

Federal Programs Coordinator Needed On Guam...

A few years ago we read about a man in Washington who hired out to three separate medium-sized cities - as their collective federal funds applicator.

Guam needs somebody like that.

The main duties of the applicator was merely to keep up with the various, and often conflicting, federal programs and make out applications for the loans, grants and other federal funds that are available. He sat in with the city council meetings of each of the communities and kept the council informed as to changes in the federal laws. He also had to visit Washington on occasion and managed to keep up with the continuing laws affecting his string of cities.

Call him a federal coordinator, if you like. Or the man with the arm outstretched. But, he was the man that kept things humming in those three cities with the planning of programs, with efforts to secure matching funds and with overseeing the multitudes of reports necessary to keep the steady stream of Washington money coming in.

This man drew a pretty large salary, but he was worth every penny of it because he was a producer. He brought a good deal of federal money into those communities.

Guam, more than many other places, is a creature of the federal government. The federal government owns about a third of all property on the island. It controls Apra Harbor and Guam International Airport. It controls immigration and customs. The military installations here are Guam's largest single source of revenue.

Yet, you often get the feeling that our contact with the federal government is both loose and haphazard. Few people on the island are aware of the various federal programs and how they affect Guam or, for that matter, why Guam isn't included in many of the programs.

The way it has worked in the past the many Government of Guam departments apply for their own program funding and then fight to get matching funds through the Legislature. The Department of Agriculture, for instance, has certain federal monies coming in for forestry, and tree planting. Yet, Gov. Bordallo noted recently that Guam farmers apparently aren't under any federal crop loss program. The Department of Public Safety applies to the U.S. government for help in many ways, yet, in some communities the federal government is installing radio systems and providing certain armaments for local police.

We were surprised to learn recently that Guam only receives assistance under about 100 federal programs, when there are more than 1000 of them available. That is not to say that Guam would be eligible for them all but we sure would like to take a good look at what we are missing.

Our Washington delegate, Rep. Antonio Won Pat, and his staff generally are doing a good job in this area. We have no real complaints about the type of programs and funding received from the federal government thus far. Yet you get the nagging feeling that this isn't really the job they should be doing. What is needed is somebody, at the GovGuam level whose primary function is to work closely with Won Pat's office, to see exactly what is taking place.

If a separate federal coordination office were established, the

Crime Commission or the Department of Education or Guam Economic Development could simply make inquiries, and the coordination office could follow it up. They could initiate letters to Washington, seek out the forms and have them followed through to completion. They could work with the Guam Legislature on matching funds.

It wouldn't be an easy job. The bureaucratic red tape and form filling would blow the mind of most people relatively swiftly. Yet, that very fact is proof that it should all come under one office, whose only job is to understand the myriad, complex forms, rather than be scattered out through a hundred GovGuam offices. We might be able to create some efficiency out of our relationship with the federal government.

When Guam was under the Rehabilitation Act, we did have one coordinator, in charge of overseeing the various programs. But now federal spending, which has increased enormously, is scattered across the island. We imagine such a federal coordination office would also help the Federal Comptroller on Guam.

The federal government's relationship with Guam seems to be one of a shotgun, with pellets flying in every direction. This should be tightened up under one roof. JCM.