Recommendations for Year 2015 Funding and Accessibility Requirements

A Report to the Board by Executive Director David L. Donahoe

RAD Board Meeting, October 1, 2013

Board Members

For nearly two years the District has been focusing attention on the opportunities available in making our regional assets available to all in our region. Under the banner, Regional Asset are for Everyone, we have studied the problem, learned about the needs, considered the laws and regulations and heard about many inclusive activities already underway in our community.

The good news is that a number of organizations are leading the way in accessibility planning and action. More needs to be done and I believe RAD should have an agenda in this important area.

As part of this agenda, we included accessibility and inclusion as evaluative criteria in the 2014 application. We asked all applicants to answer a series of questions so that we could learn more about the efforts and so that we could demonstrate the District’s commitment in this area.

Based on those responses, I am proposing that the District consider adopting several policies going forward. If approved, they would be incorporated into the 2015 funding guidelines. My purpose in bringing them up now is so that the can be considered and put in place by the end of this year giving applicants sufficient time to consider and, if necessary adjust. I believe these are reasonable, practical guidelines that any recipient of public funding should expect and welcome.

Designated Funding for Accessibility and Inclusion Projects

Most applicants indicate that their facilities are accessible as required by law. Far fewer have adaptive equipment such as assisted listening or reading devices. The availability of such equipment along with training of staff will go a long way in making asset facilities not just accessible but welcoming.

In its report this evening, the Allocations Committee is recommending that RAD include accessibility projects in a designated project grant line item and are making recommendations to award three projects from that line. This is an important first step in offering financial assistance to address accessibility needs. Our goal would be to add to this fund as requests are received.
Require Designation of an “Accessible” Accessibility Coordinator

Beginning with 2015 applications, assets will be required to designate a person or position to coordinate accessibility issues within their organization who is also available to respond to inquiries from the public. Recognizing that not all assets the District funds employ staff, others such as board members or other volunteers can be designated for this role provided they can be reached by interested audience members.

Require Notice of Accessibility Information, Assistance

Beginning also with 2015 applications, assets will be required to post accessibility information, including contact information, on their web site as well as public materials.

Require Assets with Non Accessible Venues to Develop Plans for Improvement

Applicants that report they operate primarily in inaccessible facilities will be required to submit a plan on how they comply or will comply with applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act and/or other applicable accessibility regulations. We have learned that there are established tools to assist organizations in conducting accessibility self assessments and will share this information with potential applicants.

The policies outlined here are, I believe, constructive and no more than is required by current law. My request for now is that the Board authorize me to post these proposals and invite comments prior to submitting them for final consideration. We will also review them with the working group established earlier this year that includes funders and organizations that work with people with disabilities.

Thank you.