

Federal Aid Coordinators Working Group Report

To the

Trust Fund Committee, 03/10/2017

I. Communication

The WMI TRACS review commissioned by the JTF, through AFWA, recommended a communication strategy for relaying high level information from WSFR (HQ and the Regions) to the States (Directors and Federal Aid Coordinators).

The FACWG strives to facilitate the flow of information between various groups by:

1. Holding regular FACWG conference calls – at least quarterly or more frequently as dictated by matters of importance to Federal Aid Coordinators.
2. Dissemination of FACWG reports and meeting minutes to the regions and state agency counterparts.
3. Extending its liaison role to include special WSFR working groups:
 - a. 5-year Report Editorial Team- Sheila Cameron (Regions 1, 7 & 8);
 - b. TRACS WG- Mike Sawyers (Region 5); and
 - c. CFR Revision Schedule WG- Doyle Brown (Region 3).

FACWG Concern/Request:

1. While the communication strategy has been successful in several instances, inconsistencies have been found in certain cases (e.g. Information posted on the Federal Aid Wiki, posting of Notice of Funding Opportunities, apportionment notifications, etc.) Applying the communication strategy outlined in the WMI TRACS review to all aspects of the WSFR Program will improve the exchange of information that has direct impacts on the WSFR Partnership.
2. The FACWG further believes its communication efforts can be enhanced through further engagement with the TFC and JTF. To do so, the FACWG proposed changes to the bylaws in September 2016, to extend the working group's current TFC roles and responsibilities to the JTF. A copy of the bylaws revision submitted for consideration prior to the September TFC meeting is attached.

2017 FACWG Action Items: The FACWG will continue to facilitate the communication of important matters to their respective state coordinator counterparts and through continued participation in other working groups.

II. TRACS

The JTF recommended in April 2016 that an outside entity (WMI) conduct a review of TRACS including what was required to be collected by various CFR and to identify challenges faced by state agencies and WSFR. Several FACWG members attended the

Meeting of the Parties and have been keeping the entire group apprised of the recommendations to come out of that review. Because of the review, TRACS development for the enhancement has been delayed.

Many of the FACWG's concerns have been addressed by this review, but it remains important to be engaged throughout the TRACS Enhancement development. TRACS will likely have tremendous impacts on the day to day management of WSFR Grants and it is critical to maintain open communication through the development to garner support and acceptance from the states.

The JTF requested in November 2016 that the FACWG appoint a member to participate as an active member of the TRACS Working Group for continuity and information sharing between the groups. Mike Sawyers, Region 5, has been designated for this and attended the TRACS Working Group meeting in late January.

FACWG Concern/Request: The FACWG has several concerns and recommendations regarding the TRACS enhancement:

1. In January, AFWA requested that the FACWG gather information from their States to determine a date in which States would take full responsibility for data entry into TRACS. Nearly 80% of the states/territories responded to this inquiry and over 75% of the respondents indicated that they could not or would not set a date because of the ongoing uncertainty of the timeline for the TRACS Enhancement to be fully functional.
2. The FACWG supports cost accounting as required on the SF424. This is information that is already required and only applies to funding costs at the grant level. Any additional information requested in TRACS that is above and beyond what is currently required by CFR cannot be supported by the FACWG.
3. An ongoing concern with TRACS is the duplication of effort on the part of the states. States may be required to submit project information through their regular grant application procedures for WSFR and be required to enter the same project information into TRACS. The FACWG believes that reducing the burden of data entry and duplication of effort is critical to the success of the TRACS Enhancement and ultimate acceptance by the states.
4. The FACWG supports the use of TRACS as a performance reporting system. More recently, TRACS has been described as a Grants Management System. Using TRACS for this purpose may create additional burdens on the part of both state coordinators and WSFR Regional Office staff. The FACWG recommends that data entry in TRACS not be required as part of the grant submission/approval process.

2017 FACWG Action Items: Mike Sawyers will continue to serve as liaison between the TRACS WG and FACWG. He will participate in a number of subgroups focused on finalizing the TRACS Enhancement framework and solicit input via the FACWG from state coordinators.

