



**State of Vermont**  
**Department of Public Safety**  
45 State Drive  
Waterbury, Vermont 05671-1300  
<http://dps.vermont.gov/>

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Representative Mary Hooper, Chair of Joint Fiscal Committee

FROM: Commissioner Jennifer Morrison, Department of Public Safety

SUBJECT: Regional Dispatch Facility Grant Plan

DATE: November 3, 2022

**Request:** The Department of Public Safety is requesting the Joint Fiscal Committee approve the attached plan to expend \$2,270,000 from the funds appropriated in Sec. B. 1100 (b) (2) of Act 185 of 2022. We have taken an incremental approach in this grant plan request. We recognize the constraints we/DPS faces to properly manage and provide the technical assistance on these projects and on the entire transition plan. DPS requests approval of \$2,010,000 to provide grant funding to five specific projects and \$260,000 for project management and technical expertise contract services for the administration of these grants/projects and for the evaluation of subsequent proposals made for the remaining funds.

*We are also requesting the flexibility to reassign funds to another project in the event a project slated for initial funding under this proposal is locally rejected or significantly delayed. Since a substituted project may not match the cost profile of a delayed project, we are also asking for the ability to expend up to an additional \$230,000 without the need to seek additional JFO approval. If this flexibility was exercised, DPS would provide a written report to JFC/GA prior to any project substitution and expenditure of this additional funding.*

Under this request at least \$8.5 million remains available for dispatch project funding when combined with the reserved funds in Sec. B. 1100 (b) (1).

**Overview:** The State of Vermont provides dispatch services to approximately 81 non-state emergency responding agencies. The current model is not sustainable and long-envisioned regional solutions are necessary to ensure a resilient communications infrastructure with workforce being drawn from throughout the State. There have been numerous efforts to update the methodology related to communications and fees for service for decades that have not come to fruition. For years, The Department of Public Safety (DPS) has publicly communicated the need to shed agencies from its dispatch workload. DPS sought specific projects that address the development and implementation of Regional Emergency Communications Centers to offload dispatching of non-state agencies. DPS is seeking the release of limited funding to support the creation of new Regional Emergency Communication Centers or broaden the capacity and capability of existing centers. This will move dispatch services toward a system that balances workloads in regions throughout the State.



**Project Application:** The State of Vermont through the Homeland Security Unit (HSU) of DPS, created and distributed a request for proposal (RFP) and application process for entities willing to become a regional dispatch center. This information was distributed and collected per the timeline noted below.

**RFP / Application Timeline:**

- 7/28/2022: Regional Communications RFP released.
- 7/28 – 9/02/2022: HSU and DPS responded to inquiries about the Regional Communications RFP / applications.
- 9/02/2022: Application deadline at 5PM.
- 9/02/2022: HSU compiled a list of applications received and supplied information to DPS.
- 9/02 – 9/10/2022: HSU provided the application scoring group with information on grant applications and scoring criteria.
- 9/13/2022: HSU led the application scoring group to score and prioritize applications.
- 9/13 – 9/14/2022: HSU compiled a final list of projects that were approved for funding / corresponding scores.
- 9/14/2022: DPS and HSU met to discuss draft language for Joint Fiscal Committee (JFC) report.
- 9/28/2022: Commissioner Morrison presented plan to the Regional Dispatch Working Group and sought [feedback](#).

**Initial Scoring of Projects Results:**

**Regional Communications/Dispatch Application Scoring Summary:**

On September 13th, 2022, the Regional Dispatch Application Scoring Group reviewed the applications for the Regional Communications/Dispatch Request for Proposals. Appendix B summarizes the results of how the Scoring Group ranked and evaluated the applications.

