REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE GRANT – FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2020 SUPPLEMENTAL

SCOPE OF WORK FOR July 1, 2020 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2021

This document is intended to be the guidance to assist Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) in drafting their EMPG 2020 Supplemental funding applications and scopes of work. Detailed descriptions of the work elements identified below, and staff hours required will be required for applications to be considered complete. **Incomplete applications or applications requiring additional information will be returned for clarification.**

Each RPC applying under EMPG 2020 Supplemental will be required to perform the work elements outlined below. To receive reimbursement of the tasks accomplished, RPCs must follow the [**Reporting Requirements**](#Reporting) outlined under each work element. It is acceptable to work with other RPCs to divide workload effectively; you do not have to only evaluate sites within your region. Each site assessment will have a maximum of $50 for [existing sites identified here](https://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/public-wifi-hotspots-vermont), and up to $100 to assess and evaluate potential new sites to be considered.

# Preparedness:

1. **Public Wi-Fi Broadband Project (Project Deadline: September 30, 2020)**

In response to remote work, education, health care, and other needs prompted by the COVID-19 response and pandemic state of emergency, the Vermont Public Service Department (PSD) asked municipalities, schools, libraries and other public entities to voluntarily identify locations with free public Wi-Fi access to the internet that could be available inside cars parked outside of buildings. While the sites are numerous, the actual ability to receive a strong and reliable signal outside the building varies greatly. Through this project, the state’s regional planning commissions would:

* Confirm the availability, strength, and ease of login associated with each of these self-identified sites.
* Identify which sites would collectively provide as much coverage and accessibility as possible to the whole community. This may be up to five sites per town.
* Contact the managers of those facilities to assist PSD with the distribution and installation of hardware, primarily WiFi extenders, that will propagate a strong signal to cars parked outside buildings that are host to the internet access.

The goal is to provide full digital access rapidly for all Vermonters. Due to the nature of the current public health emergency and the significant potential for continued need to maintain social/physical distancing, this is a time-sensitive endeavor. Making use of existing free public internet WiFi connections, the signal would be extended well beyond building walls into parking areas using *available* WiFi extenders that produce a *strong signal, are* *reliable, easy to install, and affordable*. While robust exterior-mounted extenders would be preferable, those installed inside buildings but in windows facing the parking lot or street should suffice for most of these sites.

Each RPC shall:

1. RPCs assess the situation on the ground in terms of functionality of existing public hot spots (signal strength, speed, coverage, ease of login, accessibility, if they are open or locked). *The required specifications/details will be provided by PSD to ensure all necessary information collected.* Information will be collected in a central repository on VEM’s SharePoint.
2. RPCs should engage with municipalities (town clerks etc.) to coordinate some of these assessment efforts, especially if it would increase efficiency.
3. Once sites are determined to need signal extenders RPCs may assist PSD to develop a semi-detailed scope and budget (rough locations, kinds and quantity of equipment) and secure permission of building managers. The prioritization of sites will take into consideration items such as project feasibility, cost, and availability of other site in the area. A key consideration is to provide access to communities that do not currently have reliable access to broadband internet.
4. In addition to evaluating existing hotspots, RPCs can assess and try to coordinate additional sites in their region that PSD can support to establish a public Wi-Fi hotspot.
5. PSD will identify funding sources for equipment and coordinate installation.

Reporting Requirements:

1. Provide a summary in each quarterly report of the number of hours expended, number of hotspots assessed, and major tasks accomplished.
2. Provide any feedback to VEM Regional Coordinators regarding municipalities which required additional assistance in order to capture any potential problem areas.
3. Provide Wi-Fi hotspot information using the provided VEM SharePoint document/site, and report pending issues to PSD through the identified communications channels.