**9-1-1 Advisory Council**

**9-1-1 Grant Program Subcommittee
Thursday, June 13, 2019 • 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.**

**Minutes**

**Subcommittee Members Present:**

Quinn Ness Adriene Beck

Kim Burdick Lisa Kelly

Shantil Siaperas

Pat Roos

**Members of the Public:**

Sandra Barrows

Geoff Feiss (9-1-1 Advisory Council Member)

**Department Staff:**

Wing Spooner

**Improvements and Recommendations List**: The subcommittee continued addressing items on the bulleted list.

**Geographic Dispersion**: This should not be a factor. If the Council is prioritizing something that is less critical in nature over something that is more critical, this may put the council in jeopardy. Also, it is not practical to implement

**Ensuring that Every County Receives its # One priority**: This is not practical to carry out consistently. It all depends on the amount of funding available and the number of requests. It would not be possible to implement fairly.

**Don Harris’ Email**: Quinn read an email from Don Harris asking the subcommittee to move forward on its recommendations without being overly concerned about whether a proposal conflicts with statute. He suggested that the subcommittee earmark any potential legal issues that it might have concerns about. It’s not necessary to dive into specific proposals until the complete list is compiled.

**Working with a Private Telecommunications Provider:** Members discussed the following:

* In order to be categorized as “working with a provider” the project should be a collaborative one.
* The Council needs more information. On the application form, we can ask applicants to provide a detailed description of their collaboration with the provider that is providing their letter of support.
* A provider letter of support does not preempt the procurement process. The letter is not binding in any way.
* A letter of support from a provider isn’t necessarily needed. The Advisory Council just needs a detailed description of how the PSAP is collaborating and who they are working with. This puts more onus on the applicant to prove to us that they are working with a provider.
* Last year’s application from Flathead County truly represented a collaboration between a PSAP and a provider, Century Link.
* The description should include “how” and “why” the parties are collaborating. They should describe what they are you trying to do and how they are going to work with a provider to get it done.

**Scoring Criteria**: The scoring system didn’t really provide much value during this last round of grants. Here are some of the discussion points that were made:

* If the scoring system is dispensed with, the evaluation process becomes even more subjective. Criteria is necessary.
* A lot of the scoring system that DES uses is driven by federal DHS regulations.
* Instead of scoring criteria, perhaps the Advisory Council should use the term “minimum criteria.”
* If the Council is going to keep the scoring criteria, it needs to be stratified and correlate the range of points with qualitative description, i.e. Superior (41-50 points), Above Average (31-40 points), Average (21-30 points), Below Average (11-20 points), Incomplete or No Response (0-10 points). Some yes/no questions also could be used.
* Have the Advisory Council discuss it and decide if it want to keep scoring criteria or potentially remove it.

**Operational and Maintenance Costs:** Operational and maintenance costs are eligible, but the Council could prioritize capital investments, rather than operational and maintenance expenditures. Geoff noted that this would affect wireless providers differently than wireline providers.

One of the difficulties is that all applicants are applying for the same grant program. The allowable uses of grant funds applies to all eligible applicants. This bullet item will be marked for discussion.

**Purpose of the Grant Program**: Adriane said her preference is to use the Statewide 9-1-1 Plan to guide the grant awards. It gives a strategy and a clear expectation of what we’re trying to achieve. This will be included as a recommendation to the Council.

Quinn noted that some projects for individual PSAPs will be identified in the Plan to ensure they can move to the next level. Plans are to complete the draft Statewide 9-1-1 Plan by July 1 and distribute it a week or more before the Council’s July meeting.

The ESInet will be part of the Statewide 9-1-1 Plan. The ESInet is a network that will connect all the PSAPS. A lot of people are under the impression that ESInet is all that is needed to achieve NG911, which is not the case. It is simply the infrastructure. Once the ESInet is complete, providers should no longer be eligible for the grant program.

**Funding a Project to Get a PSAP to a Base Level**: Members discussed whether PSAPs that needs to get to a base level would receive priority over other projects, even NG911 projects. The subcommittee decided not to make any recommendations based on this bullet item.

**Assistance with Grant Writing**: If the Council wants to recommend that assistance be provided, the Bureau would probably need another staff member. Tribal resources might be available within State government that could assist tribal PSAPs. This would be a good question to pose to Jason Smith, the State Director of Indian Affairs, who is joining the Advisory Council as a new member. Providing assistance would be challenging for the Bureau, but it could host some webinars that are generic and available to anyone who wants to take advantage of them. They could be posted on our website. Shantil offered to help promote the webinars. Hiring a grant writer sometimes can be considered an allowable cost, but our rules would need to be changed to provide for this.

**Grant Considerations for Wireless Providers**: All applicants should be subject to the same expectations for providing the Council with required information. However, Sandra Barrows noted that when a bid is solicited from a vendor, generally it comes with a non-disclosure agreement. The Council would need to lean on Don Harris to determine who can see information that is required by contract to be non-disclosed. Adriane said that bids received by Flathead County do not have non-disclosure agreements because all information is subject to public information requests. Lisa affirmed that all CenturyLink tariff rates are available publicly.

**Cost Recovery for Providers:**

* **Reimbursement for Towers**: The reference in law that defines a 9-1-1 system, includes telecommunications facilities. Does the Advisory Council want to develop a recommendation here?
	+ Geoff thinks providing grant monies to fund tower construction is a stretch, and thinks it is unlikely for a provider to use funding to build a telecommunications site or communications building at a site.
	+ This item should be earmarked for Don Harris to review.
	+ Is there a good definition of the word “facilities?”

**Next Steps:** The subcommittee first wanted to develop recommendations that could be quickly implemented, such as changes to the application form and process. The next step to address would be recommendations for rule changes followed by recommendations for changes to the law.

**Public Comment**: None

**Meeting Schedule**: The next conference call will be Thursday, June 20 from 10:00 to 11:00 am.

Quinn will draft the subcommittee’s recommendations to the Advisory Council. The focus of next meeting is to verify the recommendations and agree that they will be sent on to Don Harris for review before distributing.

**Adjournment**: The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 pm.