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SABINE RIVER AUTHORITY of Texas

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May 14, 2024

Dear Sunset Advisory Commission and Staff:

The Sabine River Authority Executive Staff would like to thank the Sunset Advisory Commission Staff for their hard work reviewing our organization. The Sunset Advisory Staff was very pleasant and easy to work with and we commend them on their review. They approached the review with professionalism and thoroughness.

SRA has approached our Sunset Review as an opportunity to be open and honest about our processes and our role as an organization. We are always open to learning ways that we can improve our processes, accomplish our mission, and serve the citizens of the Sabine River Basin and the State of Texas. Several of the findings and recommendations presented through reviews of other river authorities have prompted us to make changes to our processes prior to our current review. This has been very beneficial to SRA in making improvements in areas common to river authorities.

We agree with all findings and recommendations presented in the report for SRA. As an organization, we were aware of some areas that still needed process improvements and efficiencies and this report will drive us to prioritize and make those changes. We feel that this report helps further the work we are already doing.

We have developed internal plans to address and implement changes based on all recommendations in the report. The attached document details the current status of those plans and our path forward.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations and are grateful for the role that the Sunset Advisory Commission has taken in driving these organizational improvements. We appreciate the work of all those involved in the process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Montagne", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Montagne
Executive Vice President &
General Manager
Sabine River Authority of Texas

SRA Responses to Sunset Staff Recommendations

Issue 1 SRA's grant program requires additional best practices to better ensure effectiveness, transparency, and fairness.

Management Action		Status	Response
1.1	Direct SRA to implement consistent practices for tracking and managing award and financial data for the authority's grant program.	In Progress	SRA is currently exploring options for a grant management software system. We have had multiple calls with various software vendors and have also discussed with LCRA about best practices for tracking.
1.2	Direct SRA to establish and publish policies that clearly explain the authority's grant administration processes and procedures.	In Progress	Guidelines regarding the policies and procedures for emergency and special assistance grants will be enhanced and updated in all documents related to the CAP grant program. These are publicly available documents that will be easily accessible for all potential applicants and recipients.
1.3	Direct SRA to make scoring criteria transparent and publicly available to applicants for competitive grants.	In Progress	The scoring rubric and scoring criteria will be updated to be included in all documents related to the CAP grant program including the application. Scoring results will be available if requested.
1.4	Direct SRA to establish formal agreements with written terms and conditions for individual grant awards.	In Progress	SRA is currently working with legal counsel to develop a formal written agreement to be signed by recipients as part of the application process which defines terms and conditions should the applicant receive grant funding.
1.5	Direct SRA to establish and track outcome measures for its grant program.	In Progress	SRA is currently developing a series of metrics to track measurable outcome goals for its grant program.
1.6	Direct SRA to establish performance monitoring standards for grant recipients.	In Progress	The processes for documented check-ins and final reporting is being established. We are working with legal counsel to establish better terms and conditions for receipt of grant funding. Options for grant management software systems will likely aid in this task.
1.7	Direct SRA to update policies to include consideration of past performance of grantees.	In Progress	Formal consideration of past performance will be integrated with the current scoring criteria. Metrics will be established for an entity to be reconsidered for future funding.
1.8	Direct SRA to develop a conflict-of-interest policy specific to its competitive grants.	In Progress	SRA will establish a more formal conflict of interest policy in regards to grant funding.

SRA Responses to Sunset Staff Recommendations

Issue 2 SRA's contracting processes would benefit from additional documentation and alignment with best practices.

Management Action		Status	Response
2.1	Direct SRA to institute a formal needs assessment or cost-benefit analysis to justify outsourcing certain services.	Implemented	SRA staff has instituted a change to our annual budgeting process that will include formal evaluation and documentation of outsourced professional services that will be utilized in the upcoming budget year.
2.2	Direct SRA to adopt a contract threshold at which board approval is required.	In Progress	SRA staff has a proposed change to the SRA By Laws which will incorporate a contract threshold requiring board approval that it will bring before the board at the July board meeting.
2.3	Direct SRA to formally document and evaluate vendor performance.	In Progress	SRA is implementing a process to include vendor performance reviews prior to awarding a contract or purchase order. Project owners will be responsible for submitting vendor performance evaluations at major milestones or at the completion of the project/purchase.
2.4	Direct SRA to improve its contracting processes to ensure sufficient transparency and fairness.	In Progress	SRA is actively creating policies and procedures to address the notated areas of the contracting process. Additional training will be provided to employees involved with the contracting process to ensure best practices. Documentation for managers will also be updated to reflect these policies, procedures, and training materials for reference.

Issue 3 More formal strategic decision making would better position SRA for continued success.

Management Action		Status	Response
3.1	Direct SRA to develop a formal strategic decision-making process to identify and address potential risk and better inform its decisions.	Implemented	SRA staff has instituted a change to our annual strategic planning process that will include formal evaluation and documentation of potential strategic decisions.
3.2	Direct SRA to work with SRA-LA to develop a memorandum of understanding to facilitate better coordination between the authorities.	In Progress	SRA staff has begun working with SRA-LA to develop a memorandum of understanding to facilitate better coordination between the authorities.

SRA Responses to Sunset Staff Recommendations

Issue 4 SRA's governing law and complaint process do not reflect some standard elements of Sunset Reviews.

Change in Statute		Status	Response
4.1	Apply the standard across-the-board requirement regarding the governor's appointment of the presiding officer to SRA's board.	In Progress	SRA will adopt a policy in accordance with this across-the-board statutory recommendation.
4.2	Apply the standard across-the-board requirement regarding grounds for removal of a board member to SRA.	In Progress	SRA will adopt a policy in accordance with this across-the-board statutory recommendation.
4.3	Apply the standard across-the-board requirement regarding board member training to SRA.	Implemented	SRA currently provides board member training.
4.4	Apply the standard across-the-board requirement regarding the separation of duties of board members from those of staff to SRA.	Implemented	SRA currently has By Laws of the Board of Directors that separates the duties of the Board and SRA staff.
4.5	Apply the standard across-the-board requirement regarding public testimony to SRA.	Implemented	SRA currently allows public testimony at all of its board meetings.
4.6	Apply the standard across-the-board requirement related to developing and maintaining an authority complaints system and making information on complaint procedures available to the public.	In Progress	SRA is exploring options for implementing a complaint submission process through our existing website as well as a system to manage, communicate, and follow up on complaints.
4.7	Amend SRA's review date to 2037.	--	--

Management Action		Status	Response
4.8	Direct the Texas Legislative Council to update SRA's governing law.	In Progress	Notes and comments in regard to updates to SRA's governing law have been submitted to Sunset staff as part of our current review.
4.9	Direct SRA to develop and publicize a clear complaint policy for its permitting programs.	In Progress	SRA is currently exploring options for complaint management software to enhance its current complaint tracking process.

Future Consideration		Status	Response
4.10	Postpone the decision on modifying board terms until completion of the upcoming river authority uniformity study.	--	--