WINBOURNE CONSULTING, LLC™

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Preparing for the New Federal Broadband Grants

Soon the National Telecommunications and Information Agency will release their final guidance on how to apply for the new federal broadband grants created in the Infrastructure Act. Savvy government leaders will use this time to increase their chances of getting a share of these funds by getting their grant strategy in place. Having served as an expert and outside reviewer over several years for a government broadband grants program, it has become clear there are consistent areas where many applications are weak, leading to low scores from reviewers and ultimately, being denied the grant. Broadband grants are highly competitive - paying attention to the following areas will, I guarantee, substantially improved your odds of success!

Start the Process Now

If you haven't already begun, you're behind. A good grant application will reflect that a substantial amount of organization and preparatory work has been done before the application was even started. While we don't know what the ultimate grant program will look like, we do know what areas are universally included in broadband grants, so you should begin to develop, or enhance, those areas now. Too many grant applications that look like they were afterthoughts put together only after the grant applications were released.

Winbourne Consulting offers a full range of public safety services, including strategic planning, systems integration, specifications development, solution acquisition, and implementation project management and quality assurance.

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Comprehensive Program

Grant programs like to see approaches that are "shovel-ready". You should have a comprehensive program in place now with these pieces at a minimum: a strategic plan; people and organizations with roles and responsibilities; a good understanding of your status quo based on research, studies, or surveys; and an overall project plan. Applications that state they "will" develop a program or describe one that was obviously slapped together at the last minute will compare very unfavorably against your competitors – they've been holding meetings for months.

Your Community's Vision

The benefits of broadband are widely known and generally accepted by all – some of us were making these same arguments over 20 years ago. As a result, you don't need to spend a lot of time describing the generic benefits of broadband. As a reviewer of your grant, don't know is how it will help your particular community? Your vision should describe how your community will leverage the grant to improve education, health, economic development, public safety, etc. Include all areas that are relevant to your approach and leave out what is not.

Be Credible

A surprising number of grant applications can best be described as being

"fanciful". Common among the mistakes is overstating the number of jobs created or retained; incredibly high broadband take rates; unreasonable timelines for completing the necessary bidding and contracting; and construction schedules that could never be met. Another is the "If we build the network the ISPs will come" argument. Unless you have proof of interest otherwise, such as the results of an RFI, avoid this argument. There are many factors in commercial ISP decisions, and you offering dark fiber for lease will not necessarily change their calculation. Remember, the granting authority has a responsibility to only approve funding for programs that are judged likely to succeed. Your approach has to be credible – incredible applications are rarely approved.

Develop Partnerships Now
Partnerships are crucial, but they take time to develop. They help with your credibility, sustainability, and overall capacity, and are required in some grant programs. Partnerships should be diverse and reach beyond the government sphere. For example, local colleges and universities often have technical resources that they can bring to bear. Likewise, publicly-owned utilities make excellent broadband partners – they have rights-of-way, network management, billing, and customer support in place already. Local chambers of commerce and other non-profit organizations are usually more than happy to support the effort. Try to establish two types of partners – those that will play a role in program execution, and those that will provide letters of support. A successful technique is to have the Mayor or County Executive host a briefing with the project team for all potential partners.

Think Sustainability
Sustainability to some degree depends on future events that you can't control. So, reviewers look for reasonable assumptions in judging how sustainable your approach will likely be. The key to broadband sustainability is generally take rate and monthly fees. If your application is for an extension of an existing solution, you can extrapolate those numbers from there; otherwise, a survey documenting the level of interest would assist your sustainability score. Merely positing that x% will take the service at x$ without data to back it up will lead to a poor sustainability score every time. Additional factors to address include technical support, tech refresh, and ongoing network management.

Write it Right
Poorly written grant applications are a common problem. In some cases, poor writing can make your argument difficult to comprehend, and suggests a cavalier attitude to the process. While you won't be rated on your writing style per se, anything that makes reviewing your application more difficult can lead to lower scores. Also, have one person do the writing of the entire application so it is in the same voice and style.

There are few applications that nail each of these perfectly. Fortunately, you don't need a perfect "A" to get approved, many "B" applications get funded, but "C" and "D" applications don't. If you follow the above advice, you should be able to produce a Grade-A application and maximize your chances of success.

This article was written by Mike Hernon, Director of Smart Cities for Winbourne Consulting. He has served as a city CIO and has over 20 years of experience as a consultant focusing on wired and wireless broadband, public safety systems, and strategic planning. He has served clients at the federal civilian, DoD, state, and local government levels. His broadband experience includes several years

working as an outside expert reviewing broadband grant applications for a federal agency.

Winbourne Consulting has assisted numerous public safety organizations apply for grants. If you are interested in having Winbourne Consulting assist your organization in a grant application, contact us at **info@w-llc.com**

Winbourne Happenings

Winbourne Consulting was awarded a contract by Davao City, Philippines, to assist in the development of a combined public safety and intelligent transportation operations center. The project, funded by a grant from the US Trade and Development Agency, will form the foundation of **Davao's Smart City** strategy.

Public Safety News
Ukraine's Fire Fighters Need Our Help

Since February 24, the day Russia invaded Ukraine, we have seen hundreds of photos of destroyed civic and residential housing. It is also just as common to see **Ukrainian fire fighters** in those photos and videos.

The brave men and women of the Ukrainian firefighting units, formerly known as the State Emergency Service, are constantly in danger as they rescue people and suppress fires resulting from the shelling. Regardless of the danger, we know, from our US firefighters, they will stand their ground to assist those in need.

As international assistance for military and humanitarian aid flows into Ukraine, we cannot forget that the fire fighters have specific needs for equipment resupply. As the Russian onslaught continues on the civilian areas, fire fighters are constantly using equipment that needs to be replaced so to continue the job.