**Recommendations:**

Application Rank	Application Entity	Funding Request	Agencies Moved from VSP	Application Score
1	Wilmington PD	\$330,768.00	3 Agencies	81
2	Hartford PD	\$479,909.98	3 Agencies	80
3	Town of Colchester (CCPSA)	<del>\$2,865,831.02</del> \$757,729.02 <sup>1</sup>	1 Agency	79
4	Rutland County Sheriff's Department	\$321,724.26	32 Agencies	79
9	Orange County Sheriff's Office	\$119,325.58	12 Agencies	68
Phase 1	Projects	\$2,009,456.84		
5	City of Montpelier, Police Department	<del>\$3,568,872.00</del> \$2,444,429.00	4 Agencies	75
6	Town of St. Johnsbury	\$395,587.52	1 Agency	73
7	Windham County Sheriff's Office	<del>\$1,211,918.02</del> \$301,743.65	2 Agencies	72
8	Town of St. Albans Police Department	\$650,383.76	2 Agencies	69
10	Town of Shelburne	\$78,130.50	1 Agency	64
11	Middlebury Regional EMS	\$512,252.99	4 Agencies	63
Projects Pending	Remainder:	\$4,490,543.16		
Project Not Ranked	Town of Royalton	\$71,942.49	N/A	-

<sup>1</sup> Those projects that had an adjustment to their overall funding are noted by strikethrough. The reasoning and justification are detailed below the table on page 7.

Following the grant scoring results DPS met and sought feedback from key stakeholders. We recognize there is a healthy dose of skepticism about this project and want to move forward with the appropriate urgency while being intentional and fiscally responsible. We propose a staggered approach and funding for the transition of regional dispatch centers to avert a crisis (particularly in the Westminster PSAP) and provide resources for long-term success and manageability.

1) Address Emergent Need and Show Proof of Concept for Various Size Projects Funding: \$2,009,456.84

There is an immediate need to move forward with a portion of this project to shed agencies from the two State-run PSAPs. The Westminster PSAP is currently operating with over 40% vacancy rate, handling over 30% of the State’s call volume. This level of call volume is unsustainable. DPS must move forward by reducing the number of agencies being dispatched by VSP in Westminster and surrounding regions to prevent the collapse of PSAPs.

As part of an incremental approach to regional dispatch, we recommend funding the five regional centers indicated above the red line on page two. The selection of these regional dispatch projects recognizes the work and scoring of the grant application working group while advancing a range of project sizes in geographically dispersed areas. Staggering the implementation of regional dispatch centers will allow us to address the emergent need, learn from the evolution of these projects and better prepare for future projects.

The selections consist of Rutland and Orange County Sheriff’s Departments, which combined propose to reduce 44 agencies from VSP’s Westminster PSAP. Additionally, by starting with a smaller number of agencies of varying project size (two small, two large, and one medium project), in five distinct regions of the State, we can demonstrate proof of concept and react appropriately to implementation lessons learned. Approximated timelines, noting how long it will take to start transitioning agencies (minimum) and how long it is expected to complete the transition of agencies (maximum), are noted below as reported by the applicants. If the selected applicants are unable to begin transitioning agencies within twelve months, or if they choose to defer funding, they will be moved to the next increment of selections and a suitable agency of similar project size and geographic diversity will be selected to replace them in the first increment of projects.

<u>Regional Dispatch Center Timeline</u>	<u>Months (min – max)</u>
Wilmington PD	9 - 24
Hartford PD	2 - 8
Town of Colchester (CCPSA)	9 - 12
Rutland County Sheriff’s Department	12 - 24
Orange County Sheriff’s Office	3 - 6

2) Long-term Success and Project Management Funding: \$260,000 (annually)

DPS does not have the bandwidth or specialized knowledge to manage the entirety of statewide regional communications rollout without additional resources. To properly manage the creation of long-term regional dispatch centers and boost successful transitions we request approval to fund both a Project Manager (\$120-\$130K annually) and a Technical Consultant (\$120-\$130K annually) effective as soon as possible through transition completion. We estimate these contracted limited-service positions would be needed for two to three years. These specialized positions are essential for the long-term successful transition of agencies from VSP to Regional Dispatch Centers. These resources will provide unbiased oversight and subject matter expertise while working directly with Regional Dispatch Centers to bring projects online.

**Project Manager:** The manager will coordinate across projects to monitor timelines, deliverables, and expenses. They will have oversight of individual regional dispatch projects for assistance, accountability, and auditing purposes to ensure the requirements in the grant plan are met.

**Technical Consultant:** The consultant will provide the engineering expertise to leverage existing state assets, assess existing infrastructure, and ensure appropriate redundancy and fail over in a fiscally responsible manner via shared resources. They will provide guidance to Regional Dispatch Centers in every step of the process.

