**Virginia Board for People with Disabilities**

**Investment Committee Meeting Minutes**

***Jun. 9, 2021***

**Committee Members Present:**

Alexus Smith

Frank Carrillo

Ray Hopkins

Richard Kriner

Dennis Lites

Donna Lockwood

Lindsay Pearse

Chandra Robinson

**Committee Members Absent:**

Olivia Price

Cindy Rudy

Theresa Simonds

**VBPD Staff Present:**

Jason Withers

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The Chair, Ms. Alexus Smith, called the meeting to order at 10:51 am. Following the call to order, the Chair reviewed the Agenda.

**APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES:** Ms. Smith asked if there were any changes to the March 2021 Meeting minutes. Mr. Frank Carrillo made a **MOTION** to **APPROVE** the minutes. The **MOTION** was seconded by Ms. Lindsay Pearse. The **MOTION** carried.

**GRANTS AND CONTRACTS EXPENDITURES/MONITORING:**

Mr. Jason Withers, Grants and Contracts Manager, provided updates on recent activities and expenditures regarding 7 grant projects:

1. The Next Move @ William & Mary project with the College of William & Mary
2. Building Inclusive School Communities project with Radford University.
3. Ensuring Accessibility to All Survivors project with VCU
4. 40 i-Pads for 40 students project with Alternative Paths Training School
5. Technology to Support students with disabilities project with Carroll County Public Schools
6. Virtual Success project with Colonial Beach Public Schools
7. Intensive Support Tech grant project with Richmond City Public Schools

**UPDATE ON PROPOSALS FOR COMPETITIVE RFPs:**

Mr. Withers advised that sixteens LOIs were received, in connection with the Board’s two Competitive Request for Proposals (RFPs). The Grant Review Team (GRT) met to discuss the LOIs and of the sixteen reviewed, the GRT selected ten to submit full proposals. Total requested funds were approximately $1,237,852 (exclusive of match dollars). Available funding this grant cycle was limited to approximately $500,000 due in part to **i)** a delayed start by 12- months of the grant project with VDDHH (due to COVID-19), and **ii)** the request to release an RFP to conduct an information access study assessment. After extensive review, the GRT chose 5 proposals to recommend to the Board for funding that total $487,364. Mr. Withers discussed the details of each of the 5 proposals recommended for funding by the GRT.

**UPDATE ON DATABASE MANAGEMENT PROJECT WITH dLCV:**

Mr. Withers discussed that during the March of 2021 meeting, the Board approved staff to release a solicited Request for Proposal (RFP) to the disAbility Law Center of Virginia, so they could contract with an organization to develop a database that will be used to manage the storage, retrieval and reporting of abuse, neglect and exploitation data provided by the Department for Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS). A completed proposal application was received by staff on April 13, 2021 and approved on April 27th. In addition, staff have worked with the Procurement office at the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) and received the necessary approvals to contract with dLCV. In addition, a signed grant agreement was executed with dLCV on May 13th, which provides funding to dLCV in the amount of $100,000 and a match provided from dLCV in the amount of $33,350. Mr. Withers advised the committee members that through this project, dLCV will receive reports of suspected abuse and neglect of incapacitated persons provided under agreement with the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), Adult Protective Services. This project will further allow the grantee to i) identify trends of abuse, neglect and exploitation, ii) make recommendations to address abuse, neglect and exploitation, and iii) monitor critical incidents and health and safety of individuals with disabilities receiving services in programs operated or licensed by DBHDS.

Mr. Dennis Lites inquired about how the data received by dLCV will be utilized and what insights they will be able to determine from the data. Mr. Withers advised that while all of the data may not be shared with the Board, especially data that may identify specific licensed providers, the data we will be receiving will likely be in statistical format. Mr. Lites stated that he imagines that the trends that are determined from the data would likely result in fewer occurrences of abuse, neglect and exploitation. Mr. Withers agreed and confirmed that the grantee will be providing data to the Board through the active project period as well as for an additional period of 2 years.

