (1) Developed job description
- (2) Developed job announcement
- (3) COG decided where ad would be placed
- (4) COG collected resumes, made sure they met minimum qualifications, then mailed out COG application form. Once received, all material was submitted to SERDI
- (5) SERDI staff reviewed and used graded scale to rank order each applicant
- (6) SERDI staff met with officers of Board to review and discuss credentials of all applicants
- (7) SERDI Staff helped develop interview questions and moderated the interviews of the 6 top candidates. SERDI staff conducted background checks on the final 6 candidates
- (8) SERDI staff helped search committee walk through next steps in preparation for offering the position to the successful candidate by Board officers

BCD COG

- (1) Developed job description
- (2) Developed job announcement
- (3) COG decided where ad would be placed
- (4) SERDI collected resumes
- (5) SERDI staff reviewed and used graded scale to rank order each applicant
- (6) SERDI staff submitted ranked applications to executive committee
- (7) COG executive committee conducted review of all applicants

Review & Grading of Applications

Each application is graded by a score sheet developed by the SERDI staff based on the six top criteria factors as determined by the search committee/board of directors. A notebook is then developed that contains each applicant's letter of interest, resume, reference sheet, and grading sheet. Notebooks are then prepared for each member of the search committee for their use through the process.

Presentation of Each Applicant's Qualifications

The SERDI staff meets with the designated search committee if desired to review the candidates, their qualifications, and to answer any questions about the candidates that they might have including why a candidate was graded a certain way.

Setting up Interview Logistics

If desired, the SERDI staff works with the regional council to establish logistics for the interview process including developing potential questions to ask the candidates, checking references, and moderating the interview process, etc. The SERDI staff also plays any appropriate role in wrapping up the process in an advisory role to the committee as it prepares a job offer and benefit package for the successful candidate.

Concluding the Process

SERDI staff concludes the process as the council's desires prior to submission of its invoice of \$6,500 plus the reimbursement of all travel expenses incurred by SERDI staff through the process. All other costs incurred by SERDI through the process are encumbered through \$6,500 fee.

Appendix

Kerr-Tar Regional Council of Governments Position Overview/Job-People Specifications (Example)

Position Overview

The chosen candidate will be afforded the opportunity of this highly sought position in one of the southeast's leading councils of government, solidly positioned to manage its own destiny. Many of the elements of success are present for a seasoned professional prepared to leverage the human, material, and capital resources into a cohesive force to advance the Kerr-Tar region. Initiative, vision, innovation, and skill to make a decisive impact will distinguish the executive prepared to lead the Kerr-Tar Regional Council of Governments.

The selected executive director will discover a commitment of the member local governments, Board of Directors, staff, and other regional leaders, both public and private, to work in a collaborative way to enhance the future of the Kerr-Tar region; positioning the COG to be the convener of the region in assisting the leadership address the issues, opportunities, and challenges this region that sits on the I-85 corridor between North Carolina's Research Triangle Park and the Virginia border.

Job Specifications

Career track of progressive, documentable accomplishments increasing complex operations/administrative/executive leadership in public or private sector organization whose focus is community enhancement and economic development. A proven leader with a record of accomplishments in public service or a proven business professional with a record of community development and enhancement will be given full consideration. The ability to demonstrate innovative techniques in building partnerships into a cohesive force to advance initiatives that are advantageous to the Kerr-Tar region will be important. The ability to leverage entities and energize constituents to facilitate projects to a successful conclusion is highly desirable.

A history of organization management and financial administration skill to facilitate multiple competing priorities, with excellent delegation, implementation and follow through skills are a must for the successful candidate. The successful candidate will demonstrate an understanding of local, state, and federal community economic development and human services programs. The candidate should have proven strategic planning success, proven project management skill and team-building expertise...a people person. It highly desired that the candidate have experience of working for a Board of Directors or advisory groups or councils.

Strong communication skills, both written and oral will be important in advancing a positive image for the COG and the Kerr-Tar region with media outlets, local governments, and the business community and the general public is a must.

A minimum of a bachelor's degree in public administration, business administration, urban and regional planning, or related field is required. An advanced degree in a related field is highly desirable.

People Specifications

The successful candidate will be innovative and self-disciplined, with confidence and charisma to lead, encourage and enable the staff to work collaboratively with an energetic Board of Directors, professional local government managers, community leaders, and governmental agencies at all levels.

The successful candidate will possess the leadership stature to assume a central strategic role in refining, enhancing, strengthening, and advancing the region and the mission and purpose of the Kerr-Tar COG. They will have the executive presence to engender confidence and trust readily, with the capacity to assume the role of ambassador on a regional level.

The new executive director must be readily approachable, a good active listener with the ability to process information, formulate strategies and solutions, and communicate clear directives for implementation. The person should have a humble disposition and attitude of servant leadership.

Position Announcement

The following announcement should be placed in the appropriate local, state, regional, and national outlets:

The Kerr-Tar Regional Council of Governments, one of North Carolina's 17 regional councils of governments, with offices in Henderson and serving the municipal and county governments of Person, Granville, Vance, Warren, and Franklin counties, seeks applications for the position of Executive Director.

The successful candidate will demonstrate a career track of progressive, documentable accomplishments in increasing complex operations/administrative/executive leadership in public or private sector organization whose focus in community enhancement and economic development. The successful candidate will be a proven leader with a record of accomplishments in public service or a proven business professional with a record of community development and enhancement. The ability to demonstrate an understanding of regional governance and development, as well as innovative techniques in building partnerships into a cohesive force to advance initiatives that are advantageous to the Kerr-Tar region will be important. The ability to leverage entities and energize constituents to facilitate projects to a successful conclusion is highly desirable.

The successful candidate should demonstrate a history of organization management and financial administration skill to facilitate multiple competing priorities, with excellent delegation, implementation and follow through skills. The successful candidate will demonstrate an understanding of local, state, and federal community economic development and human services programs. The candidate should have proven strategic planning success, proven project management skill and team-building expertise...a people person. It is highly desired that the candidate have experience of working for a Board of Directors or advisory groups or councils.

Qualified candidates will possess a minimum of a bachelor's degree in public or business administration, urban and regional planning, or related field and 10 years of administrative/management responsibility in an organization (s) related to regional governance, community economic development, service delivery, or related experience. A Master's degree in one of the before mentioned disciplines, which is desired, will reduce the 10 years of management responsibility requirement.

A competitive salary and benefits package will be negotiated by the Council's Executive Committee for the successful candidate.

A cover letter of interest, resume, and a listing of four (4) professional references should be sent to the Executive Search Committee, Kerr-Tar Regional Council of Governments, P.O. Box 709, Henderson, NC 27536. Overnight: 1724 Graham Avenue, Henderson, NC 27536. Letters of interest, resumes, and references will be accepted until October 18, 2005.

The Kerr-Tar Regional Council of Governments is an equal opportunity employer