

FirstNet meets with tribal representatives as part of effort to build public safety, wireless network

Fierce Mobile Government By Dibya Sarkar

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Early last week, the independent government board tasked with overseeing development of a nationwide, wireless broadband public safety network, met with a half dozen members of tribal organizations, one of the stakeholder groups that's helping develop the communications system.

According to a recent [blog post](#) from the First Responder Network Authority, or FirstNet, members of the group's public safety advisory committee met with the designated Tribal Working Group in Washington, D.C., Feb. 22.

They discussed collection of vital data from tribes, development of a education and outreach multimedia campaign as well as expanding the tribal working group to include representation from more groups such as the Navajo Nation, "whose multistate reservation boundary and population size would contribute an important perspective," the post reads.

"FirstNet can learn a lot from tribes, whose status as sovereign nations with traditions, cultures, distinct governance structures, specialized telecommunications projects, and varied public safety services and partnerships will serve to strengthen the effectiveness" of the nationwide network, according to the post.

The tribal group also formally requested that it meet with so-called state and territorial representatives of this initiative, known as single points of contact, who are appointed by their governor and work with FirstNet in their respective state or territory.

The estimated \$7 billion broadband network would address a decades-long problem that has plagued first responders – their inability to communicate with one another due to stand-alone systems and devices that are incompatible across many jurisdictions. The money has been raised through recent auctions of spectrum by the federal government.

FirstNet, which was established by law three years ago, has begun consulting with various states, tribes and other groups in terms of their needs and plans. These governments will ultimately have to decide whether they want to participate or not in the network build-out.

In related news, FirstNet board members will hold a teleconference March 9 to consider a public notice regarding legal interpretations related to broadband network. Additionally, FirstNet Chairwoman Sue Swenson is scheduled to testify March 11 at a Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee about the progress of the planned network.

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