



Advisory Board Teleconference

Outcomes

January 14, 2016

In Attendance: Rachel Barkow (USSC), Lorie Brisbin (NIC), Robert Brown (NIC), Norman Carlson (AZ), Jim Cosby (NIC), Jim Eaglin (FJC), Stephen Haas (NIC), Jeff Hadnot (NIC), Robert Listenbee (OJJDP), Colette S. Peters (OR), Anne Precythe (NC), Gary Raney (ID), Anne Seymour (DC), Susan Shaffer (DC), Shaina Vanek (NIC), A.T. Wall (RI), Reggie Wilkinson (OH), Diane Williams (Chair-IL).



Designated Federal Official Shaina Vanek (NIC) called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for their attendance on the conference call. Advisory Board Chairperson Diane Williams (IL) welcomed everyone and turned the floor over to Director Jim Cosby (NIC) for a brief agency update.

NIC Director's Update

Director Cosby provided an update on agency activities, focusing on what had transpired since the last in person Advisory Board meeting in June 2015. The key points he discussed are presented below:

Hiring and Staffing

- As of March 2015, NIC had 38 FTE positions filled. As of the date of the teleconference, NIC had a total of 43 FTE positions filled, plus one Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) staff member and one Public Health Service (PHS) staff member, for a total staffing complement of 45.
- Eight FTEs have been filled during the past year, including two new division chiefs (Community Services Division and Jails Division).
- Three people left the agency during the past year due to retirements or promotions (Tracey Vessels, Randy Rothleutner, and BeLinda Watson). NIC plans on filling remaining vacancies as soon as possible to reach the agency soft cap. Priority positions include: Accounting/Financial Technician, Data Manager, Prison Division Chief, and a Prison Correctional Program Specialist.
- Director Cosby explained that the priority positions were determined through initial strategic planning processes and identification of agency needs.

Advisory Board Questions and Comments:

- Reggie Wilkinson (OH) asked about the balance of minority staff in executive leadership positions. Director Cosby (NIC) concurred with the concern and affirmed his commitment in increasing diversity among the executive leadership, within the parameters of the human resources policies and procedures. Reggie Wilkinson offered to help by encouraging applicants of color to apply for the prisons division chief position. Chairperson Diane Williams (Chair-IL) echoed this remark.
- Colette S. Peters (OR) asked if the Advisory Board could receive notice of the job openings. Shaina Vanek (NIC-DFO) confirmed that this could be done once positions were publically posted on www.usajobs.gov.
- A.T. Wall (RI) asked who had been appointed as the acting Prisons Division Chief. Director Cosby (NIC) stated that Senior Deputy Director Robert Brown was currently serving as the acting division chief and would continue until the position was filled.
- Gary Raney (ID) asked about the future of the Jails Division since the appointment of Stephen Amos as chief. Director Cosby (NIC) described some of the new chief's efforts, commenting on how much he had already contributed to achieving agency goals. DFO Shaina Vanek (NIC) noted that the next Advisory Board would likely focus on the Jails Division initiatives, just as the agency did at the last meeting (Academy Division).

Information Gathering-Strategic Planning

- Delphi Process: Experts in the field of corrections are surveyed to validate current practices and identify gaps. Round one has been completed and round two is about to be released (March 2016). Upon review and completion, NIC plans to engage the Advisory Board for input and advice.
- Conferral Process: NIC will bring major correctional associations and corrections representatives to build upon the Delphi Process, enhancing NIC's information gathering from the field.
- Director Cosby (NIC) commented that the agency will also engage existing networks for information gathering purposes, ensuring the needs of the field are addressed. All of the activities outlined will contribute to the development of a working strategic plan that will be used to guide NIC's fiscal and programmatic decision making. Staff are fully engaged in the process.

