

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF WISCONSIN

Universal Service Fund Council Meeting

SUMMARY OF SEPTEMBER 20, 2017 MEETING

Meeting Date/Time: September 20, 2017 at 1:30 PM

Place: Public Service Commission Building, 610 N. Whitney Way, Madison, WI
Pecatonica River Conference Room

Attendees:

In person— USFC Members: Jim Jermain, Bob Kellerman, Pam Holmes, Kathy Schmitt. Staff: Jeff Richter

By phone – USFC Members: Scott Bohler, Jim Costello, Brad Dodson, Pamela Hollick, Vanessa Johnson, David Mortimer, Adam Raschka.

Public: Jason Belongy (for Kitty Barry, Independent Living Centers).

Vice Chair Jim Jermain called the meeting to order and requested self-introductions. Jeff Richter clarified that the recording of the meeting was only for purposes of drafting minutes and made some facilities announcements for those attending in person.

Lifeline Update & CALER Database Changes. Jeff Richter covered major changes in the Federal Lifeline program. A major item was the addition of broadband offerings. Another major change was to make uniform federal eligibility requirements and states would have to run a separate state Lifeline program if it wanted to offer expanded eligibility criteria. That required the state to alter its Lifeline verification database and CALER will be updated and in effect 11/4/17. We were able to get updates to LIHEAP and Homestead verifications to assure they were not above be the FCC income cap of 135% of the Federal Poverty Level. All the federal guidelines will be met by the CALER queries starting 11/4 and no separate state program is necessary. The cost estimate for the CALER revisions was \$50,000, however if a duplicate database had to be created for a separate state Lifeline program, the estimate was \$500,000. Only the Federal low-income housing and Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit program eligibility will need to be handled by providers in a process separate from the CALER query. David Mortimer and others expressed kudos for achieving the upgrade within the federal guidelines.

More FCC changes to Lifeline are expected this fall and states hope for the FCC to end federal preemption and return authority to states to certify Broadband Lifeline Providers as Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (ETCs).

Pam Holmes pointed out that the PSC website Lifeline webpage needs updating comparable to the updates done by Pennsylvania to its website. Jeff said that these updates will need to be made after the CALER changes go on-line 11/4.

With passage of the state budget, Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) funding and staffing will be moving from the Department of Administration to the PSC. The TRS Director will also have significant responsibility for TEPP matters. There was also discussion of federal versus state

TRS funding and coverage for IP-based caption telephone service (IP-CTS). The FCC is concerned over the growth of CTS funding and the possibility that there may be waste and fraud involved and would like to move certification of need from CTS providers to the states. The FCC would also like to make states responsible for funding the IP-CTS. States have resisted this move without allocation of monies from the federal TRS funds.

TEPP Update & Outreach Changes: The Independent Living Centers are essential to the mission of the TEPP program. In its 2017 Nonprofit Grant decision this year the Commission moved funding for the ILC services for TEPP to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Health Services – Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources (DHS-BADR) for the services previously procured through the Nonprofit Grants. The budget for that MOU is \$350,000 and is included in the proposed Draft FY 2019 USF Budget.

Jeff presented a review of the FY 2017 budget results and proposed amounts for the draft FY 2018 Budget that was provided prior to the meeting and went through them line-item-by-line-item comparing between the FY 2017 budget results and the same line item in the proposed Draft USF Budget for FY 2018. Council members questioned and discussed the budget information.

USFC voted to recommend to the Commission adoption of the proposed Draft FY 2018 USF totaling \$4,084,200. Moved by Pam Holmes. Seconded by Scott Bohler.

The PSC is no longer the lead agency for the National Deaf Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP). DHS became the lead agency starting 7/1/2017. The PSC's last request for reimbursement of expenses (for the last half of FY 2017) has been submitted to the FCC.

There will be one more USFC meeting yet this calendar year, however the Low-Income Subcommittee and TEPP Advisory Committee may meet before then.

There is need for a new chair for the Low-Income Subcommittee. Suggestions for nominations or offers to volunteer should be sent to the Chair or Jeff Richter.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 PM.