The Process for Working with FirstNet

State Consultation and Outreach

To make FirstNet a nationwide network, all states must have a radio access network (RAN) that connects to the FirstNet core. By law, FirstNet is responsible for working through the designated state point of contact to consult with states, local communities, tribal governments and first responders to gather requirements for developing its RAN deployment plan. These outreach efforts began in mid-May 2013 with six regional workshops. Ten individuals from each state/territory, including some tribal representatives, participated in an interactive meeting where they provided requirements, priorities and concerns to FirstNet. Now FirstNet is gearing up for individual visits to continue the dialog about our common mission.

State Visits

FirstNet will work through the designated state point of contact to arrange a visit, agree on the agenda and identify participants. Timing will depend on state readiness, the State and Local Implementation Grant Program (SLIGP) Phase 1 award and how quickly FirstNet can staff up its outreach team. The agenda for the initial FirstNet visit will focus on users and coverage needs, leveraging available information from the Department of Homeland Security Office of Emergency Communications. We will also discuss known state assets, expectations for data collection, as well as other state-specific issues. This meeting will pave the way for ongoing collaboration that will culminate in the development of a plan from FirstNet for constructing state RAN.

Tribal Outreach

FirstNet plans to create an education and outreach program to engage tribal members in discussions about the network and their public safety needs. FirstNet will encourage state governors to include tribal nations in the local FirstNet consultation process. In addition, FirstNet plans to hold separate meetings with tribes.

Data Collection

Data gathering, supported by funding from SLIGP Phase 2, will help ensure that the FirstNet state RAN build-out plans meet user needs. FirstNet will preview the components of the data request to help states understand the level of effort so they can adjust their SLIGP budgets accordingly. Data collection will cover the following general areas:

- Architecture of an evolved packet core and radio access network
- Required coverage areas of the network
- Hardening, security, reliability and resiliency requirements
- Assignment of priority users and selection of secondary users
- Availability of assets that may be utilized

States will be asked to submit available data as soon as it is compiled instead of waiting to complete the entire data request. FirstNet will continually update planning and modeling efforts based on new input. Our goal is to avoid surprises by working closely with state representatives as we develop the final FirstNet build-out plan.

RAN Proposal Response

To make FirstNet a nationwide network, all states must have a RAN that connects to the FirstNet core. A state can decide whether to have FirstNet construct the RAN or, it can "opt out" and seek the required approvals to build its own RAN that meets stringent FirstNet requirements.

RAN Response Timing

A state has 90 days from the date that the governor receives the FirstNet build-out plan to notify FirstNet, NTIA and the FCC in writing whether it prefers to engage FirstNet to build its RAN or construct its own RAN. If a state chooses to build its own RAN, it has 180 days to complete a request for proposal for its RAN. The state must also submit an alternate plan to the FCC for consideration.

State Decision Process

FirstNet will collaborate with states to develop and deliver a RAN plan that meets their needs.

Consultation
- Regional Workshops
- State Visits
- Ongoing Dialogue

RFP Process

FirstNet Presents Plan to Governor

State Decision
2 Options

90 days to decide and notify FirstNet, NTIA and the FCC

Opt Out

State seeks approval to construct its own RAN

State Requirements:
- Notify FirstNet, NTIA and the FCC of intention to build within 90 days of receiving FirstNet Plan
- Submit alternate plan to FCC and gain FCC approval
- Complete an RFP
- May apply for grant funding from NTIA
- Must apply to NTIA to lease FirstNet spectrum

Accept FirstNet Plan

FirstNet builds the RAN. FirstNet intends to cover the cost to construct, operate, maintain and improve the RAN.

Funding the Build-out

If the state's plan is approved by the FCC, the state may apply for grant funding from NTIA. To obtain federal funding to construct a RAN, a state must:

- Demonstrate the technical capability to operate and fund the RAN
- Maintain ongoing interoperability with the FirstNet network
- Complete the project within specified comparable timelines
- Execute its plan cost effectively
- Deliver security, coverage and quality of service comparable to the FirstNet network

There are additional funding implications if a state receives approval to build its own RAN:

- States pay any fees associated with using FirstNet core elements
- Grant program specifics are not developed yet
- NTIA will determine: eligible costs of the grant program; whether a match will be required; and funding levels

Licensing FirstNet Spectrum

If the state plan is not approved, the construction, operation and maintenance of the state RAN will proceed in accordance with the FirstNet plan. If a state receives approval to build its own RAN, the state then needs to negotiate a lease for the use of FirstNet spectrum.

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