

Financial Assistance Review Committee (FARC)
Quarterly Meeting
Embassy Suites - Richmond
Glen Allen, Virginia
February 1, 2024
10:00 AM

Members Present:	Members Absent:	Administration Staff:	Staff/Other Guests:
Kevin Dillard, Chairman		Michael Berg	Scott Winston
JC Bolling, Vice Chair		Linwood Pulling	Ron Passmore
Mark Barenklau			Frank Gresh
Tracy Hanger			Michelle Ludeman
Joe Trigg			Billy Altman
Robert Trimmer			Janet Blankenship
			Steve Simon
			Melissa Meador

Topic/Subject	Discussion	Recommendations, Action/Follow-up; Responsible Person
I. Call to order - Kevin Dillard, Chair	Kevin called the meeting to order and thanked all for attending today.	No further action is required
i. Chairman's Report	At our meeting in November, lunch wasn't provided due to the budget crunch. Lunch will be available for everybody today which is good news. We talked about the Spring 2024 grant cycle. OEMS sent out a notice to all the agencies letting them know the Spring 2024 grant cycle has been cancelled. The money coming in is being used for Four-For-Life funds and will go towards the grants that we've already approved but haven't been drawn down yet. We're envisioning that we should have enough money after not having this grant cycle to hopefully be back on track for the Fall grant cycle. The Fall 2023 grant cycle was not awarded either. Mike sent out a letter to the agencies that had applied letting them know that their grants were not awarded. The letter didn't make a	No further action is required

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	<p>lot of sense to some of the people that received it so Mike is working with Marion and others to see what we can do to fine tune the wording in the future should we have a special circumstance. Mike said it was the first time in the history of the grant program that we could not award those grants. We didn't even think about not awarding grants as part of this process, so we'll be working on that.</p> <p>Mike said that with the various reductions that have been going on throughout the Office, he wanted to make us aware that the number of IT personnel available to us has been dramatically reduced. Having anything changed in short order, other than an immediate fix that's urgent and emergency in nature, it's going to be a bit of a challenge.</p> <p>Kevin said that he and Joe will be rotating off FARC after our meeting in May. The next two Regional EMS Councils in the rotation are the Northern Virginia EMS Council and the Tidewater EMS Council. Mike met with the Executive Director's Group yesterday and let them know. This will allow them time to begin searching for someone to represent their council on FARC.</p> <p>We will need to elect a chair and vice chair at our meeting in May. Kevin said if anyone is interested in either position to let him know.</p>	
II. Quorum Verification	A quorum requires that you have at least four members present. All six members are present, and Kevin thanked them for that.	No further action is required
III. Approval of Minutes	The November 16, 2023, meeting minutes were approved as submitted.	No further action is required
IV. OEMS Report i. Executive Leadership	<p>VDH has brought on board the contractor Fitch and Associates. They've been working with OEMS the past four weeks. They will be here for six months. Frank Gresh, who is with Fitch and Associates, has been around this morning in different meetings. He'll be making his rounds trying to get his finger on the pulse and figure out what's going on. There are other members of the team that come in every other week or so to add additional support and offer their expertise as we are moving through transitioning to the new era. Their goal is to be able to share with VDH some best practices with regards to EMS in the future and how Virginia can be moving forward. They will be making recommendations on how we handle and address some of the fiscal issues and challenges.</p>	<p>No further action is required</p>
ii. OEMS Division Directors (present)	<p>Frank Gresh came into our meeting and Mike asked him to introduce himself and say a few words. Frank said he was a Senior Consultant with Fitch & Associates. He is working with OEMS to work through some best practices, processes, procedures, and policies. Frank said he has gotten to know some of us and looks forward to knowing the rest of us. He thanked us for letting him join our meeting and said he was glad to be here.</p> <p>Ron Passmore, Regulation and Compliance Manager, said one of the most dynamic changes that we're making in our process in the Division when it comes to inspections, is we're no</p>	<p>No further action is required</p>