DPS requests the Project Manager and Technical Consultant be funded by the appropriation dedicated to regional dispatch in Act 185.

- 3) Future Funding of Transitional Costs for Regional Dispatch Centers: The \$260,000 for project management and technical expertise will inform the expenditure of the remainder of the initial 6.5 million allocated to provide grants to regional dispatch facilities upon approval of the Joint Fiscal Committee and the \$4.5 million reserved in Sec. B. 1100 (b) (1) pending the workgroup report.

DPS proposes to present an update on the Regional Dispatch Facility grant plan to the Joint Fiscal Committee following the hiring of a Project Manager and Technical Consultant to request the approval and release of additional funds for next steps in the incremental transition of Regional Dispatch Facilities. Estimated timeline: four to six months.

### **Federal Funding:**

DPS sought grant and congressionally directed spending funds to assist with the transition and support of Regional Dispatch initiatives. Those funding sources are detailed and explained below:

Homeland Security Grant Funds: Funds have been requested and previously awarded to stakeholders under the Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) for regional communications projects. HSGP funding is competitive and focused on terrorism preparedness. A portion of future HSGP funds may be allocated toward regional dispatch initiatives, but this is dependent upon guidance and national priority areas set forth by FEMA.

*The next annual HSGP funding opportunity will be released in early 2023, with funds potentially available in the fall of 2023. In addition, there is a possibility that residual funding may become available from prior grant years (2020/2021). In these cases, a separate funding opportunity will be released to solicit applications for eligible projects.*

Congressionally Directed Spending Funds (CDSF): The Department of Public Safety proposed to serve as the recipient/administrator of Congressionally Directed Spending, to award sub-grants to Vermont law enforcement agencies or partners to assist in the transition to a Regional Dispatch model:

\$750,000 (Sanders CDSF) for law enforcement equipment that support or expand capacity in one or more of the following areas:

- Regional communications dispatching systems and the transition to these systems;
- Public safety communications interoperability and radio upgrades to ensure compatibility with current national standards;
- Equipment and technology that serves to increase transparency and public trust.

*DPS does not expect to know whether funds will be awarded until winter/spring 2023.*

\$9,000,000 (Leahy CDSF) to support implementation / transition to statewide regional emergency communications.

- <https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/CJSFY23RPT.PDF>, Explanatory Statement for Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2023. Page 141. Funds were included in the relevant appropriations bill; the allocation of the funds remains uncertain.

*DPS does not expect to know whether funds will be awarded until winter/spring 2023.*

**Regional Dispatch Working Group:** The Department of Public Safety convened a working group on the new regional dispatch model as prescribed by legislation (Act 185). Regional Dispatch Workgroup members were appointed by the entities prescribed in legislation. The working group has met weekly to address the legislative mandates. The meetings have been held virtually in a public forum (<https://dps.vermont.gov/committees-boards/dispatch>). The workgroup has sought information from subject matter experts as they explore options to address the mandate.

Working Group Members:

<b>Member</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
Lance Burnham	Captain Vermont State Police	<i>(1) one representative of the Vermont State Police, selected by the Commissioner of Public Safety</i>
Jack Helm	Selectboard Benson	<i>(2) two representatives of local legislative bodies, selected by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, one of which utilizes a State-dispatch center and one of which utilizes an existing regional or local dispatch center</i>
Paul White	Working Group Chair, Selectboard Barre Town	
Brian Peete	Working Group Vice Chair, Chief Montpelier Police	<i>(3) one representative of an existing local or regional dispatch center, selected by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns</i>
Peter Mantello <sup>2</sup>	Chief Castleton Police	<i>(4) two police chiefs, selected by the Vermont Police Chiefs Association, one of whom utilizes a State-dispatch center and one of whom utilizes an existing regional or local dispatch center</i>
Anthony Cambridge	Chief Hinesburg Police	
Drew Hazelton	EMS Advisory Committee	<i>(5) one emergency medical responder, selected by the Vermont EMS Advisory Committee</i>
Robert Schalacher	Vermont State Firefighter Association	<i>(6) one firefighter, selected by the Vermont State Firefighters Association</i>
Mark Anderson	Windham County Sheriff	<i>(7) one sheriff, selected by the Vermont Sheriffs Association</i>
Barbara Neal	Vermont Enhanced 911 Board	<i>(8) one representative of the Enhanced 911 Board, selected by the Board Chair</i>

