**9-1-1 Grant Program**

**Summary of Improvement Suggestions**

***Based on the June 11, 2020 9-1-1 Advisory Council Meeting***

**Eligible Expenses**

* **Training:** The Council needs to determine if training will be considered an eligible use of grant funds.
  + MCA 10-4-101 (1) defines 9-1-1 Systems to include circuits, equipment, software, and associated transmission services. MCA 10-4-306 (2) state that grants may be awarded for various plans and the implementation, operation, and maintenance of 9‑1‑1 systems, equipment, devices, and data. It also allows for the purchase of services that support 9-1-1 systems.
  + If training becomes allowable, the application needs to specifically ask about the type of training being offered and who is being trained. The applicant should explain how an employee’s position directly serves 9-1-1.
* **Reimbursement for Expenditures that have already Occurred**: The application form should specifically clarify that expenditures that have already occurred are not eligible.
* **Ongoing Expenses:** The application form should specify that grant funds are not intended to fund operational, ongoing expenses, such as ongoing GIS expenses to simply update and maintain NG911 GIS and GIS layers, annual subscriptions, or annual equipment costs.

**Submitting Multiple Requests on the Same Grant Application**

The intent of recently enacted rules was to have applicants submit one application per project or piece of equipment.

* The rule states “The department may prioritize applicants that submit one application over applicants that submit multiple applications in a single grant application cycle.”
* The application form can be revised to provide more clarity to help educate applicants not to lump projects together in the same application.

**Establishing Priority**

• In the application form, PSAPs need to clearly explain how they are working with a Telecommunications Provider. A self-declaration that an applicant is a Priority 1 is not sufficient.

* The Council may want to say that a letter of support from a telecom provider is not required but it could be useful for determining if the applicant is a Priority 1.

**Letters of Support**

* All letters of support must be current.
* They must be on agency letterhead with a signature. Or, if they are provided via email, a complete signature block must be included.

**Completeness and Effectiveness**

Applicants should be discouraged from using “cookie-cutter” grant applications developed by a vendor. Generic applications are not considered to be effective.

**Applications without a Quote**

* The application form should clearly state that a detailed vendor or consultant cost estimate quote is a requirement.
* The application form should also say that vendor quotes need to match the dollar amounts being requested in the application.

**Life Cycle**

* The rule states that the department may prioritize applications to replace the equipment and systems that are at or near the end of life or support.
* Several applicants misunderstood this criterion and did not provide justification as to why their current equipment was near the end of life.
* The application form needs to provide more clarity.

**Support of Statewide Plan**

* **PSAP Needs Assessment Data**: PSAPs need to be encouraged to update and submit their Needs Assessments in advance of applying for grants. Before the next grant application cycle, a notice could be sent to PSAPs to review and update their assessments.
* The application form asks the applicant to identify if the proposed project is included in the statewide 911 plan; however, more explanation on the application form may make this criterion clearer.

**Partial Funding**

* Applicants should be asked about their ability to fund their projects if they are only given partial funding to determine if the project is still viable if it only receives partial funding.
* The Council may want to consider amending the application form to have applicants describe their ability to obtain additional funds if they only receive partial grant funding.

**Applicants with Unexpended Grant Funding from Last Year**

* Progress on expenditure of previous grant funds might be something the Council wants to address before the next grant cycle.
* Several applicants had received grant funds last year that had either not expended any or very much of those funds. However, many of the applicants ran into delays due to the coronavirus pandemic.