Improving the Use of the Grants System

Frances Miley
South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism

January 27, 2014
Introduction

The South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT) administers several grant programs for the development of public recreational opportunities throughout South Carolina as well as a marketing grant program. Three of these grant programs are federally funded while the others are State funded. Most of these grant programs are three to five year grants, meaning the sub-grantee has three years to complete their project before submitting for reimbursement, but they can submit for partial reimbursement anytime throughout the project period. We typically have at least 150 to 200 open sub-grants during a fiscal year. Since we have several large grant programs, we need a system that will provide accurate and timely reports.

In November 2009, SCPRT went live onto the South Carolina Enterprise Information System (SCEIS). Before SCEIS, we used Excel spreadsheets, Access databases, and a PRT database called Enterprise to track all of the grants and sub-grants. These tools gave us the ability to easily see our grant balances at any given time. Since SCEIS has the functionality for tracking funding to sub-grants, as well as several good reporting tools for monitoring grant activities, we were hoping to be able to get away from using the Excel spreadsheets and data bases and rely solely on SCEIS.

Problem Statement

There are several issues that make it difficult for us to effectively use the Grant Management module in SCEIS. These issues include the…

- Inability to enter the entire grant budget in current fiscal year unless you have been given full budget authority
• Complexity when budgeting for future years
• Requirements to unnecessarily budget to the detailed commitment items

The Systems Applications and Products in Data Processing (SAP) design of the Grants Management module was to use the grants budget in the Grant Management module to drive the budget in the Funds Management module because once you have accepted a grant; you have accepted the full amount of the award regardless of when it will be paid out. However, it was the State’s decision to change this design because a budget “ceiling” is required to ensure that the overall grant budget does not exceed the agency’s current budget authorization for any one fiscal year. The budget in the Fund Management module represents the federal funds that SCPRT expects to expend in a fiscal year, not what is available to SCPRT from the federal government (Appendix 1). Because of the limitations created in the system by this budget “ceiling,” agencies can load only a projection of what they anticipate spending for the current fiscal year that way, there will not be a large excess of budget authority sitting on the books at fiscal year-end. Additional limitations are placed on the system because the budget authorization is specific to funded programs. State agencies are told not to request additional budget authority if they have budget authorization on the books, even though the authorization may be in another funded program. As a result, we may receive grants that we weren’t aware of when our budget was submitted in the prior fiscal year. When this happens, we have to take budget authority from another funded grant program, in order to set up any new grants during the fiscal year, so that we can start spending from the new grant. Unless you push budget out to future years in the grants module, you do not get an accurate view of our grants’ remaining budget when looking at any report in SCEIS because the budget in the Grant Management module can not exceed what is in the Fund Management Module. As a result, we have to keep separate spreadsheets in order to
track our grant budgets because we can not retrieve a report in SCEIS that shows all federal funds available to our agency.

SCEIS does allow agencies to load grant budgets for future fiscal years; however, it is a time consuming process. If we estimated a sub-grantee will submit a reimbursement request in a future fiscal year (FY2015) and then they submit for reimbursement in the current fiscal year (FY2014), there are four, possibly five transactions that we have to do to move budget around before we can process their reimbursement request. The fifth transaction occurs if we have to move budget between detailed commitment items.

1. “Pass-Thru Transfer Return” to move budget in FY2015 from sub-grant to main grant
2. “Return” in GM to move budget in FY2015 from Main Grant to Not Relevant
3. “Enter” budget in FY2014 from Not Relevant to Main Grant
4. “Pass-Thru Transfer: in FY2014 from Main Grant to Sub-grant

We would spend most of our time moving budgets around in order to make a single grant reimbursement. This process would not be too bad if we did not have so many sub-grants or had additional staff. Currently, there are two employees who manage the grant financials, but they also have other job duties than grants.