Working Group Timeline:

- 7/27/2022: 1st working group meeting facilitated by DPS
- 8/03/2022: 2nd working group meeting facilitated by Chair Paul White
- 8/10/2022: 3rd working group meeting facilitated by Chair Paul White
- 8/17/2022: 4th working group meeting facilitated by Chair Paul White
- 8/24/2022: 5th working group meeting facilitated by Chair Paul White
- 8/31/2022: 6th working group meeting facilitated by Member Lance Burnham
- 9/07/2022: 7th working group meeting facilitated by Chair Paul White
- 9/14/2022: 8th working group meeting facilitated by Chair Paul White
- 9/21/2022: 9th working group meeting facilitated by Chair Paul White
- 9/28/2022: 10th working group meeting facilitated by Chair Paul White
- 10/05/2022: 11th working group meeting facilitated by Chair Paul White
- 10/12/2022: 12th working group meeting facilitated by Chair Paul White
- 10/19/2022: 13th working group meeting facilitated by Chair Paul White
- 10/26/2022: 14th working group meeting facilitated by Chair Paul White
- 11/02/2022: 15th working group meeting facilitated by Chair Paul White

<sup>2</sup> 11/02/2022 – George Merkel, Chief of Police, Vergennes Police Department was replaced by Chief Peter Mantello

## **Appendix A Dispatch - Act 185 (FY23 Budget Bill) Language**

### **Funding**

#### Sec. B.1100 FISCAL YEAR 2023 ONE-TIME GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATIONS

(b) \$11,000,000 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Public Safety for regional dispatch funding. The funds are subject to the following conditions:

(1) \$4,500,000 shall be held in reserve until the report required by Sec. E.209.1 of this act is submitted and further approval to expend the funds is granted by the General Assembly.

(2) \$6,500,000 to provide grants to regional dispatch facilities upon approval of the Joint Fiscal Committee subsequent to review of a Regional Dispatch Facility grant plan submitted by the Commissioner of Public Safety. The plan shall include the extent to which federal funding sources may be available for regional dispatch.

### **Workgroup**

#### Sec. E.209.1 PUBLIC SAFETY – VERMONT STATE POLICE; DISPATCH WORKING GROUP; TRANSITION PROPOSAL; REPORT

(a) Creation. The Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety shall convene a working group on the new regional dispatch model. The working group shall provide a written report to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before December 1, 2022. The report shall include recommendations on:

(1) The long-term funding model for regional dispatch that fairly assesses costs statewide, does not unduly affect property taxes, and clearly identifies the potential impact on property taxes;

(2) The estimated timeline and transition funding needed as new regional dispatch centers come online and local dispatch services are transitioned away from State-operated facilities.

(3) Identify the reduction in workload that will result at the two Vermont State Police dispatch centers from a fully operational regional dispatch model.

(b) Membership. The working group shall be composed of the following members:

(1) one representative of the Vermont State Police, selected by the Commissioner of Public Safety;

(2) two representatives of local legislative bodies, selected by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, one of which utilizes a State-dispatch center and one of which utilizes an existing regional or local dispatch center;

(3) one representative of an existing local or regional dispatch center, selected by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns;

(4) two police chiefs, selected by the Vermont Police Chiefs Association, one of whom utilizes a State-dispatch center and one of whom utilizes an existing regional or local dispatch center;

(5) one emergency medical responder, selected by the Vermont EMS Advisory Committee;

(6) one firefighter, selected by the Vermont State Firefighters Association;

(7) one sheriff, selected by the Vermont Sheriffs Association; and

(8) one representative of the Enhanced 911 Board, selected by the Board Chair.

(c) Powers and Duties. The working group shall:

(1) Consider and document how current dispatch services are provided statewide and the various methods of funding that exist to cover the cost of dispatch services. This shall include detail by town and or by emergency service provider. This analysis shall identify any funding inequities that exist in the current system between those entities paying for services using local funds and those entities receiving dispatch services provided by the State without cost. The analysis of current costs and payments flows for dispatch services shall be compared to the projected costs and payment flows under the new regional dispatch model. This analysis shall also estimate how first responder entities dispatched through the new regional system may be financially impacted in the transition to the new regional system.