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<p>iii. Grants Division Report</p> <p>I. Alberta VFD</p> <p>II. Dante VRS</p>	<p>longer going to be inspecting vehicles when we do agency re-licensure inspections. We are just doing 100% spot inspections. Ron said he's been out at 10:00 o'clock at night and at midnight in ER's checking trucks. You get a better view of what the trucks really look like when you see them in action. We are still working but are short one (field rep). Jimmy and Ron have announced their retirement this year, and there's no immediate approval to replace them. That will make five in the field instead of eight. We just don't have the manpower.</p> <p>Mike said we are looking at the verification of the grants. He had spoken with Ron and said that Linwood and himself would potentially work with the agencies and verify the grants. We have the technology, and it doesn't necessarily require travel. It would take a huge load off the field reps.</p> <p>On November 28th, Mike was able to travel to Alberta Volunteer Fire Department and view the new ambulance they received through RSAF. It's more technology than they're use to, but they were excited to have a dependable ambulance. It's a beautiful ambulance and is now in service. Mike sent pictures to the committee.</p> <p>Dante Rescue Squad received the new Dodge ambulance that we had. There has been challenges with the striping that was done by their vendor. The radio frequencies they sent us were not the right ones. This has been corrected along with the striping issues. The ambulance is ready to go, and they are also excited to have this unit in service.</p> <p>Mike has been creating spreadsheets to show where we are currently with the grants and how much we have encumbered in grants. Covid was not kind to anybody and as a result, supply chain issues have caused us to extend the grants up to three years. The regulations only allow for one year, but VDH senior leadership understood administratively, we haven't been putting extensions to three years. We're not sure how long we can keep extending these grants, but we can't keep kicking the can down the road. Mike created a spreadsheet based on the grant cycles and they are color coded. Mike will keep updating this spreadsheet as the grants are pulled down and paid. We started out with eight million in encumbered grants and are down to less than 4 million in encumbered grants. We are slowly but surely making progress. The grants unit has had trouble reaching a couple of the agencies that were awarded EMD grants. Amber Woods, with Special Operations, is reaching out to these agencies to help us finalize their grants.</p>	<p>No further action is required</p> <p>No further action is required</p> <p>No further action is required</p>
<p>V. Unfinished Business</p> <p>i. Hardship Grant Formula Discussion</p>	<p>Kevin told the committee that currently hardship funding is 80/20. We've had discussions about moving it to 75/25 or 70/30. He made a recommendation to move hardship funding to the 70/30 funding level. He then opened it up for discussion.</p> <p>Robert said that as soon as they click on hardship request, it puts it in a separate queue to be scored as it was submitted into hardship. You should only have two choices. Approve it as a</p>	<p>No further action is required</p>

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<p>I. Recommendation On Percentage (70/30)</p>	<p>hardship or deny it as a hardship. If you put in for a hardship, you're going to have to paint that picture to get a hardship. Sometimes, the grantee feels that if I put in for hardship and don't get it, I'll get funded at the 50/50 funding level. That's not what they should be doing.</p> <p>Kevin agreed with Robert and said there are two parts to this. The first part is the percentage. He asked the committee if they wanted to keep the 80/20 hardship funding level or change it to the 70/30 hardship funding level. If we change it to 70/30, we have more money to spread around.</p> <p>Billy said he thought 70/30 is appropriate because then the request has more skin in the game. They're going to have to commit a little more money, but is this something we need or just something we want?</p> <p>Mike reminded FARC that the regulations say the FARC can determine what that amount is. It also states that 100% funding should be for only rare and exceptional cases. We've seen an increase in the number of 100% requests. They will put in for 100% funding hoping to get at least the 80/20 funding level.</p> <p>Mark said it's probably our fault because that's the way we have been doing it.</p> <p>Tracy said she didn't see that many 100% requests from the rescue squads. Most of them were for law enforcement and dispatch centers when the EMD was a priority. They don't have an EMS budget.</p> <p>Robert said that agencies were asking for 100% funding to replace an ambulance that had been wrecked. He had a lot of discussions with Billy about that. What are they doing with the insurance money? You don't need 100% funding. You need to make up the difference between your insurance payment and the replacement of the unit.</p> <p>Melissa asked is there black and white criteria for asking for 100% funding, 80/20 funding or whatever? She said she had never seen criteria about it. We take into consideration things like operating budgets and the County and locality tax base revenue. Are we looking at any of that or are we taking their word for what they're asking for?</p> <p>Kevin said no, we look into all of that.</p> <p>Mike told FARC we made a modification to the grant application that is in place that would have been used this cycle. The applicants must provide us with one of three documents. These documents are their most recent Federal tax return, their most recent audit, or their most</p>	<p>No further action is required</p>