Another issue that is problematic with the Grants Management Module is that the State Budget Office requires budgeting at the detailed level for the 516000, 517000, and 518000 commitment items. When we first set up a grant with the State Budget Office, we are required to budget at the detailed level (Allocations-Municipalities, Allocations-Counties, Allocations-State Agencies, and Allocations-Other Entities); however, when we have to do a budget transfer to move funds from one commitment item to another, the Budget Office does not require budget transfers to be
work flowed to them for approval. If it is not necessary for the Budget Office to approve budget transfers between commitment items, then why is it necessary to budget to the detailed commitment item? For example, with our Parks and Recreational Development (PARD) grants, we do not know what kind of entity (City/Town, County, or Other) will be awarded a grant since the PARD funds are allocated to each county at the beginning of the fiscal year. We have to make a guess as to how to budget each commitment item for each grant. After the main grants are set up, the County Delegation submits projects to SCPRT each month for approval. Because the commitment items for the awarded projects will differ greatly from the way the main grants were budgeted, we will have to do several time consuming budget transfers for these grants, especially near fiscal year end when the majority of the payment requests are submitted.

Data Collection

Yvette Sistare, SCPRT Director of Finance, and I met with several staff members with the State Budget Office to explain the issues we have using the Grants Management module because of the budget constraints. We explained all the obstacles we have and asked if it was possible for us to be given sufficient budget authority that we needed so that we could load all of our grants into SCEIS in order to get an accurate view of our grant budgets. Before the meeting, I learned that another agency is allowed to inflate their federal grant budget as long as they complete a BD-100 to return any excess budget authorization at year end. I asked if we could do the same, but I was told that was not an option since I was requesting that for federal and restricted funds. Since the State Budget Office was unable to do anything to help solve our problem, I wanted to know how other State agencies that issued sub-grants handled their grants in SCEIS. I contacted the Grants Services Division of the State Budget Office and asked which state agencies issued
sub-grants and I was forwarded a list of twelve agencies and contact information. I called a few of those agencies and learned that others had the same problem. I sent out a survey using SurveyMonkey to the following twelve state agencies...Department of Natural Resources, Department of Employment & Workforce, Department of Public Safety, South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Services, Department of Commerce, Emergency Management Division, Department of Mental Health, Department of Education, Department of Archives and History, Arts Commission, and the Sea Grant Consortium. The survey consisted of the following ten questions...

1. Does your Agency issue sub-grants?

2. How many open sub-grants do you typically have in a FY?

3. Do your sub-grants cross over State fiscal years?

4. Do you keep separate spreadsheet outside of SCEIS for your grants?

5. Do you track your grants in the Grant Management module in SCEIS? If not, why?

6. Are you given the full budget authority needed at the beginning of the FY to account for all grants/sub-grants in your agency?

7. At the beginning of the FY, do you push your budget from Not Relevant to...Subgrants, Main Grant, Keep at Not Relevant until reimbursement request is received and push down to main grant or sub-grant, or Other?

8. Comments or Suggestions regarding the Grant Management module?

9. What is your Agency name? (Optional)

10. Name of person completing the survey? (Optional)

An email was sent out on August 27, 2013 (Appendix 2) with a link to the survey (Appendix 3) and agencies were given a deadline of September 20, 2013 to complete. A reminder email was
sent to those agencies that had not yet responded. Of the twelve surveys, I received nine
responses, a 75% response (Appendix 4).

Data Analysis

In reviewing the survey responses, eight out of nine agencies replied that they do issue sub-
grants. I followed up with the agency that answered no, and learned that they issue contracts for
services. Of those agencies that issue subgrants, the total grants open during a fiscal year ranges
from 7 to 2,500. Seven agencies stated they have grants that cross over State fiscal years. Eight
agencies that responded to the survey keep separate spreadsheets outside of SCEIS for their
grants. Two agencies responded that they track their sub-grants in the Grants Management
module. One respondent noted that “it is a very useful reporting tool that allows reports to be
run for the duration of the grant, which may be multiple years.” The agencies who said they did
not track their sub-grants in the Grant Management module, either used Funds Reservations for
their grants, had a separate grants system in place to track grants, or used spreadsheets because
“they are easier to maintain sub-grantee balances than the SCEIS system.” Seven agencies
responded that they make their sub-grant payments using a main grant number and two agencies
replied that they use sub-grant numbers when making payments to their sub-grantees. I asked
agencies for comments or suggestions regarding the Grant Management module and I received
the following responses…

