

## PSAP Grant Program Grant Ranker

# View Application--72--Wireless E-9-1-1 Enhancement Program Grant Application

**Grant Period:** 2009

**Tier:** Broaden or increase the delivery of wireless E-911 equipment or services beyond established minimum functional standards (**BROADEN**)

**Grant Program:** Enhancement **Grant Type:** Individual PSAP

**Priority:** Personnel - recruitment (**RECRUIT**)

**Primary PSAP Applicants:** Virginia Beach Communications Division

**Jurisdictions Served:** Virginia Beach

### **Project Director:**

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### **Project Description:**

Wireless E-911 Enhancement Program Grant Application Virginia Beach has identified that one of our greatest needs in 9-1-1 Emergency Communications is an initiative for selection of staff. The purpose of this grant request is to conduct a job analysis study of telecommunicator I and telecommunicator II that will provide a solid foundation for recruitment and selection decisions; research, analyze and recommend selection instruments to be used; develop a marketing and recruitment plan to target the most qualified candidates; and evaluate and make recommendations regarding turnover and retention issues.

**Total Project Cost** \$180,000.00

**Amount Requested:** \$180,000.00

**Matching Funds:** \$50,000.00

**Additional Local Funds:** \$0.00

### **Statement of Need:**

The Virginia Beach Communications and Information Technology Department's Emergency Communications & Citizen Services Division (ECCS) is newly organized and separate from the Virginia Beach Police Department. We recognize that public safety communications services are a critical component of public safety response to emergencies. We have identified that one of our greatest needs in 9-1-1 Emergency Communications is an initiative for selection of staff, a funding priority category within the Commonwealth of Virginia E-911 Enhancement Grant Program. The purpose of this grant request is to: • conduct a job analysis study of Telecommunicator 1 and Telecommunicator 2 that would provide a solid foundation for recruitment and selection decisions, • research, analyze and recommend selection instruments to be used

based on the conduction of a transportability study or a content and/or criterion related validation study • develop a marketing and recruitment plan to target the most qualified candidates, and • evaluate and make recommendations regarding turnover and retention issues. The staff development needs of the Virginia Beach 9-1-1 Bureau are significant, as they are in virtually every 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) in Virginia and throughout the nation. Like other PSAPs, the Virginia Beach ECCS experiences a chronic shortage of call-takers and police/fire/rescue dispatchers. Turnover rates have increased among both probational employees and the more experienced employees. The turnover rate for VB9-1-1 in FY07 was 22%, including retirements. One of the most serious direct results of continuous staff shortages is longer queue times in response to answering 9-1-1 emergency calls for public safety service. Due to staffing shortages, the ECCS is unable to routinely meet the National Emergency Number Association's (NENA) standard for answering 90% of 9-1-1 calls within 10 seconds. The following is a chart indicating the reasons individuals have left Communication Officer positions (these positions will be changing titles to Telecommunicators on February 1, 2008) in FY 06/07.

Job Title	Date	Reason for Leaving
Communications Officer II	07/04/2006	Resignation – OT requirements
Communications Officer II	07/05/2006	Resignation – OT requirements
Communications Officer I	07/15/2006	Dismissed - in academy – Performance Issues
Communications Officer I	07/16/2006	Resignation - Return to previous employer (better work hours)
Communications Officer I	07/29/2006	Resignation - Left for Federal Employment
Communications Officer I	08/15/2006	Dismissal - Unable to perform functions of CO I
Communications Officer I	10/03/2006	Dismissal - Unable to perform functions of CO I
Communications Officer II	10/15/2006	Resignation - Moving out of area
Communications Officer III	11/01/2006	Retirement
Communications Officer II	11/15/2006	Resignation - transfer to VBP (better work hours)
Communications Officer II	11/15/2006	Resignation - transfer to VB Human Services
Communications Officer II	12/07/2006	Resignation – left for private employment
Communications Officer III	01/01/2007	Retirement
Communications Officer I	01/31/2007	Resignation - Uncomfortable with CO I position
Communications Officer I	02/15/2007	Dismissed - Performance Issues
Communications Officer I	04/30/2007	Resignation - Uncomfortable with CO I position
Communications Officer I	05/15/2007	Resignation - Unable to perform functions of CO I
Communications Officer I	05/31/2007	Dismissal - Unable to perform functions of CO I
Communications Officer I	05/31/2007	Dismissal - Unable to perform functions of CO I
Communications Officer I	05/31/2007	Dismissal - Unable to perform functions of CO I

