

MEMORANDUM

To: House and Senate Committees on Appropriations
Senate Committee on Government Operations
Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs
House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs
House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development

From: Kristin L. Clouser, Secretary of Administration

Date: June 30, 2023

Subject: Act 3 Sec. 95 Status Report (Municipal Technical Assistance)

Section 95 of [Act 3](#) of the 2023 Legislative Session appropriated \$3 million of general fund dollars to the Agency of Administration (“the Agency”) to provide technical assistance to municipalities with the goal of expanding access to State and federal funding. Due to the abnormally high amount of State and federal funds currently available to municipalities and the short timeframes on many federal programs, Section 95 included the requirement for three reports to Legislative committees on April 1, 2023, July 1, 2023, and January 15, 2024. This report is the second of those three reports.

Implementation Progress

The Agency, with the support from procurement staff from the Agency of Transportation and the Office of Purchasing and Contracting within the Department of Buildings and General Services, published a Request for Proposals (RFP) on March 22, 2023. The purpose of the RFP is to establish the retainer agreement contracts with commercial entities and grants to regional planning commissions (RPCs), or other interested non-profit or statutorily created entities, to provide technical assistance to eligible municipalities with a minimum administrative burden. The RFP was closed with responses due by May 31, 2023. The Agency has received and evaluated bids from multiple not-for-profit and for-profit entities and is establishing contracts on an ongoing basis.

The Agency finalized the consolidated grant agreement with the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) serving as the primary grantee, with other similarly established regional commissions and the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) operating as subgrantees. Monthly reports will be submitted to the Agency by the regional planning commissions to optimize Agency oversight and administer the program.

Outreach efforts were initiated during the reporting period, with RPCs contacting and holding discussions with 15 of the identified 61 prequalified municipalities by May 31, 2023. RPCs additionally submitted outreach plans reviewed by the Agency to contact the remaining prequalified municipalities by June 30th.

Further planned outreach includes development of program materials to be distributed to municipalities for use and discussion in Selectboard meetings, hosting a webinar for prequalified municipalities to provide a forum to ask questions, and maintaining a shared record detailing communications with municipalities.

July and August will be primarily focused on scoping out the needs of the prequalified towns and actively confirming with Selectboards whether or not their town will be participating in the program. Program expansion beyond the prequalified group is expected to occur in September and October.

The Municipal Technical Assistance webpage ([Municipal Technical Assistance | Department of Finance and Management \(vermont.gov\)](http://www.vermont.gov/municipal-technical-assistance)) continues to serve its intended outreach and coordination purposes. All reports, instructions, and other relevant documents are available on this site. Municipalities that are not prequalified may request evaluation of a project or request by completing the “Municipal Assistance Request” found on the webpage. The Agency has received no inquiries from municipalities that are not prequalified, but has not broadly solicited assistance requests, and intends to do so when the program is expanded.

There has already been interest expressed in joint projects between municipalities, some of which are between high needs index and low needs index municipalities. The Agency welcomes this coordination and collaboration between communities and to encourage it will consider joint proposals between municipalities to be prioritized at the level of the higher needs indexed community.

Summary

Progress remains consistent with expectations established for program implementation during the legislative session. This has only been possible due to the exceptional partnership and proactive approach of the regional planning commissions and VLCT, with TRORC performing the heavy lift of balancing centralized coordination with the local knowledge and relationships. The third report in this series will include details on how many towns are participating in the program, how much of the funding has been dedicated, and the nature of the projects being supported.

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