

2009 Annual Awards Program

Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

Deadline for Nominations: March 13, 2009

Complete this form (sections 1 and 2) and submit with your descriptive narrative.

SECTION 1: Information About the Nominated Program

Program Excellence Award Category (*select only one*):

- Community Health and Safety
- Community Partnership
- Community Sustainability
- Strategic Leadership and Governance

Name of program being nominated: 9-1-1/Emergency Dispatch Collaboration - Saving Lives and Saving Money.

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: Dakota County, Minnesota

Jurisdiction population(s): 400,000

Please indicate the month and year in which the program you are nominating was fully implemented. (Note: All Program Excellence Award nominations must have been fully implemented by or before January 31, 2008, to be eligible. The start date should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: December Year: 2007

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in Montréal, Québec, Canada, September 2009. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: Tom Lawell

Title: Administrator Jurisdiction: City of Apple Valley

Name: Craig Ebeling

Title: Manager Jurisdiction: City of Burnsville

Name: Brandt Richardson

Title: Administrator Jurisdiction: County of Dakota

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: Dave Osberg

Title: Administrator Jurisdiction: City of Hastings

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City: Hastings State/Province: Minnesota

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Additional Name and Titles of individuals who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, September 2009.

Name: Tom Hedges
Title: Administrator
Jurisdiction: City of Eagan, MN

Name: Peter J. Herlofsky, Jr.
Title: Administrator
Jurisdiction: City of Farmington, MN

Name: Dave Osberg
Title: Administrator
Jurisdiction: City of Hastings, MN

Name: Joe Lynch
Title: Administrator
Jurisdiction: City of Inver Grove Heights, MN

Name: Steve Mielke
Title: Administrator
Jurisdiction: City of Lakeville, MN

Name: Jim Danielson
Title: Administrator
Jurisdiction: City of Mendota Heights, MN

Name: Dwight Johnson
Title: Administrator
Jurisdiction: City of Rosemount, MN

Name: Stephen P. King
Title: Administrator
Jurisdiction: City of South St. Paul, MN

Name: John Remkus
Title: Manager
Jurisdiction: City of West St. Paul, MN

Since 1973, unifying dispatch services in Dakota County, Minnesota has been discussed and dismissed several times. Consolidating five public safety answering points (PSAPs) into one centralized dispatch center finally became a reality in 2007 due to a partnership of 12 local governments with the desire to provide efficient services and save taxpayers millions of dollars.

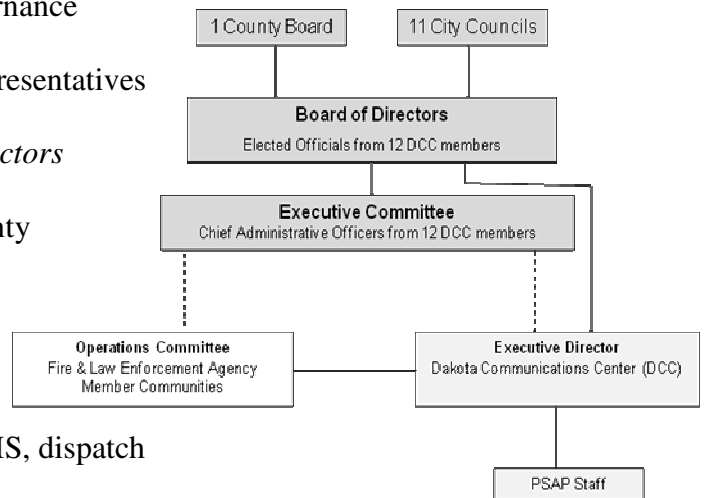
In 2004, Dakota County and the 11 cities (with populations over 10,000) within the County formed the High Performance Partnership (HiPP) program. The purpose of HiPP is to identify and analyze potential collaboration opportunities between the 12 local governments that may result in cost efficiencies and improved services. A citizen forum conducted as a part of the initial HiPP analysis found that 61% of the participants would support shared arrangements among local units of government in providing police services and 75% in providing fire services. The HiPP evaluation determined that the unification of five PSAPS into one, centralized PSAP had the greatest opportunity for both economic and operational efficiencies.

During the same time, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) mandated local governments to convert to narrow band radio systems by 2013, rendering most public safety systems in Dakota County obsolete. The public safety agencies (police, fire, EMS) in Dakota County recommended migration to the Twin Cities metropolitan 800MHz communications system to improve interoperability between each other. The high cost to equip five PSAPs with 800 MHz technology was a potential barrier to the participation of the individual local governments. Preliminary HiPP estimates showed considerable cost savings would be possible by equipping a single PSAP for 800 MHz as opposed to five separate PSAPs.

The need to obtain operational and economic efficiencies, address regulatory factors, increase interoperability between agencies, coupled with the support of the public and the political will to act, led to the establishment of the Dakota Communications Center.

The Dakota Communications Center (DCC) was implemented in unimaginable speed. The DCC organization was officially established with the signing of the Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) in September 2005 by the 12 DCC Members (Dakota County; Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Farmington, Hastings, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville, Mendota Heights, Rosemount, South St. Paul, and West St. Paul). In June 2006, the groundbreaking was held for the state-of-the-art facility, with occupancy in August 2007. The Dakota Communications Center was open for business on December 27, 2007, only two years after the signing of the JPA.