III. National Federal Aid Coordinators Meeting

The application for a Multistate Conservation Grant for the National Federal Aid Coordinators meeting was approved. However, due to the TRACS review recently completed by WMI and results of the Meeting of the Parties, the TRACS enhancement rollout timeline has been delayed (to 2018). Because training on the TRACS enhancement is an important component of this Meeting, the FACWG believes the proposed date of the National Meeting should be delayed until the TRACS Enhancement is fully functional. This will allow for the rollout of the new TRACS enhancements and allow for training to take place in conjunction with this meeting.

FACWG Concern/Request: The FACWG formally requests that the National Meeting be delayed until 2018 or until the TRACS Enhancement is fully functional.

2017 FACWG Action Items: Coordination will continue with WMI and relevant parties to initiate meeting planning and draft an agenda based on the timeline of future TRACS developments.

IV. State Needs Document

At the August 2016 TFC Meeting, the FACWG was asked to update the States' Priority Needs Document which was originally developed in 2013. The purpose of this document is to identify the States' core needs for effective administration of the WSFR Program by the USFWS. There are two core needs identified by the FACWG:

1. Support from WSFR when addressing diversion issues; and
2. Continued support of the WSFR Partnership, as further defined in the attached document.

FACWG Concern/Request: The FACWG is submitting the revised State Needs Document for formal review and acceptance by the TFC – see attachment to this report. **2017**

FACWG Action Items: The FACWG will respond to any suggested edits or recommendations for the State Needs Document made by the TFC.

V. 5yr report

The Editorial Team has been working to finalize the best indicators available as well as recommendations for future indicators to demonstrate the effectiveness of the WSFR program on a national scale. It is expected that the first report will be out in the fall of 2017 and will be followed every 5 years with updates. FACWG member, Sheila Cameron (Regions 1, 7 & 8), remains an active participant in this team. A survey of outcome indicators was recently distributed to States via the Communication Process and the results of this survey will help finalize the framework of the 5-year report.

FACWG Concerns/Request: The FACWG believes it is important to stress that some information in the 5-year report may appear incomplete as not all states use the WSFR funding in the same ways or they may not gather the requested information. Just because a given state does not include certain information for the 5-year report does not mean that the state is not engaged in these activities. This potential discrepancy may result in incomplete or

misleading information for the 5-year report if the data collection process is not adequately explained.

2017 FACWG Action Items: Sheila Cameron will continue to participate in the discussion and review of the final document as well as in communicating information from the Editorial Team back to the FACWG and the states.

VI. CFR Review Scheduling

From April - August 2016 a team consisting of WSFR and State members worked on developing a schedule that will allow us to move forward with a phased approach to rulemaking. These phases are designed to allow reviewers to address topics over four rounds of rulemakings that are spread out over an extended period of time. The proposed schedule was delayed due to the importance of vetting the approach.

A revised schedule and information was shared with the Joint Task Force (JTF) at their meeting (Nov. 29 - Dec. 1) in Denver. The JTF forwarded recommendations on license certification to the AFWA Executive Committee in December.

FACWG Concern/Request:

Despite the agreement that reviews and comment periods would not be overlapped, there are still multiple items coming to the states for review with concurrent review periods. For example, both the Lands chapter and the Standard Performance Report questions were sent out for review in December (within a week of Christmas). This is concerning because when multiple items are being reviewed, less detailed review can take place as it is typically the same individual(s) within the state agencies responsible for these reviews.

2017 FACWG Action Items: FACWG members will continue to monitor review periods and notify their states of deadlines while encouraging all the states to review and comment.

VII. Action Items

The FACWG requests that the Trust Funds Committee consider and approve the following items as proposed in this report:

- Approve the delay of the National Federal Aid Coordinators meeting until 2018;
- Approve the September 2016 proposed FACWG bylaws;

And

- Accept the attached revision to the State Needs Document for the TFC's consideration.