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<p>II. Recommendation on grading grants as presented</p>	<p>recent profit and loss statement. This requirement has been pushed to the Fall 2024 grant cycle. We do look at all the financial data. That can now be verified by these documents.</p> <p>Steve said when the councils are reviewing it at the local level, the reason why you see most EMS agencies asking for either 80/20 or 50/50 funding is because we communicated with them and say don't apply for 100%. With law enforcement agencies, a lot of times it's too late because the application has already been submitted.</p> <p>Kevin asked FARC if they wanted to leave the hardship funding at the 80/20 level or proceed with moving it to the 70/30 level. Mark made a motion to move it to the 70/30 funding level for hardship. JC seconded it. The motion carried unanimously.</p> <p>Along with changing the hardship funding level, FARC has been discussing if an agency puts in for hardship funding, should we grade it at the hardship level and not change the funding level? In times past, we have changed the funding level to 50/50 if we didn't think the grant needed hardship funding. Kevin told the committee this proposal would mean if they put in for hardship, it stays at hardship and it does not get moved to the 50/50 funding level.</p> <p>Robert said tinkering with the percentage requested encourages people to ask for 100% hoping to get an 80/20. The grant should be graded according to the percentage of what they asked for. Kevin asked if he would like to put that in the form of a motion? Robert made a motion that we grade grants as presented and do not change funding percentages on them. JC seconded the motion.</p> <p>Mike told the committee there may be extenuating circumstances where you may want to make an exception to this rule. By the time you keep making exceptions, you have liquidated the entire process. This is a word of caution and for consideration.</p> <p>Kevin asked if there was any more discussion on this? There wasn't and the committee unanimously approved the motion.</p> <p>Mike reminded the committee this will take programming changes. We are very limited to IT support and this change may take some time to materialize. We are having to categorize our IT priorities for the various Divisions. Due to our limitations with our IT personnel, it may not get changed in time for the fall cycle. As IT is available to make those changes, we will make it happen.</p> <p>Kevin welcomed Scott to our meeting and asked him if he had anything to say. Scott said he had been down at the General Assembly this morning. There are a number of bills that have been introduced relating to contracting, recruitment, career fatigue, burnout, mental health,</p>	<p>No further action is required</p>

