

Leadership Orientation and Forum: Component Group Funding and Resources

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My job as Treasurer is to help Council understand the financial decisions we need to make, and together with staff, find our way through sometimes difficult choices in allocating our precious resources. Then, we hope to translate those decisions to the members through the budget and meetings like this one.

Actually, most of the financial decisions are easy and represent the overwhelming majority of our expendable funds. Standard operational costs, including rent, salaries, and business costs are fairly predictable and grow as we expand our services. An example of that growth is found in this year's budget for the first time: the provisioning of AV equipment for all component groups (Sections and Roundtables) without having to ration this meeting benefit as in the past.

A very small part of our budget, less than 20%, is actually available for new initiatives and programs. New programs are critical to our flexibility as an organization, however, and Council has spent considerable effort in the last eight or so years to develop effective Strategic Plans that funnel our energies productively so that we don't end up in futile pursuit of interests that are all over the map.

Council's new Strategic Plan was born out of a spirit on Council of sincere willingness to take more risk, to be more agile and ambitious. We tried to stay high level in our vision and goals and avoid overly anxious attempts to fill in all the specific activities that could accomplish our hopes. We actually wanted to leave room for activities and ideas to bubble up whenever possible.

This is where your component group may have a way to make a difference in SAA. In most cases, your group will not require funding beyond the resources currently available: SAA's staff, including our Publications and Education and IT directors, communications and website support, meeting space and equipment, and general administrative help in getting things done. But, what would happen if your group engaged an idea that led to a "what if" moment, which in turn was followed by a "hey, why not" epiphany? And what if you then discovered by looking right here in SAA's Strategic Plan that your idea could advance the profession in ways that we all want to see happen? We on Council would hate to see a good idea stall after all that group conversation because of a "but how would we pay for that" dilemma.

With that in mind, Council adopted in this year's budget, on the recommendation of the Finance Committee, a formal process and a new openness to receiving funding requests from component groups. Admittedly, we don't have a whole lot of discretionary money lying around, but we are looking to see what might bubble up and challenge us all. My strong inclination is that a joint proposal involving more than one component group would be especially intriguing.

If you find yourself in the position of needing funds to advance a seriously good idea, I encourage you to go SAA's "About Us" webpage at <http://www2.archivists.org/governance> and look for the "Component Group Funding Request" form under Templates and Forms. The request form is in a standard format that Council members use to consider almost any matter. Your Council liaison will be a key person to guide you through that proposal process which has a deadline date of March 1 for the following year's budget. You should also feel free to contact me at any time if you want to get an informal reaction or input to a possible investment in your group's idea and how to make it happen.