



COLUMBIA COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AGENDA ITEM REQUEST FORM

The Board of County Commissioners meets the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month at 5:30 p.m. in the Columbia County School Board Administrative Complex Auditorium, 372 West Duval Street, Lake City, Florida 32055. All agenda items are due in the Board's office one week prior to the meeting date.

Today's Date: 6/10/2021 Meeting Date: 6/17/2021

Name: David Kraus Department: Economic Development

Division Manager's Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "DK", written over a light blue circular stamp.

1. Nature and purpose of agenda item:

Three month agreement for Merchant McIntyre to prepare a Federal Grants Strategy and Action Plan to identify and target Federal grants for County infrastructure projects. This effort will include assistance in the preparation of the grants and facilitating with members of Congress, Congressional staffers and Federal agency decision makers.

2. Recommended Motion/Action:

Motion to Approve Service Agreement with Merchant McIntyre Associates - \$22,500

3. Fiscal impact on current budget.

This item has no effect on the current budget.

District No. 1 - Ronald Williams
District No. 2 - Rocky Ford
District No. 3 - Robby Hollingsworth
District No. 4 - Toby Witt
District No. 5 - Tim Murphy



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS • COLUMBIA COUNTY

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: June 10, 2021
TO: Board of County Commissioners
FR: David Kraus, County Manager
RE: Service Agreement with Merchant McIntyre

County staff has met with Merchant McIntyre about providing assistance with Federal grant applications and Federal funding opportunities. In the past, County staff has worked primarily on grant funding opportunities provided through the State of Florida. On two recent occasions, we have requested funds directly from the US Economic Development Agency and have received one grant (for HAECO). These grants are difficult and time consuming.

With the recent approval of the ARPA and possible adoption of an infrastructure legislation, the County has an increased opportunity to apply for funding directly from the Federal government. Merchant McIntyre proposes to develop a comprehensive list for funding opportunities targeting the economic development and infrastructure needs the County has already developed but has not funded. In addition, they will assist the County in writing the grants and seeking approval of the grants. While we have firms to assist in our efforts in Tallahassee, Merchant McIntyre will direct our efforts in Washington DC. The attached agreement is for a three-month trial, at \$7,500 per month, to see if Merchant McIntyre can assist the County in finding additional federal funds.

BOARD MEETS FIRST AND THIRD THURSDAY AT 5:30 P.M.



SERVICE AGREEMENT

COLUMBIA COUNTY, FL (the “County”) agrees to retain **MERCHANT MCINTYRE & ASSOCIATES, LLC**, a Delaware limited liability company with a principal place of business in Washington, D.C. (“MM”) (together, the “Parties”), for government relations services commencing on August 1, 2021 and terminating on October 31, 2021 (the “Term”).

Fee. The County agrees to pay MM a total professional fee of \$7,500 per month, billed monthly in advance. Payment shall be made to MM on or before the first (1st) of each month at the address listed on the MM invoice(s). Federal funds may not be used to pay MM professional fees.

Deliverables. MM agrees to provide the following deliverables during the Term of this Agreement:

1. Conduct a Resource Inventory to identify specific federal funding objectives and potential federal funding requests for the County.
2. Prepare a comprehensive Federal Grants Strategy featuring a detailed Federal Grants Grid and a specific Action Plan so County leadership can review and assess federal funding opportunities firsthand and evaluate MM’s strategies to secure that funding.
3. Arrange substantive Congressional and Executive Branch meetings with staff and federal program officers who have jurisdiction over the funding MM targets for the County, based on forecasted federal grants and the timing of the County’s federal grant submissions.
4. Support the County in all facets of the federal grant process, including planning, partnership development, grant writing, budget development, proposal submission, administrative requirements, and compliance.

Renewal. At the end of the initial Term, the County reserves the right to renew this Agreement commencing on November 1, 2021 and terminating on October 31, 2022 (the “Renewal Term”). The Renewal Term shall incorporate all terms and conditions of the original Agreement.

Scope of Work. In its capacity as a consultant, MM shall make its best effort to assist the County in pursuing its federal funding and government relations objectives. The nature of these objectives shall be determined by the County with the advice and assistance of MM. In this role, MM shall plan and implement all government relations strategies designed to accomplish the County’s federal funding objectives; assist in the preparation of grant applications and supporting materials for the initiatives; develop meetings with Members of Congress, congressional staff, and federal agency decision-makers to advance the funding initiatives; and serve as liaison to federal agencies relevant to the County’s funding initiatives. The County agrees to frequent communication with MM and to provide MM the necessary information in real time to help MM plan and implement strategies.