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	<p>collective bargaining, professional development and training. Unfortunately, a lot of these bills have been carried over to the 2025 session of the General Assembly. They felt that there's just too many studies going on and essentially just kicked the can down the road a little bit further until next year. OEMS recently reported a 33-plus million deficit. There are some budget amendments to help increase funding for EMS. Currently, we transfer twelve and a half million dollars to the general fund every year from collections from motor vehicle registrations. The Governor has proposed in his budget that we be exempt from that transfer for the next two years. This would help OEMS pay back our debts and help balance our budget.</p> <p>Mike told the committee that we had talked about requiring the local jurisdictions to sign off on the grants. He spoke with our new Attorney General liaison, Adam Hayden. Mr. Hayden said the way that the grants are written, and the way the regulations are written, we cannot legally compel the local jurisdictions to sign those grants. Mike asked the committee what direction they wanted to go in knowing we cannot enforce this. There was a lot of discussion, from the committee and the meeting attendees, about not being able to enforce the grantees to get the local jurisdictions to sign off. The consensus was that we would recommend, not require, them to work with their local government.</p>	
ii. Future FARC site visits - update	<p>We had planned to go to the Lord Fairfax EMS Council area for a FARC site visit in the spring but we had to put that off. Kevin asked Mike if there were any updates on future visits? Mike said he didn't think travel was going to be high on the agenda until we get a much firmer grasp on our finances. We are working diligently on making sure the ground is solid before we start making obligations elsewhere. The bottom line is, we're going to have to put a pause on that until things settle down a little bit more.</p>	No further action is required
iii. RSAF Policies and Procedures	<p>We have been updating our RSAF Policies and Procedures. Each member of the committee received a copy. Kevin asked the committee if anyone has any other changes or additions or corrections they would like to make? Several of the committee members had questions they wanted clarified. Mark made a motion that we approve it as submitted. Robert seconded the motion. It was approved unanimously.</p>	No further action is required
iv. Vehicles per locality discussion	<p>We had a discussion at our last meeting about vehicles per locality and asked the Transportation Committee to address it. Kevin asked if anyone had an update?</p> <p>Robert, who is also on the Transportation Committee, said it wasn't really recommended that we move forward with that because of the availability of some of those. A lot of agencies have vehicles that are twelve or fifteen years old but they're unusable ambulances. They are not serving the needs out there. We should start looking at the ambulances that are available. The agencies that own the unusable ambulances, could give them to the locality to use. As long as</p>	No further action is required

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<p>v. Adding Inventory listing on E-GIFT application</p> <p>vi. Other</p>	<p>they belong to the agency, it's going to hurt the agency requesting a vehicle because its showing there are units out there, but they don't have access to them. JC said he agreed one hundred percent with Robert. He said we can't say they have fourteen ambulances in this county, so they don't need another one. That's only one piece of information and by itself doesn't mean anything. You must collaborate that with all the other pieces of information. If we start incorporating the requirement of transport units within the locality and have some type of algorithm that says if they have X number population, this is the maximum units, then I think we're defeating the purpose. This becomes useless and even detrimental. However, if we include that information with the understanding that by itself it means absolutely nothing, one thing it will do is paint a better picture of what we are grading. If we require it, we should require it as just an additional piece of information and not place any algorithm or any weight as the final determination.</p> <p>Mike said his assessment after a good discussion with the Transportation Committee was there was too many constraints, too many variables to come up with a reasonable algorithm to be consistently applied to the grant application. FARC doesn't have access to look at the database of the number of ambulances.</p> <p>Kevin said, okay. Maybe, we can look into that further and revisit.</p> <p>At our November 16, 2023, meeting, Joe requested the addition of an inventory listing be added to the required items when you are requesting those type of things. Tracy said her concern was to make sure we're comparing apples to apples. If someone has a LifePak 15 for example and it's past the replacement date or isn't functioning, we somehow have to capture that information as well. Mike's thought process was they need to identify the item and even date of purchase and the age of the item. Mike stated this was on the list of desirables for IT. It should be just adding some wording to the application. We just don't know when that will happen.</p> <p>There wasn't any other unfinished business.</p>	<p>No further action is required</p> <p>No further action is required</p>
<p>VI. New Business</p> <p>i. Consultation regarding exemption request</p>	<p>Kevin told the committee that we had received an exemption request from a volunteer agency seeking an exemption from the RSAF restriction on submitting grant requests for preordered ambulances. Mike said this agency had previously had the unfortunate experience where they put in a well written grant, but the financial officer was out of the country at the time. She came back in the country the day after the deadline, so that grant was not processed. The reason they are requesting this exemption is because of the longevity of getting a chassis and wanting to secure a price, a signed contract today, and that price hold in place until the truck arrives.</p> <p>Kevin said that Ron is here to help us with this discussion.</p>	<p>No further action is required</p>