“Needs a lot of work especially with errors during budget loading because of all the pushing of
budget at one time over loads some grants. Then they need to be reset. It is a good internal
control for federal monies and sub-grants” and “We love the Grants Management module but
know that our State’s requirements on the level we have to budget for sub-recipients makes it
very difficult to use.”
Implementation Plan

I met with the Fiscal Analyst II who is also responsible for administering several of PRT’s grant programs and discussed the survey results. Since the overall problem can not be solved by SCEIS or by the State Budget Office at this time, we decided to change the way we use the Grant Management module. Instead of guessing which sub-grants will pay out this fiscal year and pushing budget down to the sub-grant level, we decided to do what the majority of the other state agencies are doing, pay from main grant number. We decided to keep the budget sitting in “Not Relevant” and push the budget down to the main grant as we receive a reimbursement request.

We started paying our sub-grantee reimbursements from the main grant number and put the sub-grant number in the text field. Since we had made several grant payments this fiscal year before this decision was made, we did journal entries on those payments changing the grant number from the sub-grant to the main grant number and placing the sub-grantee number in the text field. This process took less than one hour to do because we only had eight payments to change. The majority of our grant reimbursements are between March and June, so we picked the right time to make this change.

An obstacle we have faced with paying sub-grants from a main grant number was how to treat our inter-agency grants. We have a few State Parks that we have awarded grants to over the past few years. Previously, they were issued a sub-grant number and we paid these by an Inter-Departmental Transfer (IDT). We will now treat pay them like the other sub-grants. State Parks will charge their expenses to the main grant and when the project is completed and we submit for reimbursement from the Federal agency, we will bring the revenue in at the main grant. The expense will only appear on the Schedule of Federal Financial Assistance (SFFA) once. In the
past, when we used sub-grant numbers, the expense would appear on the SFFA twice and we would have to remove the sub-grant payment from the schedule.

Another obstacle that we have faced with paying our sub-grants from a main grant number and entering the sub-grant number in the text field is that you can not search the text field when using BEX or Business Object reports. We later discovered that we can run a KSB1 report in Citrix that shows the text in the “Name” field. This will beneficial when completing the Schedule of Federal Financial Assistance (SFFA) report because we are required to list all sub recipient payments for the fiscal year.

In November, we met with several SCEIS staff members to discuss the our changes and to see if there was another option that allowed us to use the main grant number and be able to pull reports that would show a sub-grant number. One of the suggestions from a SCEIS staff member was to use an extended functional area. Each grant would have an extended functional area and we would still pay from a main grant number. You are able to run reports in Citrix, Business Warehouse, and Business objects using the functional area. The SCEIS analyst was testing this scenario, but the testing was not completed by the time this project was due.

Since there are only two of us that use the Grants Management module, we did not have to communicate our changes with anyone in SCPRT other than our Finance Director.

**Evaluation Method**

There are several advantages that we have seen from the changes we have implemented by paying sub-grantee reimbursements from a main grant number. These changes have saved us time from doing the multiple transactions involved in order to push budget down to make a grant payment. This will also be a time-saver at fiscal year-end because we won’t have to “return” the
budget to “Not Relevant” that is required since it is already sitting there. The FMAVCR01 report is a cleaner report now (Appendix 5). We can easily see how much has been paid out of a main grant for the fiscal year. Previously, when we ran the FMAVCR01 report for all grants, it would list both sub-grants and the main grants and you could not tell how much was spent from a particular grant for the current fiscal year (Appendix 6).

The Schedule of Federal Financial Assistance (SFFA) still shows all sub-grants and main grants from previous fiscal years, but the sub-grants will eventually drop off the schedule once the main grant is closed. It will take a few years, but once that occurs, the SFFA will be a more condensed report. One noticeable change on the SFFA for this fiscal year is that the revenue and expenses are at the main grant. Previously, we would bring the revenue in using the main grant number, but the expense was at the sub-grant level, which meant we had a negative balance at the sub-grant level and a positive balance in the main grant.