Assignment. No other party shall assign any of its rights or delegate any of its duties or obligations under this Agreement without the express written consent of the other party.

* * *

IN WITNESS THEREOF, the parties hereto have executed or approved this Agreement on the dates below their signatures.

Brent W. Merchant
Principal and Co-Founder
Merchant McIntyre & Associates, LLC

David Kraus
County Manager
Columbia County, FL

Date: _____

Date: _____

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Federal Funding Action Plan for the Columbia County

Objective:

Merchant McIntyre Associates (“MM”) proposes to help Columbia County (“the County”) secure an unprecedented level of federal support for your priority projects -- on a regular basis.

Federal funding will be achieved through competitive grants and discretionary grants.

The ultimate objective is for every federal dollar we secure to provide budget relief for the County and/or help you take a leap forward on initiatives to better serve your citizens.

Situation Analysis:

- Within the federal government’s annual \$4.4 trillion budget, there is significant funding available for Columbia County's priorities through multiple federal agency competitive and discretionary grant programs.
- Our initial research shows that Columbia County has won only relatively modest federal grants since 2008. This indicates the County is leaving significant federal dollars on the table. Merchant McIntyre can help!
- Since Columbia County is not an entitlement county, it’s all the more important to pursue as many competitive grants as possible at the federal level. Further, the County qualifies as USDA Rural and EDA distressed, which opens up many funding opportunities.
- Specifically, major federal dollars are available for economic development, surface transportation (roads, bridges, rail), public safety, water/storm water/wastewater infrastructure, and other priority needs. We understand that some of these priorities relate to the build-out of the Industrial Park, which is highly fundable at the federal level.
- For example, Merchant McIntyre is in the process of helping win a \$1.75 million grant from the Federal Rail Administration on behalf of Humboldt County, NV. This application to FRA’s Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements program requests funding to develop a critical rail spur in the county that will create jobs, reduce road and rail congestion, and increase road safety. (Sound familiar?) MM worked with the rail spur developer, Cyanco, and their government affairs consultant to develop the application in accordance with county priorities and federal requirements.

The next FRA grant competition is anticipated in September/October. **This could be the first grant application we submit for Columbia County.**

- Regarding surface transportation priorities, Merchant McIntyre professionals have a history of winning these types of grants, including:
 - Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government (KY): \$14.1 million to construct a multi-modal greenway through downtown Lexington (TIGER)

- Broward County/City of Pompano Beach: \$11.4 million for roadway improvements and to create clearly delineated bicycle and pedestrian trails (TIGER)
- City of Boone (IA): \$1 million for construction on Snedden Drive (USDOT)
- Village of Franklin Park (IL): We secured several million dollars for multiple road and bridge projects around the Village, and an authorization of \$148 million dollars for a coalition of municipalities that included the Village.

The sewer projects and wastewater treatment facilities related to the Industrial Park and in the southern part of the County may be funded through HUD and/or the next Water Resources Development Act. Merchant McIntyre's previous grant wins include:

- City of Williamsport (PA): \$2.7 million for water and wastewater infrastructure to generate critical economic development for the city (EDA)
 - Village of Franklin Park (IL): \$1 million for wastewater infrastructure improvements (HUD)
 - City of Marion (IN): \$1.3 million for water infrastructure improvements with the Marion Water Loop and Deer Creek Project (HUD)
 - Village of Kiryas Joel (NY): \$5 million to expand water infrastructure (Water Resources Development Act)
- Merchant McIntyre has won grants in each of the County's areas of need. Our on-site Resource Inventory process will invariably identify additional fundable projects.
 - Merchant McIntyre professionals regularly meet with federal program officers at DOT, EDA, USDA, FEMA, DOJ, and other federal agencies to learn about the competitive preference priorities they're seeking in award-worthy applications. This is an essential element in winning federal grants.
 - The County lacks a comprehensive federal grants program, and the professional "boots on the ground" in DC to execute it. Humbly, that's Merchant McIntyre's greatest strength. Merchant McIntyre's role is to serve as the County's professional grants staff — your "multiplier force" to forecast, identify, write, submit, mobilize Congressional support for, win, and comply with federal grants.
 - MM will mobilize key members of the Florida Congressional delegation to support every County grant application. MM will write the letters of support and talking points so Members/staff simply need to sign the letters and pick up the phone to call the federal agency program officers.