During these two years, the complex governance structure - with three distinct committees with representatives from all 12 Members, including the *Board of Directors* (elected officials - council members, mayors, county commissioners); the *Executive Committee* (city/county administrators/managers); and the *Operations Committee* (law enforcement, fire, EMS, dispatch personnel), was formed to address start up issues. Nearly 120 persons contributed to the development process of the DCC in creating policies, designing the facility, and identifying personnel needs. The governance structure reflects the desire of the DCC Members to retain local decision making in a centralized service.



The design and implementation of the 800MHz communications system by Dakota County occurred simultaneously with construction of the DCC to assure the interoperability of the 27 different public agencies served by the DCC, including 12 Member fire & emergency medical, 12 Member law enforcement, 1 Member owned paramedic service, and 2 non-member fire agencies.

Dakota County donated land and project management services to construct the 25,000 PSAP. The construction costs (\$7.7 million) were financed by a County bond issue, with repayment of bond proceeds through pro-rated lease payments from the DCC Members. Funds from Dakota County and the participating 11 cities (about \$7 million) covered the other equipment requirements.

The consolidation of five PSAPs has significant short-term and long-term operational, capital, and indirect savings for all DCC Members. In 2008 – the first full year of operations – the DCC budget was 1.7% lower than the total 2007 operational budgets for the five former PSAPs, combined. The adopted 2009 operating budget is 4.7% less than the estimated PSAP costs without consolidation. If the construction debt is removed from the operating budget, operating costs are 13.9% lower than without consolidation. While operational cost savings in the early years are partially offset by the construction and equipment debt, a total savings of \$32.8 million is estimated over the first 16 years of operations.

A total savings of \$3.8 million was realized in avoided capital costs with the construction of the DCC in concurrence with the 800 MHz system rather than retrofitting the five original PSAPs to support the infrastructure required for migration to 800 MHz. Several of the five original PSAPS had considerably aged consoles and equipment, which would have required additional, significant capital expense to the 800 MHz expenses.

Indirect savings were also an outcome of centralizing dispatch services. Space occupied by the five former PSAPs is now utilized for other services. One Member was able to construct a new law enforcement center and avoid the cost of adding square footage for a PSAP. In addition, the combination of financial, human resources, and legal services for one PSAP rather than five PSAP has saved tens of thousands of dollars in staff time for all Members.

Operational efficiencies and streamlining processes have resulted because of the DCC. The center dispatches an average of 1030 incidents per 24 hours, with the anticipation to dispatch over 400,000 calls for services per year. This large number of incidents requires consistency in responses. DCC staff and Members developed operational protocols for most incident types, which took a tremendous amount of time to negotiate, considering the many different approaches previously used by the over two dozen agencies served by the DCC.

The quality of dispatching services increased for all 400,000 residents when Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) was implemented as part of the DCC consolidation. EMD provides for an emergency response tailored to the needs of the situation and also provides pre-arrival instruction delivered by the dispatcher to the caller. EMD has significantly reduced the activation of paid-on-call fire services for low level situations.

Additional efficiencies include physical and technical back-up and redundancy; enhanced staff training; dedicated fire dispatch positions; and shared data among all public safety stakeholders. Emergency call processing times (time from answering call to assignment of response resources) improved significantly - 14% for law enforcement and 21% for fire - from pre-consolidation to end of the first DCC year. The ability to quickly shift on-duty dispatch staff to accommodate activity surges and major events has also been an operational efficiency.

A number of barriers were overcome throughout the creation of the DCC including numerous human resource challenges and the acceptance of the organization by all stakeholders. The most challenging lesson of the DCC project was transitioning five human resources services with four unions into one human resources service with one union. The five former PSAPs had different compensation plans, benefits packages, and unions, making it difficult to design one

plan that would satisfy all future DCC employees. In addition, the territorial environment of the five PSAPS made unifying the groups a daunting prospect.

To resolve the human resource challenges, the DCC Board of Directors offered employment to all 62 employees of the five PSAPs effective January 1, 2007, which provided assurance that any downsizing would be done through normal attrition. The facility was not operational until December 2007, allowing the newly appointed DCC employees to transition into working for a new organization for almost a year before stepping into the new facility. Even though the employees sat in five different locations, they were coworkers. This subtle change greatly assisted with the acceptance of a new compensation and benefit package, and with the downsizing from four unions to one. Staffing levels were downsized with five dispatch positions eliminated through normal attrition since the consolidation.

Creation of the DCC meant major changes for people outside the organization as well. New procedures and new relationships impacted police officers, firefighters and elected officials. Regular communications through meetings and the DCC web site was a key factor. A survey is distributed to Member agencies monthly seeking feedback on DCC services. A survey is also mailed to every 200th resident identified as a caller to DCC, asking for customer feedback. Due to these efforts, a higher level of acceptance from stakeholders and residents' appreciation on the quality of services was evident at the end of the first year of service.

Jurisdictional lines for dispatching services have disappeared in Dakota County, Minnesota, as a result of the determined and dedicated partnership between Dakota County and 11 municipalities. The leadership of the elected officials and local government managers successfully developed a consolidated dispatch center that is economically and operationally efficient, a feat others in the same roles had not been able to accomplish in the last 30 years.