



**STATE INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY
SERVICES DIVISION**

Department of Administration

John Lewis, Director

Tim Bottenfield, State Chief Information Officer

August 7, 2020

Montana Legislature

Legislative Finance Committee – Education Subcommittee

State Capitol

PO Box 201706

Helena, MT 59620-1706

Re: Use of 9-1-1 State Special Revenue to fund digital library services of the Montana State Library

Dear Chairperson Bedey and Members of the Legislative Finance Committee – Education Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment regarding the proposed use of 9-1-1 State Special Revenue as a source of funding for digital library services related to next generation 9-1-1 services. Authorizing the Montana State Library (MSL) to be an allowable recipient of 9-1-1 state special revenue (9-1-1 SSR) will reduce the amount of funding available for local and tribal governments that operate public safety answering points (PSAP) and deliver 9-1-1 services. In addition, the proposal would reduce grant funding available for private telecommunication providers and local and tribal governments for 9-1-1 systems, equipment, devices, and data.

Current 9-1-1 law (Title 10, chapter 4, MCA) does not include funding specifically for next generation 9-1-1 (NG 9-1-1). 75% of 9-1-1 SSR is directed for 9-1-1 services, which include the operational costs of hosting a PSAP by a local or tribal government and delivering 9-1-1 services. Historically 9-1-1 SSR only covers approximately 30% of the annual costs of hosting a PSAP and providing 9-1-1 services. 70% of the costs are covered by local funding. 25% of 9-1-1 SSR is directed to fund grants to private telecommunications providers and local government entities that host public safety answering points for 9-1-1 systems, equipment, devices, and data.

The legislature authorized the grant program in state fiscal year (SFY) 2019. In SFY 2019 and 2020, the department awarded approximately \$10M in grant funding to local governments and private telecommunications providers. Applications for funding greatly exceeded funding available in both years. In both cycles, tribes were not eligible to participate in the grant program. If, as anticipated, the Legislature passes a proposed cleanup bill to permanently authorize tribal governments to be eligible recipients of 9-1-1 grant funding, the demands for funding will increase. Further, although they are eligible to receive funding, the largest telecommunications providers in Montana (Verizon, AT&T and CenturyLink) have not previously requested 9-1-1 grant funding. Thus, demand for grant dollars will continue to greatly exceed the amount of 9-1-1 SSR available in the future.

It should be noted that current law does not include a NG 9-1-1 account or NG 9-1-1 grant program. The sections of the code corresponding to NG 9-1-1 (10-4-308 and 10-4-309, MCA) terminated on October 1, 2019. 9-1-1 stakeholders need to collaborate in developing a legislative proposal to fund NG 9-1-1 in future legislative sessions.

Directing 9-1-1 SSR to MSL will reduce the limited funding available to private telecommunication providers and local and tribal governments for 9-1-1 services and systems. SITSD does consider a collaborative, cost effective, statewide approach to assessing and advancing GIS data to support the future of 911 in Montana a positive



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impact of a possible minimal redistribution of funds. Should the Subcommittee have questions regarding our conclusion, we would be happy to provide further explanation. As always, I appreciate your interest in 9-1-1 matters.

Sincerely,

Tim Bottenfield

State Chief Information Officer