

## New Hampshire gets five RFP bids for a public-safety LTE system, but no opt-out decision has been made

Urgent Communications By Donny Jackson

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New Hampshire received five bids in response to its request for proposal (RFP) to build a statewide public-safety [LTE](#) system, but a key state official reiterated that the process is designed to provide the governor with the “best information possible” and is not a certain precursor to opting out of [FirstNet](#) .

After receiving six vendors submitted 81 questions to the state’s RFP that was released in December, five vendors submitted bids by last Friday’s deadline, according to John Stevens, the statewide [interoperability](#) coordinator who works with the New Hampshire department of safety,

“I’m very impressed with the amount of interest that we’ve received on this,” Stevens said today during an interview with [IWCE](#) ’s *Urgent Communications*. “There’s no doubt that there’s a number of commercial vendors that spent a considerable amount of time putting these proposals together. They deserve our attention, and that’s what we plan to do.”

Bids will be evaluated by New Hampshire’s FirstNet Broadband Working Group, which is part of the Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC), Stevens said.

Many industry stakeholders have criticized New Hampshire for conducting its RFP process before FirstNet receives responses to its RFP to build and operate a nationwide public-safety broadband system, and some have contended that it is an indication that New Hampshire will opt out of FirstNet. By law, the governor for each U.S. state and territory will have the option to opt out of FirstNet, which means the state—not FirstNet—would build out the radio access network (RAN) within the state’s borders that gets integrated into the nationwide system.

But Stevens has said that the state’s RFP process is “only preparatory” and today reiterated that New Hampshire is trying only to better understand its options as completely as possible.

“We don’t anticipate any opportunity at this point in time to opt out—we’re not even addressing that,” Stevens said. “Our mission at this point in time is to review the proposals that were sent here, make a recommendation to the commissioner of safety as to what we feel may be the best opportunity, if we were to choose a commercial vendor to do this, and we’ll take it from there.”

“Through the FirstNet processes, there is an opt-in or opt-out opportunity. We don’t know what the opportunities are, if in fact we do opt out, but now we’re getting some indication. All we’re trying to do at this point in time is get to the point where, when that decision is made, we make that decision based on the best information possible.”

New Hampshire received the five bids, despite the fact that it does not have a license to operated on the Band 14 700 MHz spectrum specified in the RFP—those airwaves are licensed to [FirstNet](#) . Like all other states and territories, New Hampshire can access Band 14 spectrum only by negotiating a spectrum-lease agreement with FirstNet, which is the last step in the lengthy opt-out process that likely will take more than two years to complete.

And that opt-out process cannot start until the governor receives the state plan from FirstNet as part of its nationwide deployment. Under the FirstNet RFP, state plans would be distributed by May 1, 2017, if FirstNet awards its contract by Nov. 1 this year, as targeted in the RFP.

Governors will have 90 days to evaluate the FirstNet plan for the state before deciding whether to pursue the opt-out alternative. If a state or territory decides to opt out, it would have another 180 days to complete an RFP process to build out the RAN within its jurisdiction, according to the law passed by Congress in 2012 that established FirstNet.

This RFP timetable in the law is one that even FirstNet officials have acknowledged is very challenging, if the RFP process is not started until the governor’s decision is made. However, with the five bids, the state of New Hampshire theoretically has completed this difficult step, assuming that the vendors’ bids are still valid at that point.

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