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	<p>Ron told FARC a variance and an exemption are two completely different things. A variance can only be good for one year maximum. An exemption can be indefinite, or it can have an expiration date if we choose to expire it. Any exemption request from an EMS agency first must be approved by the committee and the GAB committee for support. They are the subject matter experts. The exemption requires local government approval. Ron said he can't grant an exemption to an agency that a local government does not grant first. It then goes all the way to the Commissioner. Ron cautioned FARC there is a silent audience watching, and there are people with their pens ready to get in line. It depends on how this goes as to how many more of these you're going to process. It's up to FARC.</p> <p>JC said that once we approve something like this, then we must approve it for everybody going forward. There is no going back. It opens up a whole Rubik's cube of where do we go from here?</p> <p>Joe said we are on a very slippery slope. If we authorize this exemption, we're basically taking the policies and procedures this Committee has stood on, and this program stood on for many years and throwing them out the window. By saying you can sign a contract and then apply for a grant, that's very concerning to me.</p> <p>Mark said, all of a sudden, we're thinking about changing the rules. If you've already signed a contract, then you don't need a grant, because you're going to pay for it either way. If you're willing to sign a contract, and then apply for a grant, you're actually saying by definition, we'd like to have the grant, but were going to figure out how to pay for it either way.</p> <p>Tracy said she was worried about the supplanting of funds. She was going through the Code of Virginia for a definition of supplanting. This agency was signing a contract, which indicated they had the funding in order to purchase it. As a governmental agency, we must have that funding to be able to sign a contract.</p> <p>Robert said his agency ran into a similar situation. They were dealing with a particular vendor and every week the price went up if you didn't have an order in. So, part of this issue may well be the vendor. Some of the grantees are not willing to look at another vendor or manufacturer for availability of a unit. They should be looking at other options. If we approve this exemption request, we're going to be opening a can of worms.</p> <p>Kevin said we've had a lot of good discussion on this. He asked FARC if they wanted to support the exemption request or not support this request.</p>	

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ii. Spring 2024 Grant Cycle	<p>Mark made a motion that we do not support this request. Joe seconded it. The motion carried unanimously.</p> <p>The 2024 Spring RSAF grant cycle has been cancelled.</p>	No further action is required
iii. Orientation for Regional Councils and Technical Reviewers	<p>Mike sent this out electronically and hopefully everyone was able to digest this slowly but surely. Luke had already done this, and Mike went through this document and tried to update it. Mike talked with the regional councils yesterday about being able to work with the various councils and their reviewers and then the technical reviewer groups to try to be able to have standardization with the information that's being reviewed. Mike said one of the concerns is some of the information that comes back from various technical reviewers, be it council or in-house is "this is a good agency". That's not objective criteria and doesn't qualify. This is an effort to do initial training for some and refresher training for others. We need to have more consistency in our review process and grading.</p> <p>JC asked if there will be a new application or new format that they can take?</p> <p>Mike said the application will be the same with a few modifications.</p> <p>JC asked that a blank application be part of the presentation that not only highlights where the areas of change are but suggestions as far as areas that need to make sure they are completed.</p>	No further action is required
iv. Vendor Requests for Grant Apps	<p>OEMS received a request from a vendor asking for all applications that applied for a specific item. The Code of Virginia doesn't address this. It hasn't been requested in the past so this is new territory for us. When Mike talked to the vendor, their rationale was they wanted to reach out to the applicants because their company had some new funding opportunities for organizations seeking that particular product. There were many questions and comments from the committee. Do they want all the applications? Is this a FOIA request? Not currently. Can we charge for a FOIA request and how much? In the past, we have been advised to not charge for a FOIA request. If it becomes a FOIA request, it needs to go through the State government process. If we allow this, there's a lot of man hours involved at the regional and state level. This is another slippery slope. Everybody that puts in a grant is going to get contacted by this company. It will open the door to all vendors asking for all applications that pertain to their product. Do we want to release these grants to a vendor. That's why we stopped allowing the vendors to come to our meetings. They were contacting the grantees before the grant was even awarded. The applicants haven't been notified that there is a potential of this happening. This would be like selling their information.</p>	No further action is required

