



## **PUBLIC SAFETY ANSWERING POINT STATE GRANT**

Modernizing Wisconsin's 911 system has been a priority for counties and other stakeholders since the early 2000s. In the 2017-19 state budget, \$6.7 million was reallocated from the Police and Fire Protection Fund (PFPF) for the creation of an emergency services IP network (ESI<sub>net</sub>), which will allow Wisconsin to move toward a long overdue upgrade for 911 by serving as the backbone to which local Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) can connect to utilize Next Generation 911 (NG 911) technology. The 2019-21 budget allocated \$19.7 million in FY20 to the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) for the project. Funds not utilized by the end of the biennium will lapse to the general fund. According to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau informational paper on the subject, the DMA has only spent \$585,200 of the allocated funds.

DOA issued an intent to award letter to AT&T in December however, a final contract cannot be issued until the end of the appeals period. Likely the details of the contract will be made public in April 2021 providing us with a better understanding of the costs associated with the ESI<sub>net</sub>. Ultimately, supporting DMA and the buildout of the ESI<sub>net</sub> is critically important in moving from the analog system to a digital, Next Generation 911 system.

In the 2019-20 Legislative Session, legislation to create the framework for a state-funded PSAP grant program was signed into law. 2019 Wisconsin Act 26 requires DMA to promulgate rules to create the grant program in consultation with the 911 subcommittee. Act 26 indicates the following uses for the grant dollars: advanced training of telecommunicators; equipment or software expenses; and incentives to consolidate some or all of the functions of two or more PSAPs. The act also clearly states that only one PSAP per county is eligible to receive the grant. However, the law did not allocate any funds for the grant program.

The cost to upgrade local PSAP equipment can be cost prohibitive for many counties. Therefore, a state-funded grant program is essential in supporting PSAPs and their need to upgrade technologies. To provide some context, Price County approved funding to update its PSAP which has two main stations and one backup call station. The county budgeted \$147,000 for the equipment and an additional \$191,000 for a 10-year service agreement on the maintenance, upgrades, and management of the equipment. In its 2020 budget, Price County set aside an additional \$30,000 for the Capture 911 recording system.

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It is critical that the state invest in the ESInet, as well as our local PSAPs, for the safety and security of the public. Local governments are responsible for purchasing 911 call answering equipment. According to the 2019 Statewide 911 System Assessment, only 50 percent of the state's PSAPs have the necessary equipment to be compatible with NG911 technologies. The state should support the funding of Act 26 by returning a portion of the PFPF back to its original intent.

**CURRENT STATUS:** 2019 Wisconsin Act 26 allows the DMA to promulgate rules for the creation of a state-funded grant program to assist PSAPs in upgrading their equipment and provide necessary training. To date, no funding has been allocated for the local grant program. DMA requested funds in its 2021-23 budget submission for the continuation of the ESInet build-out, as well as the PSAP grant.

**REQUESTED ACTION:**

- Provide \$15 million annually from the Police and Fire Protection Fund beginning in the second year of the 2021-23 biennium to fund grants to PSAPs for local system upgrades.
- Support DMA and provide the necessary funds to build the ESInet and provide the ongoing funds needed to maintain the system.

**TALKING POINTS:**

- The DMA budget request to the governor includes ongoing funds to support the build-out for the ESInet which is the essential digital platform for Next Generation 911.
- 2019 Wisconsin Act 26 requires the DMA to promulgate rules to create the grant program in consultation with the 911 subcommittee.
- No funds were allocated for the grant program at the time Act 26 was signed into law.
- According to the 2019 Statewide 911 System Assessment, only 50 percent of the state's PSAPs have the necessary equipment to be compatible with NG911 technologies.
- Uses for the grant dollars include training, equipment or software expenses, and incentives to consolidate some or all functions of two or more PSAPs.

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- Only one PSAP per county is eligible to receive the grant.
- The Police and Fire Protection Fund generates more than \$50 million in each year of the biennium, all of which was supposed to go toward 911 upgrades in the state. This would be a reliable funding source for the grant program.

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