Business Practice Changes

- Director Cosby (NIC) shared that a number of business practices have changed since the summer of 2015. He gathered information from the staff during the year to meet with then BOP Director Samuels and Deputy Director Eichenlaub regarding (1) funds that NIC was unable to spend due to administratively challenging contracting processes, (2) the drop in the number of funded technical assistance (TA) events in the field, (3) the increased cost of

the TA's, and (4) the resultant low staff morale due to frustrations over the new processes and a feeling of being unable to effectively do their jobs in providing services to the field.

- **Changes:** As a result of the meeting with Bureau leadership, NIC recently was able to: (1) utilize cooperative agreements for major initiatives where the field is the direct beneficiary of the services provided (and NIC is substantially engaged in the process), and (2) possibly modify the TA process to use a Blanket Purchase Authority (allowing NIC to vet Technical Resource Providers (TRP's) up front and establish a pool, expediting their deployment to the field. Contracts will still be used for projects where the primary beneficiary is the government (NIC).
- **Field Engagement:** Director Cosby noted that NIC was also making a concerted effort to effectively engage with networks, professional associations, as well as internal and external stakeholders.
- **Operational Instructions:** Internally, NIC is focusing on further development of operational infrastructure, including the development of operational Instructions (OI's). The OI teams, job aides and roles and responsibilities teams have been working hard to accomplish this task. The OI's are designed to assist NIC in meeting our mission.
- **BOP Engagement:** Director Cosby (NIC) has been working closely with the Bureau and the Department of Justice on the Attorney General's Restrictive Housing workgroup.

Questions and Comments:

- Chairperson Williams (IL) asked about when NIC will begin using the "blanket purchase" method for TA's, noting the need to include more minority providers. Director Cosby (NIC) agreed, stating that NIC was working with both BOP Procurement and General Counsel to move the effort forward. Chairperson Williams requested that she be kept informed of NIC's progress in implementation. Susan Shaffer (DC) expressed concerns over the current requirement to accept the "lowest bid" for contracting through the RP process.
- Reggie Wilkinson (OH) remarked on the need to integrate research to the work that NIC does. Director Cosby (NIC) assured him that the agency is moving in that direction. Shaina Vanek (DFO-NIC) suggested discussing a potential subcommittee on research and empirical issues at the next Advisory Board meeting.

Agency Culture/Organizational Health Efforts

- Director Cosby (NIC) described some of the other changes taking place within the agency, including the development of a working strategic plan, increased staff engagement in cross-divisional efforts designed to break down existing silos, and connecting the use of resources to the strategic plan, ensuring that the agency mission, vision, and values are at the forefront of the executive team's decision making.

- For example in FY 2017, the agency intends on developing the budget by utilizing cross-divisional efforts. There will be no specific divisional budgets; all of the information gathered through Delphi, Conferral, and Strategic Planning will be used to develop an agency-wide budget and spending plan.

Office Move

- Director Cosby (NIC) announced that the office would be relocated in the Spring of 2017 due to the current building's lease expiration. Both NIC and the BOP offices located at the 500 First Street NW location will be moving. He did not provide the prospective location as it has not been finalized as of the date of the teleconference. Senior Deputy Director Brown is working with the Bureau on this effort, representing NIC's interests.

Shaina Vanek's Involvement in LEAP

- Director Cosby (NIC) informed the Advisory Board that Designated Federal Official Shaina Vanek (NIC) has been involved in the Department of Justice's Leadership Excellence and Achievement Program (LEAP) Program. She will be leaving NIC for a four-month developmental assignment/detail beginning next month at the U.S. Sentencing Commission, within the Office of Legislative and Public Affairs. She will continue to manage the Advisory Board activities as the DFO.

Next Board Meeting

- DFO Shaina Vanek (NIC) discussed potential dates for the next Advisory Board meeting. It was tentatively scheduled for late April in Washington DC. Shaina Vanek (NIC) will poll the Advisory Board members to determine best available date and send a confirmation to all members, along with the outcomes of the teleconference.