



Further Revised Proposal to Provide Strategic Planning Facilitation Services to MERA

- **Project Team Roles:**

CBG – Tom Robinson of CBG Communications, Inc. (CBG) would facilitate the Strategic Planning process for MERA, develop the overall elements of the process (as more fully described below), facilitate meetings of the Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Committee (Committee), compile the findings and develop the written Strategic Plan.

Maureen Cassingham, Executive Officer - would provide administrative and logistical support for the process, and interface with the Committee as needed.

Marin County DPW - would provide technical support throughout the process, provide information on technical operations, system elements, best practices in other jurisdictions, etc., and assist in crafting the technical elements of the Strategic Plan.

- **Process:**

CBG anticipates that the Strategic Planning process will be broken down into the following four (4) phases:

Phase 1: Final Process Design – CBG would meet with the Executive Officer and County DPW, over the phone and/or in person to do a final process design once the Ad Hoc Committee related to Strategic Planning was established, review and evaluate background information, establish a set meeting schedule and concur on critical goals and objectives of the process.

Phase 2: Initial Meeting and Planning Activities with the Ad Hoc Committee – During the initial meeting, CBG would work to familiarize the Committee with the process and discuss baseline issues related to MERA’s organization and operations (i.e., where MERA is now, how MERA got there, where MERA would like to go, etc.). This phase typically involves brainstorming with the Committee, and undergoing a SWOC (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges) analysis. Specifically, the SWOC analysis would look at: organizational issues; network issues such as maintenance, technical services, current limitations, needs and capacity requirements; upgrade strategies; and similar items. Under the Challenges portion of the SWOC analysis, CBG would help the Committee discuss risks, security issues and network vulnerability (such as obsolescence, protection of the network’s physical infrastructure and similar issues), as well as funding and other resources needed to maintain and upgrade the network. This phase involves preparation work, facilitation of the initial meeting, compilation of findings, follow-up, initial analysis and preparation for the next phase.

At the end of this and all the Phases, the Ad Hoc Committee would report on its activities and deliberations to MERA’s Executive Committee.

Phase 3: Findings and Initial Strategic Plan Component Development
- The next phase of the process is to work with the Executive Officer, County DPW and the Committee to discuss initial findings, develop

priorities and establish strategic directions and actions under those directions, including projected timelines and costs. This usually requires the next two meetings (the 2nd and 3rd meetings of the Committee) to discuss the issues, develop proposed directions, actions, timeline and costs, discuss comparisons of the desired future environment with the current operations and system and the best practices of other jurisdictions, and then work through all the material to fine-tune and decide on consensus directions, actions, timelines and costs in order to move forward into the next phase. Activities of the facilitator include preparatory work, facilitation at the meetings, follow-up, analysis and development of the information set to carry forward into the next phase.

Overall, CBG would ensure that the Committee in this phase had worked to:

- Define MERA's boundaries (scope of activity, oversight and involvement, including degree of elasticity)
- Decide on MERA's core Mission (what MERA must do and what it can do that is ancillary and beneficial, considering available resources)
- Concur on a long-term financial plan, including continual support for operations, maintenance and capital expenditures. All work related to financial planning would be reported to and vetted by MERA's Finance Committee before inclusion in the Draft and Final Strategic Plan.
- Adopt a network development strategy and develop a succession plan

Phase 4: Drafting and Finalization of the Strategic Plan – All the information developed during the previous phases will be used to develop the initial draft, written Strategic Plan. Per the Executive Officer Work Plan, the Strategic Plan will be designed to address the future of the

MERA system, its half-life status, user needs and expectations, the state of other similar Emergency Communications systems, emerging technology, resources to enhance and/or replace the system when necessary and what needs to be included in future maintenance agreements.

Typically the Plan is routed in a draft form to all of the Ad Hoc Committee members for their detailed review prior to the 4th meeting of the Committee, which will be to go over in detail all of the elements of the draft plan and seek consensus. If all MERA member agencies aren't represented by the Ad Hoc Committee, then, per the Executive Officer Work Plan, comments can be solicited directly from them as well during this phase.

All of the input from the 4th meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee and MERA agencies will be incorporated into revisions of the draft plan. The revised plan will then be resubmitted to the Ad Hoc Committee for final review and concurrence before it is sent to the MERA Board for review and approval. Often the final review can occur with written comments coming back from the Ad Hoc Committee that are then evaluated by the facilitator, the Executive Officer, and County DPW for potential incorporation into the final plan before it goes to the Board. If there are enough written comments, then a 5th meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee can be scheduled to resolve any conflicts or issues.

After this, the Strategic Plan is presented to the full MERA Board for review and adoption. Sometimes the full Board will need to discuss and deliberate on the plan during one meeting and then seek clarification, additional information, etc. before approving it at a subsequent meeting. Adoption of the plan would complete the initial Strategic Planning process.

More than likely, there will be a recommendation to review and update the plan on a regular basis.

- **Strategic Planning Timeframe:**

The Strategic Planning process will take a minimum of 6 months but no longer than one-year from project inception. The exact timeframe is typically dependent upon the scheduling of meetings with the Committee and the Board and the amount of follow-up work that needs to occur between the meetings. The initial meeting schedule will be developed during Phase 1. If the Project started in September 2009, for example, it is likely that the first Strategic Planning meeting could occur in October 2009.

- **Project Costs:**

The anticipated task hours for each Phase are shown below.

Phase 1 – 10 hours

Phase 2 – 30 hours

Phase 3 – 40 hours

Phase 4 – 40 hours

This equates to a total of 120 task hours over the course of six months to one-year. CBG's hourly rate for facilitation and plan development services is \$175 per hour plus reimbursable expenses (long distance telephone, contract clerical charges, postage, copy and reproduction expenses, FedEx or courier expenses, other similar expenses, and travel such as airfare, hotel, ground transportation, etc.) estimated at 15% of the total

professional services fees. This equates to a projected total CBG project cost of \$24,000.

Revised: 8-31-09

For: MERA Executive Committee Meeting - September 9, 2009