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<p>v. General Assembly 2024 Activities</p>	<p>Kevin said we can certainly establish a policy not to provide that and if somebody decides to take it to a different level, that's out of our wheelhouse. He asked the committee if they want to make that a policy and not provide that information. JC made a motion to make it a policy not to provide the vendors with the applications. Mark seconded it. The motion carried unanimously.</p> <p>Scott has already given us a bunch of updates. Kevin asked about House Bill 492. This bill directs Virginia Department of Fire Programs and EMS and General Services to develop a work group and report back by October 1st. Scott said this was one of the bills that has been carried over to the 2025 session of the General Assembly.</p> <p>Mike asked Scott about Senate Bill 648 which is to establish the Fire and Emergency Medical Services Grant Fund. This bill is to increase the number of firefighters and EMS personnel, ensuring communities meet industry minimum standards and achieve 24-hour staffing for adequate assistance and to purchase heavy apparatus necessary for fire and EMS. It would also increase the vehicle registration fee used to support EMS from \$4.25 to \$6.25 for each motor vehicle. Scott said that bill was carried over.</p> <p>Scott told the committee about House Bill 3010 - Search and Rescue Dog Protection Act. The bill is to ensure that search and rescue dogs are treated in the same manner as service animals during federally declared major disasters or emergencies. When a disaster or emergency is declared, these specially trained dogs would receive the same considerations and protections as seeing-eye-dogs. Scott said it looks like it's going to pass.</p> <p>Tracy said there was an interesting twist to this as well. Many schools are now hiring private contractors to provide dogs in the schools. They run canines through the school to check for weapons, drugs or whatever. She asked if those dogs would also be considered for coverage because those are dogs that the localities deal with every day?</p> <p>Mike said the specific language in the bill says fire, police, and search and rescue dogs injured in the line of duty. Generally speaking, if those animals are specially trained and they have a handler, anyone that meets that criteria I think would be eligible.</p>	<p>No further action is required</p>
<p>vi. Other</p>	<p>Robert said he had two items he wanted to bring up. Item 1: He said that twice in our meeting today there was a reference made about the State ambulance contract. The Transportation Committee had discussed whether or not we wanted to establish it, what's the history of the agencies purchasing off of the State contract, and the ones that are purchasing off contracts are using ones that are established conglomerate contracts that are already out there. Years ago, when we had a State ambulance contract. Most of the grantees didn't buy off the State contract. It's a lot of work for the State to establish an ambulance contract. There are</p>	<p>No further action is required</p>

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	<p>multiple types of units that you have would have to be included such as Type 1, Type 2, and Type 3 ambulances. Is it worth the effort to do that again? Item 2: The Board of Pharmacy issues that are going to come up. The whole pharmacy regulations have changed. Mark said every other salesman on the planet that sells some device has contacted him and its only been a week. It goes back to should we be providing the vendors with grants that asked for specific items they may sell. It will open a can of worms that we may not be able to close. Kevin said that would be a good agenda item for our next meeting to discuss this further.</p> <p>Mike said he received a call last week from Chief Baldwin with regards to how many calls were being run by the Fire Service. He was given a number and Mike told him that wasn't right. Mike talked to our epidemiology folks and they said the total EMS calls by organization type from July '21 through July '23 was three million, four hundred and sixty-two thousand, five hundred and ninety-seven. The percentages are as follows. Fire-based only, it was 56.2 percent, hospital-based 1.9 percent, private non-hospital was 20.6 percent. This information is provided to our office through their patient care reporting.</p>	
VII. Proposed Meeting Dates	May 2, 2024; August 1, 2024; November 14, 2024; December 5, 2024 (Grading Closed) Location TBD	No further action is required
VIII. Adjournment	Meeting adjourned at 10:40 a.m.	No further action is required