**APPROVAL FOR STAFF TO MAKE AN AWARD TO ENTITIES TO COMBAT COVID-19:**

Mr. Withers informed committee members that the Administration for Community Living (ACL) recently notified DD Councils that if requested, funding would be provided to assist with critical services to help communities combat COVID-19. In April of 2021, staff to the Board submitted an official request to ACL to receive the funding that would be made available to the Virginia Council. This funding, provided under the American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”), is designed to break down barriers that would allow for expanding vaccine access in communities. Examples of activities provided from ACL for which these funds may be used include: Education about the importance of receiving a vaccine; Identifying people unable to independently travel to a vaccination site; Helping with scheduling a vaccine appointment; Arranging or providing accessible transportation; Providing companion/personal support; Reminding people of the second vaccination appointment if needed, and/or providing technical assistance to local health departments or other entities on vaccine accessibility. Mr. Withers advised a Notice of Award (NOA) was received by Council in April, with funding provided in the amount of $98,842. The timeframe provided to councils to expend these funds is from April 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022. Staff to the Board are determining how best to utilize these funds and Mr. Withers shared ideas developed by staff to the Board and solicited ideas from the committee.

Mr. Lites inquired if there was any available information on demographics, including disability type, which may indicate where the greatest needs are. Mr. Withers advised that staff had initially focused on transportation challenges that may be preventing individuals with disabilities from receiving the vaccine and discussed staff’s conversations with several Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) to determine if transportation challenges exist. Mr. Withers advised that what staff had heard from CILs is that many folks with disabilities that are hesitant to receive the vaccine and funding allotted to provide transportation to vaccine sites will likely not change their mind to receive the vaccine. Mr. Richard Kriner stated that it would be best to understand where the highest rates for lack of vaccinations exist in the state in order to inform where the greatest needs lie. Ms. Smith proposed working to develop a comic strip of sorts that could be used to deliver clear and concise information to individuals with disabilities about the vaccine so they can make their own informed decisions. Mr. Withers discussed an additional idea staff had to partner with a media production company to receive stories from individuals with disabilities to showcase their experiences with receiving the vaccine.

Mr. Lites inquired if we have available data on the rates of vaccinations for individuals with disabilities as well as any reported deaths of this population that received the vaccine. Mr. Ray Hopkins inquired if there was a repository available that documents the objections that some individuals have to receiving the vaccine. Ms. Teri Morgan discussed staff’s involvement in a number of work groups related to COVID and what we have heard is that disability status data was not collected when individuals registered to receive the vaccine. Further discussion ensued.

Mr. Richard Kriner made a **MOTION** to recommend that the full Board approve the release of an RFP, and/or fund other allowable vaccine access activities, and for staff to make an award to one or more entities, to conduct projects designed to address critical service needs for communities to combat COVID-19. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Ms. Donna Lockwood. The **MOTION** carried unanimously.

**APPROVAL TO RELEASE RFP TO CONDUCT INFORMATION ACCESS STUDY ASSESSMENT:**

Mr. Withers discussed that one of the assessment recommendations that the Board discussed during the previous ad-hoc committee meeting was the need to assess the availability of information on DD services and supports and how that information is accessed, including: 1) how individuals with disabilities and families learn about and access needed information, 2) barriers to accessing and using needed information, 2) actionable recommendations and strategies to improve information access in Virginia, including recommendations for further research. Mr. Withers advised funding for this RFP is estimated to be $100,000. Mr. Kriner asked how this type of requested information compares to similar efforts that may already be in place in Virginia. Ms. Morgan advised that we are not aware of any existing efforts to review this system of services holistically in terms of information access and Teri reiterated that the ad-hoc committee identified information access as one of the biggest issues and a topic that they wanted to see the Board work to improve in Virginia. Further discussion ensued.

Ms. Lindsay Pearse inquired if we have a target audience in mind to receive the RFP. Mr. Withers advised we will aim to distribute the RFP as widely as possible, utilizing our existing channels for dissemination, including our own Board members to let people know once the RFP is posted. Ms. Morgan advised that a solid research entity, such as a university, might apply but reminded the committee that there will be a fairly quick turn around for applications, as the selected grantee will be required to submit final products to the Board by May 2022.

Mr. Frank Carrillo made a **MOTION** to recommend that the full Board approve the release of a Request for Proposal to conduct the information access study assessment. This **MOTION** was **SECONDED** by Ms. Pearse. The **MOTION** carried unanimously.

**WRAP UP AND FUTURE MEETING TOPICS:**

Mr. Withers advised the committee members that he would be reaching out to the full Board to solicit volunteers to serve on a Grant Review Team, to review applications received in response to the information access study assessment RFP.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 12:15 PM.