Scope of Work:

1. Develop Funding Strategies:
 - A. Conduct an in-depth Resource Inventory in Lake City to determine and document Columbia County's strengths and needs as they relate to pursuing federal support, and develop a comprehensive grants strategy to maximize that support.
 - B. Develop proposal themes and write and produce background materials that provide a compelling, persuasive presentation of the County's priorities to potential federal funders.
 - C. Plan and implement a comprehensive federal grants program, matching Columbia County's strengths and objectives with federal grant accounts.
 - D. Schedule substantive meetings with Members of Congress, their staff in D.C. and in Florida, and federal program officers to highlight the County's needs.
2. Implement Legislative/Funding Strategies:
 - A. Arrange Congressional and Executive Branch meetings.
 - B. Generate quality third-party support letters.
 - C. Ensure Columbia County's projects make the priority list of your Congressional champions.
3. Win Federal Grants:
 - A. Identify grant opportunities and assess both eligibility and competitiveness, before grants are released to the public. (While the County may technically be eligible for a given grant(s), it's MM's job to ensure you're truly competitive before we invest your resources in applying.)
 - B. As discussed above, MM will help the County's leaders establish relationships with key federal agency staff to shape programs ahead of grant announcements.
 - C. Utilize federal agency staff recommendations on best practices from current grantees and review winning applications for similar projects.
 - D. Manage the grant application timeline and deliverables for each grant from start to finish for Columbia County.
 - E. Help the County's professional staff ("content experts") write the actual grant proposals.
 - F. Assess the need and availability of external subject matter experts to develop or improve program design and/or specific application components.
 - G. Review individual grant-scoring criteria to ensure proper emphasis in the application.
 - H. Finalize the grant proposal; provide multi-level reviews to ensure clarity, cohesiveness, and editorial input. Check budgets for cost-effectiveness, completeness, and accuracy.
 - I. After winning grants, provide the County with compliance support, as needed.

The Merchant McIntyre Team:

- Merchant McIntyre professionals have a 25-year, documented track record of securing significant federal support for counties, cities, municipal agencies, and a wide range of nonprofits. We're passionate about serving local governments and organizations that house people... feed people... educate people... heal people... and create jobs for people.
- We never chase money. Rather, we will pursue only grants that align with the County's priorities.
- MM has generated a good-to-great-to-phenomenal ROI for local governments.
- In addition to delivering a strong ROI, Merchant McIntyre will help Columbia County build its internal grants capacity -- you will become more knowledgeable and skilled in the federal funding process.

Budget:

Our typical minimum retainer is \$7,500/month, plus work-related expenses (typically 1% of the retainer), for one year. MM is extremely cost-conscious because we work exclusively for local governments, colleges, hospitals, and other nonprofits.

The only "major" expense is for the travel for two MM professionals to conduct the Resource Inventory in Columbia County. You will never be surprised by a Merchant McIntyre invoice!

Further, since this would be a new initiative for the County and we appreciate your budget constraints, Merchant McIntyre proposes a 90-day "audition assessment" with these deliverables:

1. Merchant McIntyre's team will perform the Resource Inventory on-site in Lake City.
2. We will produce a comprehensive Federal Grants Strategy featuring a specific Action Plan and a detailed Federal Grants Grid.
3. MM will bring the appropriate County leaders (one or two) to DC for meetings with Members of Congress, Congressional staff, and Executive Branch agency program officers who have jurisdiction over the funding accounts we are targeting for Columbia County's projects.
4. You will get to evaluate Merchant McIntyre's strategic thinking and added value.

If the County's leadership is pleased in every respect with Merchant McIntyre during the audition assessment, you may then decide whether to retain MM for our typical minimum service period of one year.

Our objective is to deliver the highest possible ROI so Ben Scott, David Kraus, Kevin Kirby, your Board of County Commissioners, and your professional staff exchange high-fives and say, "Let's do that again!"

Conclusion:

For all the reasons described in this document, Merchant McIntyre Associates would welcome the assignment to secure significant federal support for Columbia County.

Thank you for your serious consideration of this Federal Funding Action Plan.

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