In order to maintain adequate staffing levels, the Virginia Beach ECCS relies on a mandate to members to participate in a scheduled overtime program to increase staffing on all shifts. This ultimately has a negative impact on “quality of work life” for all staff members and generates other challenges that contribute to turnover. Additional operational impacts of staffing shortfall is the ever-increasing public access to 9-1-1 via wire line phones, cell phones, Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) calls, as well as the increasing number of police, fire and rescue units that dispatchers must monitor and control. Recruitment and retention are keys to staffing our Public Safety Communications Centers. The key to retention is the ability to staff our centers with the appropriate number of call takers and dispatchers to handle the workload. We need to address the problem of job burn-out resulting from too few call takers and dispatchers handling too many phone calls and too many field units. A communications center must have staffing available to handle the emergency calls for public safety service and the dispatching workload experienced by their centers. A communications center must be able to identify individuals who have the knowledge, skills, abilities and other personal characteristics (KSAOs) to make split second decisions in a time critical, error free environment, while being empathic to citizens who are often in highly emotional, life threatening and distraught situations. The focus of this grant request is on the challenges and problems of recruitment, selection, and retention. A job analysis is necessary to identify the essential knowledge, skills, abilities and other personal characteristics of the job that will be the foundation for updating job descriptions, minimum requirements, critical elements of the job, and valid applicant selection methods that will identify candidates most likely to succeed and be retained. Project Description A job analysis of the Telecommunicator 1 and 2 positions is an essential first step toward achieving desired recruitment and retention of a diversified workforce. Based on other job analysis and selection packages our City has purchased, the sum of money identified for similar grant proposals (\$180,000) should be sufficient to conduct a job analysis study, to make recommendations for a valid recruitment and selection process, develop a marketing and recruitment plan to target the most qualified candidates, and to evaluate turnover and retention issues:

- Conduct job analysis for Telecommunicator 1 and Telecommunicator 2 positions:
  - o Identify tasks and important knowledge, skills, abilities and other personal characteristics (KSAOs) required at entry level
  - o Administer job analysis questionnaire (JAQ) to include criticality, frequency, and necessity at entry.
  - o Compile results from JAQ.
  - o Identify most important KSAOs to provide a focus for recruitment and selection efforts as well as serve as the basis for Human Resources' evaluation of minimum qualifications

and the development of an examination plan by the consultants. This includes evaluating the reliability and validity of selection instruments and making recommendations to direct selection efforts.

- o Develop revised job descriptions (JD)
- Evaluate Recruitment, Selection, Training, Performance, and Retention Issues and Provide Recommendations
- o Evaluate current selection, recruitment, and training processes and performance and retention issues (for past 3 years); identify best practices; make recommendations for process improvements
- o Evaluate Academy performance to include adult learning methodologies and time allowances for learning new skills;
- o Identify specific KSAOs that are lacking for those who fail (dismissals or resignations) and other reasons for separation
- o Interview successful candidates and identify important KSAOs that contributed to their success
- o Relate Academy performance issues to job analysis to identify most important KSAOs to focus for selection, training and performance improvements
- o Develop an examination plan that links most important KSAOs to available selection instruments and make recommendations on the most valid selection instruments that would identify the most qualified candidates and have the least adverse impact;
- o Conduct a transportability study to support the validity of the recommended selection instruments.
- Develop plan for marketing and recruitment to target the most qualified candidates and address performance and retention issues
- o Evaluate the KSAOs needed for the job and current marketing and recruitment efforts; including how effectively these efforts target important KSAOs.
- o Make recommendations for web site development for in-house production.
- o Make recommendations for media outreach and recruitment displays, develop script for radio and public service announcements, and create and design print-ready recruitment materials for in-house production.
- o Create script for realistic job preview video for in-house production
- o Make recommendations for community outreach and recruitment initiatives that reach the target group.
- o Explore effective use of City resources such as internships, the Human Resources Community Outreach position, and the City's Multimedia Services Division. If awarded a grant, the job task analysis, testing and selection recommendations, and the recruitment marketing plan will be available to other PSAPs in the Commonwealth to address similar staff development needs. It is important to realize that 9-1-1 call takers and law enforcement, fire-rescue and emergency medical service dispatchers and their supervisors are the nations "1st of the First Responders". This study will yield a recruitment and marketing plan, a selection process, and an analysis of training and retention issues that will improve the effectiveness and stability of the Emergency Communications and Citizens Services Division. The necessity of marketing and recruiting individuals with the highest potential for success in this division is critical to the wellbeing of our community and our citizens.