**Summary and Recommendations**

Although we have made changes in the way we use the Grants Management module, we still have to maintain separate spreadsheets in order to track our grants as do several other agencies. In order for SCPRT and other agencies to track their grants in SCEIS, changes need to occur either at SCEIS by lifting the budget ceiling requirement they have in place in the Grant Management module or at the State Budget Office by allowing agencies to load their total budget authorization needed for their grants. The mission of SCEIS is to “standardize and streamline business processes within the government of South Carolina” and to provide “timely, accurate and complete information that will empower decision-makers, insuring transparency.”¹ The key

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¹ Source [www.sceis.gov](http://www.sceis.gov)
thing now is transparency in government, but we are unable to have that with the current grants system. You do not get an accurate view of the total grant funds available to us by looking at any report in SCEIS. If changes were made so that we could load our total grants budget in a current fiscal year, we would be able to allocate all of our sub-grants and issue Purchase Orders or Fund Reservations on our sub-grants, which would show an accurate view of our available budget since the grant budget would be encumbered. We would also be able to scan our grant awards to a Purchase Order, so that State Auditors could see this documentation.

Another recommendation is for the State Budget Office to allow agencies to budget at the top level commitment codes for grants. This would eliminate all the transactions to move budget between the detailed cost elements, which takes a lot of time. If the State Budget Office did away with this requirement, then we could possibly budget out to future years since there would not be the constant movement between commitment items.

Finally, I feel there is a need for an advanced training session on the Grant Management module and reports. Before we went live onto SCEIS, we attended training sessions for different components of SCEIS. At that time the system was new to us, but since we have been on the system for several years and familiar with it, advanced training would be beneficial.

My CPM project will be presented to the SCEIS Change Advisory Board at an upcoming meeting to see if changes can be made in the system to separate the Grants Management module from the Funds Management module.
**GM/FM Grant Budget vs Commitments/Actuals**

**Table**

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*This report shows we have $294,049.80 available budget for this grant, but at 12/31/2013, the actual available budget was $1,143,163.75*
From: Frances Miley  
Sent: Tuesday, August 27, 2013 2:48 PM  
To:  
Subject: CPM Project - Grant Management Module Survey  

I am the Capital Project & Grant Manager at the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism. I am currently enrolled in the Certified Public Manager (CPM) program. My CPM project is regarding the Grant Management module in SCEIS and how other agencies who issue sub-grants are using GM. I would much appreciate you taking a few minutes to complete the attached survey.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/FMTZGGS

I would like to have all responses back by September 20, so please fill complete the survey and submit it to me any time before that date. The compiled information and project paper will be submitted to SCEIS and to the State Budget Office for their information.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Frances Miley  
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Columbia, SC 29201  

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Fax: (803)734-0671  
fmiley@scprt.com  

South Carolina Just right.
1. Does your Agency issue sub-grants?
   - Yes
   - No

2. If yes to Question #1, how many open sub-grants do you typically have in an FY?

3. Do your sub-grants cross over State fiscal years?
   - Yes

4. Do you keep a separate spreadsheet outside of SCEIS for your grants?
   - Yes
   - No

5. Do you track your sub-grants in the Grant Management module in SCEIS? If not, why?

6. Are you given the full budget authority needed at the beginning of the FY to account for all grants/sub-grants in your agency?
At the beginning of the FY, do you push your budget from Not Relevant to...

- Sub-grants
- Other (please specify)
- Main Grant and make payment using Main grant number
- Keep at Not Relevant until reimbursement request is received and push down to main or sub-grant number.

Comments or Suggestions regarding the Grant Management module?

What is your Agency Name? (Optional)

Name of Person Completing this Survey (Optional)

Powered by SurveyMonkey
Check out our sample surveys and create your own now!
Q1: Does your Agency issue sub-grants?

Yes

Q2: If yes to Question #1, how many open sub-grants do you typically have in an FY?

Anywhere from 10 to 25 maybe 30 in a FY.

Q3: Do your sub-grants cross over State fiscal years?

Yes

Q4: Do you keep a separate spreadsheet outside of SCEIS for your grants?

Yes

Q5: Do you track your sub-grants in the Grant Management module in SCEIS? If not, why?

Yes

Q6: Are you given the full budget authority needed at the beginning of the FY to account for all grants/sub-grants in your agency?

No, we have five grant coordinators and over 250 grants and some are not even on the estimated budget when it is turned in to governors office.