(2) Identify a transitional timeline and the tasks to be completed within that timeline for transitioning to the new regional dispatch model.

(3) Identify any State resources that may become available once the new dispatch system is fully operational and recommend if and how such resources should be distributed to equitably reduce local costs.

(4) Identify any other ongoing sources of statewide revenue to be dedicated to statewide emergency response communications to equitably reduce local costs.

(d) Meetings.

(1) The Commissioner of Public Safety or designee shall call the first meeting of the working group.

(2) The working group shall determine its chair from among the members of the working group.

(3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

(e) Assistance. The working group shall have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Department of Public Safety.

**Appendix B – Initial Ranking of Grant Requests Received**

Application Rank	Application Entity	Funding Request	Agencies Moved from VSP	Application Score
1	Wilmington PD	\$330,768.00	3 Agencies	81
2	Hartford PD	\$479,909.98	3 Agencies	80
3	Town of Colchester (CCPSA)	<del>\$2,865,831.02</del> \$757,729.02 <sup>3</sup>	1 Agency	79
4	Rutland County Sheriff's Department	\$321,724.26	32 Agencies	79
5	City of Montpelier, Police Department	<del>\$3,568,872.00</del> \$2,444,429.00	4 Agencies	75
6	Town of St. Johnsbury	\$395,587.52	1 Agency	73
7	Windham County Sheriff's Office	<del>\$1,211,918.02</del> \$301,743.65	2 Agencies	72
8	Town of St. Albans Police Department	\$650,383.76	2 Agencies	69
9	Orange County Sheriff's Office	\$119,325.58	12 Agencies	68
10	Town of Shelburne	\$78,130.50	1 Agency	64
11	Middlebury Regional EMS	\$512,252.99	4 Agencies	63
-	Town of Royalton	\$71,942.49	N/A	-
	Total Amount:	\$6,391,984.26	Remainder:	\$108,015.74

Town of Colchester (Chittenden County Public Safety Authority):

- \$750,000.00 were outlined as building upfit costs which were identified as construction costs. Construction costs fell under the special considerations costs and were allowable for minor cosmetic costs. The costs in the Town of Colchester costs were identified as non-minor cosmetic and not approved and were removed from their total approved amount.
- \$890,000.00 were outlined as personnel expenses for transition. \$468,102.00 were identified as operating expenses for transition, both were identified as administrative costs. Administrative costs were outlined as unallowable in the RFP and were removed from their total approved amount.
- With both removed costs, their overall cost was brought down to \$757,729.02.

City of Montpelier, Police Department:

- \$324,443.00 were outlined as 10% project contingency costs. While it was understood why these costs were applied for, contingency costs were not outlined as an allowable cost in the RFP. As a result, these costs were removed.
- \$800,000.00 were outlined as Project Management, Engineering, and Implementation Oversight costs. As outlined in the RFP, Planning and Engineering costs were generally unallowable due to support that could be provided by the Department of Public Safety Radio Technology Services. At this time these were removed from their overall application request pending further review of their project by Radio Technology Services.
- With both removed costs, their overall cost was brought down to \$2,444,429.00.

<sup>3</sup> Those projects that had an adjustment to their overall funding are noted by strikethrough. The reasoning and justification are detailed below the table on page 7.

Windham County Sheriff's Office:

- \$110,174.37 were outlined as 10% project contingency costs. While it was understood why these costs were applied for, contingency costs were not outlined as an allowable cost in the RFP. As a result, these costs were removed.
- \$800,000.00 were outlined as Project Management, Engineering, and Implementation Oversight costs. As outlined in the RFP, Planning and Engineering costs were generally unallowable due to support that could be provided by the Department of Public Safety Radio Technology Services. At this time these were removed from their overall application request pending further review of their project by Radio Technology Services.
- With both removed costs, their overall cost was brought down to \$301,743.65.

Town of Royalton:

- The Town of Royalton applied for the Regional Communications/Dispatch Program as an agency seeking to transition into a new or expanding dispatch center. While transition costs were an eligible cost under the program this application did not meet the intent of the funding in that regional dispatch centers were the targets applicants as outlined in the Signature Page.