We can help them to fill the need for essential protective and other equipment or support the families of these heroes who gave their lives saving others.

Please consider sending donation and equipment to the International Red Cross in support of Ukraine **https://www.icrc.org/en/donate/ukraine.**

RapidDeploy Brings Modern Mapping And Analytics To Emergency Response In Minnesota

Highlights:

1. This is a first of its kind statewide offering for mapping and analytics in Minnesota.
2. The state now has improved location accuracy by integrating network and mobile location data on a single map.
3. RapidDeploy Radius alleviates challenges faced by overwhelmed primary call centers by quickly identifying any misrouted calls.
4. Non-English speaking residents will be able to receive faster responses through automatically translated text messages.
5. People in outstate Minnesota will benefit from increased location accuracy, resulting in reduced emergency response times

https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/rapiddeploy-brings-modern-mapping-and-analytics-to-emergency-response-in-minnesota-301502335.html

IWCE 2022: The Success, Challenges of NG911 and Emergency Telecommunications

From smart light switches to coffee makers that can brew on command and refrigerators that can sense a fire, the internet of things has changed everything—including emergency telecommunications.

"I'm not going to buy the refrigerator that can call 911, but what about a fire alarm?" asked Gerald "Jay" English, a veteran telecommunication expert, at a kickoff session Monday morning for the IWCE 2022 expo in Las Vegas.

English, a Marine and Air Force veteran with experience in intelligence, has managed emergency telecommunication centers and helped integrate efforts related to Next Generation 911 (NG911) with the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, which is his current role.

https://www.americancityandcounty.com/2022/03/22/iwce-2022-the-success-challenges-of-ng911-and-emergency-telecommunications/

Industry Events

The IACP Technology Conference is the premier professional event dedicated to discussing technology in law enforcement. Attendees should expect quality training, professional development, and networking covering a broad array of new and emerging technologies.

For additional information, visit: https://www.theiacp.org/tech-conference

Articles of Interest

Public Safety Agencies Are Leveraging GIS-based Apps And Dashboards To Improve Response And Operational Efficiencies

Digital maps and online dashboards are increasingly enlisted by law enforcement, fire departments, rescue and emergency medical teams to mitigate risk in everything from dispatch services to field data collection.

In a new e-book titled Keeping People Safe: GIS for Public Safety, experts at the location intelligence firm Esri present a collection of case studies and strategies describing how geographic data and GIS-based tools have helped emergency response agencies. The e-book aims to help educate state and local organizations on how they can incorporate these tools and processes into their response efforts.

The full article can be viewed at: https://gcn.com/public-safety/2022/02/gis-amplifies-emergency-response/362260/

How to Address 9-1-1 Staffing Shortages

Previously we explored the drivers of the acute staffing shortage that is having a severely negative effect on the 911 community.

The drivers include the following:

• Funding. The lack of money flowing into emergency communications centers (ECCs) makes it more difficult to compete with the private sector concerning personnel compensation, which in turn makes recruitment and retention more difficult.

• Lack of proper recognition. The federal government's continued insistence on classifying 9-1-1 telecommunicators (call-takers and dispatchers) as clerical workers not only makes it more difficult for ECCs to justify higher compensation for telecommunicators but also causes candidates to take a dim view of the profession, which hinders recruitment.

• An incredibly stressful environment. Telecommunicators make life-and-death decisions every day. They also work long shifts and a lot of overtime, driven largely by the staffing shortage. The environment often drives personnel away or leads them to avoid the profession altogether.

• The negative impacts of social media. The stressful environment sometimes leads ECC personnel to vent their frustrations via social media platforms unintentionally torpedoing recruitment efforts.

• The silver tsunami. The baby boomer generation is retiring in droves, resulting in a tremendous loss of institutional operational knowledge that exacerbates the staffing woes that the 9-1-1 community is experiencing overload.

To read the complete article visit:

https://www.rrmediagroup.com/Features/FeaturesDetails/FID/1106

PTT over FirstNet gains traction, with some entities planning to abandon LMR

LAS VEGAS—Perceived primarily as a data-centric network, FirstNet connectivity is gaining traction as a mission-critical-voice alternative to traditional land-mobile-radio (LMR) technology, as speakers during IWCE 2022 conference sessions have noted this week.

Push-to-talk (PTT) solution ESChat was one of the first applications included in the FirstNet App Catalog when it was established years ago, but all forms of PTT over FirstNet primarily have been used as augmentations to LMR systems, which has been a foundation of public-safety communication for more than 60 years. But that situation is changing, with multiple entities this week unveiling plans to use PTT over FirstNet for their primary mission-critical voice communications while shuttering aging LMR networks that would have required costly upgrades.

To read the complete article visit: https://urgentcomm.com/2022/03/24/ptt-over-firstnet-gains-traction-with-some-entities-planning-to-abandon-lmr/

IWCE 2022: Edge Computing Is The Backbone Of Future Smart Cities
At this modern apex of human innovation, sometimes it feels like the digital evolution has emerged at the precipice of a new era: artificial intelligence is in the preliminary stages of mass deployment throughout many sectors; smart devices connect people and things like never before; technological advancements are plowing ahead at an unprecedented rate.

Edge computing, a burgeoning field that puts digital internet infrastructure that's traditionally been housed in regional hubs directly into increasingly smart devices, is becoming more of a societal norm—serving as the backbone of 21st century developments including smart cities.

The full article can be viewed at:
https://www.americancityandcounty.com/2022/03/24/iwce-2022-edge-computing-is-the-backbone-of-future-smart-cities/

We Are Interested in Your Thoughts on the Above Topics.

To share them with us, please:

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or
Twitter: https://twitter.com/winbournellc

For more information about our services and solutions, visit our website at:
www.winbourneconsulting.com