Q7: At the beginning of the FY, do you push your budget from Not Relevant to...

Sub-grants

Q8: Comments or Suggestions regarding the Grant Management module?

Needs a lot of work especially with errors during budget loading because of all the pushing of budget at one time over loads some grants. Then they need to be reset. It is a good internal control for federal monies and sub-grants.

Q9: What is your Agency Name? (Optional)

1/27/2014 2:18:02 PM Page 1 of 2 total page
Q10: Name of Person Completing this Survey (Optional)

Respondent skipped this question
Q1: Does your Agency Issue sub-grants?

No

Q2: If yes to Question #1, how many open sub-grants do you typically have in an FY?

Respondent skipped this question

Q3: Do your sub-grants cross over State fiscal years?

No

Q4: Do you keep a separate spreadsheet outside of SCEIS for your grants?

Yes

Q5: Do you track your sub-grants in the Grant Management module in SCEIS? If not, why?

Because the prior Grants personnel did not set up grants correctly in the system we have to track on excel spreadsheets. I've been here one year and the grants that started after that we are not having to track this way.

Q6: Are you given the full budget authority needed at the beginning of the FY to account for all grants/sub-grants in your agency?

Yes

Q7: At the beginning of the FY, do you push your budget from Not Relevant to... Main Grant and make payment using Main grant number

Q8: Comments or Suggestions regarding the Grant Management module?

Respondent skipped this question

Q9: What is your Agency Name? (Optional)
Q10: Name of Person Completing this Survey (Optional)

Signature
Q1: Does your Agency issue sub-grants?

Yes

Q2: If yes to Question #1, how many open sub-grants do you typically have in an FY?

7

Q3: Do your sub-grants cross over State fiscal years?

Yes

Q4: Do you keep a separate spreadsheet outside of SCEIS for your grants?

Yes

Q5: Do you track your sub-grants in the Grant Management module in SCEIS? If not, why?

When they are paid we use the general ledger number 5170110000 and 5170800000 to track the funds.

Q6: Are you given the full budget authority needed at the beginning of the FY to account for all grants/sub-grants in your agency?

Yes

Q7: At the beginning of the FY, do you push your budget from Not Relevant to...

Main Grant and make payment using Main grant number

Q8: Comments or Suggestions regarding the Grant Management module?

Respondent skipped this question

Q9: What is your Agency Name? (Optional)
Q10: Name of Person Completing this Survey (Optional)
Q1: Does your Agency issue sub-grants?

Yes

Q2: If yes to Question #1, how many open sub-grants do you typically have in an FY?

Approximately 2,500

Q3: Do your sub-grants cross over State fiscal years?

Yes

Q4: Do you keep a separate spreadsheet outside of SCEIS for your grants?

No

Q6: Do you track your sub-grants in the Grant Management module in SCEIS? If not, why?

No, we already had a grants system in place for our sub-grants

Q7: At the beginning of the FY, do you push your budget from Not Relevant to...

Main Grant and sub grants using Main grant number

Other (please specify) We set up budget in SCEIS and in our sub system

Q8: Comments or Suggestions regarding the Grant Management module?

2.

1/2/2014 4:05:20 PM
We love the Grants Management Module but know that our State's requirements on the level we have to budget for sub recipients makes it very difficult to use.

Q9: What Is your Agency Name? (Optional)

Q10: Name of Person Completing this Survey (Optional)
Q1: Does your Agency issue sub-grants?

Yes

Q2: If yes to Question #1, how many open sub-grants do you typically have in an FY?

125-150

Q3: Do your sub-grants cross over State fiscal years?

Yes

Q4: Do you keep a separate spreadsheet outside of SCEIS for your grants?

Yes

Q5: Do you track your sub-grants in the Grant Management module in SCEIS? If not, why?

No, we track all the sub-grants outside of SCEIS, as the recipients use a different system.

Q6: Are you given the full budget authority needed at the beginning of the FY to account for all grants/sub-grants in your agency?

Yes, pretty much.

Q7: At the beginning of the FY, do you push your budget from Not Relevant to...

Keep at Not Relevant until reimbursement request is received and push down to main or sub-grant number.

Q8: Comments or Suggestions regarding the Grant Management module?

