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Agency of Human Services

July 17, 2012

Vermont Joint Fiscal Committee
Senator Ann Cummings, Chair
Rep. Martha Heath, Vice-Chair
One Baldwin Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05633-5701

Dear Senator Cummings and Representative Heath,

The Vermont Department of Health is required by 32 V.S.A. 8557(a) as amended by Act 143 Sec. 62 of 2012 to present our plan to the Joint Fiscal Committee for review prior to initiating any related expenditures from the EMS Special Fund. Act 155 of 2012 (Sec.32-44 modified 18 and 24 V.S.A.), which relates to the delivery of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Vermont, calls for the creation of an advisory committee, development of response time standards, and several items related to the delivery of education and training. 18 V.S.A. 908 added by Sec. 38 of Act 155 created the EMS Special Fund and describes the primary areas of focus as support for online and regional training programs, data collection and analysis and other areas related to training of personnel and delivery of emergency medical services across Vermont.

For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2012, the Vermont Department of Health (VDH) intends to pursue expenditures related to education and training, beginning with securing options for online training. Secondly, VDH will work to support regional educational and training initiatives related to the continuing education and refresher training needs of EMS providers. Finally, if any funds are available beyond these expenditures, VDH will partially fund initial training courses conducted in the various EMS Districts.

The total amount that is now in the law for the EMS special fund is \$150,000 per year. We issued the RFP for the first priority area, the learning management system. We do not yet know how much that will cost but recognize that the cost of that system will determine how much we have left to spend on the second and third priorities. Our intent is to spend all of the available funds on these priorities this year.

We are required by Act 155 to have both the online learning and regional training classes in place by 9/1/12. After JFC review, we also are required in statute to review our plan with a newly created 14 member EMS advisory committee. That group will meet for the first time in August. We ask the Joint Fiscal Committee to review the attached spending plan with consideration for the condensed timeline and need to conduct a competitive bidding process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tracy Dolan".

Tracy Dolan
Deputy Commissioner of Public Health
Vermont Department of Health



Spending Plan for Emergency Medical Services Special Fund (Year 1)

Overview:

Act 155 of 2012, Sec.32-44 modified 18 and 24 V.S.A. related to EMS in Vermont, to create an advisory committee, development of response time standards, and items related to the delivery of education and training. 18 V.S.A. 908 added by Sec. 38 of Act 155 creates the EMS Special Fund and describes the primary areas of focus as support for online and regional training programs, data collection and analysis and other areas related to training of personnel and delivery of emergency medical services across Vermont. Accordingly, for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2012, the Vermont Department of Health (VDH) intends to pursue expenditures related to education and training, beginning with securing options for online training. Secondly, VDH will work to support regional educational and training initiatives related to the continuing education and refresher training needs of EMS providers. Finally, if any funds are available beyond these expenditures, VDH will partially fund initial training courses conducted in the various EMS Districts.

The Vermont Department of Health is required by 32 V.S.A. 8557(a) as amended by Act 143 Sec. 62 of 2012 to present our plan to the Joint Fiscal Committee for approval prior to release of any funds.

Online Education and Training

First Objective: By August 15, 2012, identify and select a vendor/contractor via a competitive bid process with a scope of work that includes statewide access to an online educational platform suitable for use by EMS personnel.

Online training, as part of a distance education model of curriculum delivery, represents a potentially valuable tool for providing high quality EMS content to a broad audience. The key tenets of a modern online educational system include a fully featured learning management system (LMS). The LMS is a software application package that is typically accessed through a web-based portal. In order to identify the most cost effective LMS package that may be available, VDH intends to issue an RFP with the following general criteria regarding the LMS:

- Ability to upload custom content to the system from a range of sources
- Delivery of content across a range of formats, including videos, PowerPoint presentations and other standard formats (PDF, word, excel)
- Delivery of live-streaming content (possibly via integration with CiscoWebEx)
- Automated collection and tracking of EMS provider/student information, including limited demographics (affiliated service, level of EMS provider, etc.) and all aspects of training, with the ability to search and track by multiple criteria and generate a range of both pre-built and custom reports.

The LMS system will also require active security and secure login mechanisms to protect content and student/user information as well as 24-hour access customer support. By selecting a well-developed LMS, VDH will ensure that educational options are available to EMS providers at all hours, affording the flexibility not found with classroom-based learning. In addition, the automated tracking features of the LMS will ensure that EMS providers, organization/agency leadership and VDH are able to efficiently monitor progress towards achieving the required EMS continuing education.

Request for Proposals Timeline (competitive bid process)

RFP published	July 11, 2012
Written Questions	July 19, 2012
Response to questions	July 23, 2012
Bidders Conference Call	July 24, 2012
Proposal due	July 30, 2012 4:00 PM EST
Contract negotiation period	July 31 2012 – August 15, 2012

Regional Training Programs

Second Objective: By September 1, 2012, provide direct monetary support to EMS District-based education and training initiatives focused on EMS refresher training courses.

By virtue of their geographic boundaries, the thirteen EMS Districts (see attached map) represent a natural delivery mechanism for meeting the “regional training programs and classes” requirement of Act 155. Each District has a training program and coordinator that currently provide both continuing education and refresher training classes (required biannually for recertification/relicensure) for EMS providers. VDH will work with the EMS districts to provide direct funding allocations to provide additional classes of these types.

Initial Education Programs

Third Objective: With any remaining funds from the first year appropriation into the EMS Special Fund, VDH will work with the EMS districts to reduce the cost to the individual provider of the initial education programs at the EMR, EMT, AEMT levels and increase the number of those initial education courses that are offered.

Because of the uncertain cost of the initial purchase of the LMS system for the first objective, the amount of funding available for this project is not yet known. This is one of the priorities identified by the EMS personnel, agencies, and districts in a survey conducted by VDH. In future years, we anticipate lower ongoing costs for the LMS which will allow for greater support of this objective.