### **Project Impact:**

This project impacts the ability to respond to emergency 9-1-1 calls for public safety service and dispatch appropriate police, fire and emergency medical services. 9-1-1 recruitment, staffing and retention are a nationwide crises. The key to retention is staffing our centers with the appropriate number of call takers and dispatchers. The key to staffing our centers with the appropriate number of call takes and dispatchers is identifying which individuals have the necessary knowledge, skills, abilities and other personal characteristics to succeed in a 9-1-1 environment.

### **Consequence of Not Receiving:**

The consequence of not receiving funding for this project is the continual struggle to staff our 9-1-1 emergency communications center with staff qualified to handle the workload. We are in a continual state of hiring and training personnel without benefit of knowing the knowledge, skills, abilities and other personal characteristics required to be successful in this type of work environment and identify those candidates who are most likely to succeed and be retained. With insufficient staffing, queue time to answer 9-1-1 calls will increase and delays in response to public safety emergencies will ultimately occur.

**Part of Long Term or Strategic Plan?:** Yes

**Likelihood of Completion Unfunded?:** 10%

**Other Available Funding Sources?:** No

**Percent of Grant Funding Requested To Total Funding Cost?:** 72%

**Is Project Locally Sustainable?:** Yes

### **Comprehensive Project Description:**

NA

**What type of interface or compatibility solution will be used between existing equipment**

**and/or software and that which you intend to purchase?:**

NA

**What is the overall relationship of your project to your PSAP or locality's established long-range future plans?:**

NA

**How will the equipment purchased will support future technologies for PSAP readiness?:**

NA

**Budget and Budget Narrative:**

Budget Development of a job analysis, valid testing and selection process, and a marketing and recruitment plan as well as the evaluation of training, performance and retention issues - \$180,000.00 In-kind contributions will include: Job analysis will require "in-kind" contributions from incumbents and Human Resources Department staff \$10,000 Agency will produce its own realistic job video, website, radio, TV/public service announcements, recruitment materials and purchase display equipment \$40,000

**Ongoing Expenses:**

NA

**Evaluation:**

Evaluation for success will be determined by the Division's ability to select and retain increased numbers of highly qualified Telecommunicators with reduced turnover. We anticipate a 30% increase in the retention rate of probationary employees over FY 08/09 and a considerable reduction in vacancies.

**What are the short term, intermediate, and/or long-term outcomes desired for this project?:**

Improved staffing; highly qualified 9-1-1 personnel; reduced turnover rates; improved response to emergency 9-1-1 calls for public safety service

**What measures will be used to determine outcomes?:**

An increased number of applicants who meet minimum criteria for position; an increased number of candidates who successfully complete the hiring process; an improved retention rate; improved response to 9-1-1 emergency calls

**How will data be collected and how will evaluations be conducted?:**

Data will be collected by Virginia Beach ECCS administrative personnel and tracked in a database; monthly analysis will be conducted by ECCS administrative personnel

**How will data be presented?:**

Data will be reported quarterly to the Department of Human Resources and the ECCS Coordinator.

**Attachments**