

Information Network of Kansas Board Meeting Minutes

Special INK Board Meeting – via Teleconference Monday, March 23, 2020

Opening

A special meeting of the INK Board was called to order via teleconference at 11:02 a.m. on Monday, March 23, 2020 by Chairman Aaron Kite with the following members present:

Mark Burghart, Secretary of Revenue

Jennifer Cook, representing the Secretary of State

Lucas Goff, representing the Kansas Association of Counties

Gregg Wamsley, representing the Kansas Library Association

Glen Yancey, representing the Executive Branch Chief Executive Technology Officer

Others Present

Duncan Friend, Information Network of Kansas

Regular Agenda

- 1) Governor's grant request for COVID-19 Pandemic Response Public Communications and Supporting Activities (Review / Approval)

Kite open the meeting and asked Friend to address the Governor's office grant request. Friend began by noting that Yancey was also on the call and he could likely provide more details here if questions arose on the call center expansion project that was part of the request.

Friend explained that the grant proposal essentially asked for a pool of funding that the Governor's office can use communication and public information related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Friend directed the members to page 6 where he explained the approval process he had set up for requests that would flow through this pool, noting that it required a specific set of information to be provided, including a description of the applicable initiatives they would seek to fund and an explicit statement of how it fits with INK's statutory mission and how it supports the COVID-19 Pandemic Response. That could be delegated to him or the Board could do that, whatever they wanted.

Kite asked if Friend or Yancey, without having to repeat the grant request, could give the members some idea of what they are wanting to do with the money – and his opinion of whether or not it falls within the statutory directives of the Board. Yancey explained the KDHE COVID-19 Resource Center website and the information provided there about the KDHE COVID-19 Response Line. That response line is currently being staffed using a very simple solution that does not allow them to understand how many people are attempting to call, no way to forecast call volume or anything else. The Governor's office is wanting to contract with Amazon to use a product that enables virtual software automated call direction (ACD) with other capability that would enable bringing people on for support with cell phones that would allow KDHE to staff the 800 number for COVID-19 response in a more organized fashion, understand call volume and understand and predict it so that they can ensure they have enough people on the phones to handle it. They are also working with INK on some potential things such as AI-based chatbot capability, potentially through Microsoft that other states have implemented – like Washington – that lets them interact to answer questions through that means.

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He continued, explaining that the Governor's office is seeking this grant to help fund a quick provisioning of these services to all the Governor's office, KDHE, and other officials to communicate with the public, government agencies, and businesses across and array of technologies to keep them informed about the current situation and steps that need to be taken.

Cook thanked Yancey for his explanation and asked whether it was possible for those needs to be delineated in the grant so that the Board has some knowledge up front about what that money might be used for. And, she also asked whether those projects were anticipated to take the bulk of the \$500,000 amount being requested – is it a number that the Board needs to do right now, or should a portion be done now and a portion later? She wanted to know his thoughts on that.

Glen answered that the only project that is underway is related to standing up the Amazon contact center capability. In their discussions with the Governor's office, they certainly were willing to work with the INK Board however they want to do that. The thought was to put a pool of money out there that could be drawn against, with whatever process the INK Board wanted to put in place. He continued that, to his knowledge, however, the only plan today in terms of cost provisioning was related to the automated call distribution capability.

Cook responded that she thought it would be helpful – and she knew there was a provision in the grant application regarding Friend paying for what is approved – like with any of the Board's grants, as things came up – not necessarily to approve them as a Board – but certainly to have that knowledge of how the money is being spent and how any pool that the Board was being drawn down. Whether that would be at the INK Board meetings, or at special meetings that the Board might have, Cook expressed that she thought it would be helpful for the Board to know. Yancey said it was certainly not the Governor's office's intent to create a blank check to draw against.

Friend briefly recapped the mechanics he'd included in the grant for the information that would be required for individual projects within the grant and offered some options on how it could be modified based on whatever the board wanted in terms of both notification and approval.

Kite confirmed with Yancey that the call distribution capability was the immediate need. Yancey confirmed that. Kite asked if it was anticipated that there would be more projects. Yancey said that INK was also looking into the State of Washington's AI chatbot as that state had made it available to other states.

Friend noted that, if the chatbot came through INK, it may just be a no-charge service like others INK provides. He continued, saying that the Board recently approved a modification to the Master Contract and an agreement with KDHE that approved specific uses of things related to the COVID-19 website, like email messaging. As he understands what's been said so far, this might not be something that would go through the grant if it was delivered through INK as a no charge service, and, since it was likely cloud-based, this may require further amendment of those agreements. Basically, if it did happen, it would not necessarily cost the Board.

Kite then reconfirmed the situation with Amazon and asked for Friend's recommendation. Friend stated that as he saw it, no one knew what might be ahead. The \$500,000 seemed like it could cover the help desk solution for a while and it is not clear what else they may discover is needed. So, if the pool is approved and then the Board invokes the process in the grant to justify each request in terms of COVID-19 response and the Board's statutory mission, they would be prudent and assumedly bring forward the projects they need.

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Friend continued that, if the Board were comfortable, then they would approve the pool and the call distribution solution is the first one that they would OK through the grant. The question would be how these were being approved going forward, say, the next three. As it reads currently, the Governor's office would bring forward the justification and if he (Friend) agreed, then he would just approve and have them move forward and report it after the fact to the Board. Or, he could convene the Board. He noted that they were scheduled to meet again April 2, although it was during the state's shutdown period. He summarized that it was really at the Board's discretion as to whether they wanted to narrowly tailor their approval or not.

Wamsley asked if Kite would make a motion on this matter.

Action Taken: Kite moved to approve the grant request with the following narrowed stipulations: That the Board is authorizing a grant of up to \$500,000 for the purpose of providing funds for the automated call distribution capability that KDHE requires and also for the related artificial intelligence response capability described in the meeting, with the grant funds to be disbursed subject to the Executive Director's determination that the use of the funds falls within the statutory strictures of the INK Board and also authorizing the Executive Director to enter into any necessary paperwork and contracts required for the money to be expended. Second by Wamsley. There was no further discussion. Friend called the roll on a member-by-member basis. The motion was approved unanimously.

Kite added by way of explanation – not part of the motion – that the money would be used for those two purposes only, it would be up to \$500,000 and if anything that would come up outside of the limitations of the motion, they would need to call another meeting. He asked Yancey if this would be satisfactory for now and he responded that it would be.

2) Executive Director temporary delegated payment / contract authority

Friend explained the proposed motions he had distributed. The first was something he had discussed with Gaumer who was in the process of taking on the Treasurer duties as part of being Vice Chair. It would enable the Executive Director to pay for expenses already budgeted without having to seek the Vice Chair's approval, including grants under their approved terms, but excluding payroll. It would have a control that Friend determined the INK auditors were OK with by him providing documentation at the next meeting of the expenses paid. The other motion was to allow him discretion when the Board wasn't meeting to sign Consent Agenda-type no charge contracts and have some discretionary spending authority, given the situation in government right now and the potential issues with the Board being able to convene. It would have a caveat that it would extend only through the next meeting of the Board.

Action Taken: Goff moved to adopt the language in the proposed motions that had been distributed (*see attached for copy*). Seconded by Yancey. There was no further discussion. Friend called the roll to record the vote. The motion was approved unanimously.

3) Other Business (as required) – including discussion of next meeting date of Thursday, April 2.

The members agreed to move the next meeting to Thursday, April. 9 at 10 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.