Respondent skipped this question

Q9: What is your Agency Name? (Optional)
Q1: Does your Agency issue sub-grants?
Yes

Q2: If yes to Question #1, how many open sub-grants do you typically have in an FY?
63 ON THE AVERAGE

Q3: Do your sub-grants cross over State fiscal years?
Yes

Q4: Do you keep a separate spreadsheet outside of SCEIS for your grants?
Yes

Q5: Do you track your sub-grants in the Grant Management module in SCEIS? If not, why?
NO, We issue funds reservation for all the sub-grants.

Q6: Are you given the full budget authority needed at the beginning of the FY to account for all grants/sub-grants in your agency?
We usually load what is expected to be spent in the SFY.

Q7: At the beginning of the FY, do you push your budget from Not Relevant to...
Main Grant and make payment using Main grant number

Q8: Comments or Suggestions regarding the Grant Management module?
Respondent skipped this question

Q9: What is your Agency Name? (Optional)

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1/2/2014 4:05:01 PM  Page 1 of 2 total page
Q10: Name of Person Completing this Survey (Optional)
Q1: Does your Agency issue sub-grants?
Yes

Q2: If yes to Question #1, how many open sub-grants do you typically have in an FY?
600

Q3: Do your sub-grants cross over State fiscal years?
Yes

Q4: Do you keep a separate spreadsheet outside of SCEIS for your grants?
Yes

Q5: Do you track your sub-grants in the Grant Management module in SCEIS? If not, why?
No - we use one SCEIS grant number for each federal grant. Spreadsheets are far easier to maintain sub-grantee balances than the SCEIS system.

Q6: Are you given the full budget authority needed at the beginning of the FY to account for all grants/sub-grants in your agency?
No - estimated on what we'll spend that year.

Q7: At the beginning of the FY, do you push your budget from Not Relevant to...
Main Grant and make payment using Main grant number

Q8: Comments or Suggestions regarding the Grant Management module?
Respondent skipped this question

Q9: What is your Agency Name? (Optional)

1/2/2014 4:04:54 PM
Q1: Does your Agency Issue sub-grants?

Yes

Q2: If yes to Question #1, how many open sub-grants do you typically have in an FY?

36 subgrants for our county providers; each subgrant may be listed on 2-3 grants

Q3: Do your sub-grants cross over State fiscal years?

No

Q4: Do you keep a separate spreadsheet outside of SCEIS for your grants?

Yes

Q5: Do you track your sub-grants in the Grant Management module In SCEIS? If not, why?

Yes, it is very useful reporting tools that allows reports to be run for the duration of a grant which may be multiple years. You can filter the reports and track all the necessary data needed.

Q6: Are you given the full budget authority needed at the beginning of the FY to account for all grants/sub-grants in your agency?

Yes, the budget is allocated based on our given budget authority.

Q7: At the beginning of the FY, do you push your budget from Not Relevant to...

Sub-grants

Q8: Comments or Suggestions regarding the Grant Management module?

Respondent skipped this question

Q9: What is your Agency Name? (Optional)

29

1/2/2014 4:05:25 PM
Q10: Name of Person Completing this Survey (Optional)

Respondent skipped this question
Q1: Does your Agency issue sub-grants?

Yes

Q2: If yes to Question #1, how many open sub-grants do you typically have in an FY?

35

Q3: Do your sub-grants cross over State fiscal years?

Yes

Q4: Do you keep a separate spreadsheet outside of SCEIS for your grants?

Yes

Q5: Do you track your sub-grants in the Grant Management module in SCEIS? If not, why?

No. We only budget for projected expenses for the fiscal year.

Q7: At the beginning of the FY, do you push your budget from Not Relevant to...

Main Grant and make payment using Main grant number

Q8: Comments or Suggestions regarding the Grant Management module?

Respondent skipped this question

Q9: What is your Agency Name? (Optional)
Q10: Name of Person Completing this Survey (Optional)
### Display Annual Values of Control Objects

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#### Details

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APPENDIX 6
### Control Objects Data: Annual Values

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35
### Display Annual Values of Control Objects

#### Control Objects Data: Annual Values

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#### Hierarchy of Control Objects

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