

FirstNet changes contracting officer for nationwide RFP

Urgent Communications By Donny Jackson

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[FirstNet](#) this week announced a change in the contracting officer who would execute the deal with a contractor to be selected this year as part of a evaluation process that will begin in earnest after May 31, the deadline for offeror teams to make their proposals to build and maintain a nationwide public-safety broadband network.

Gregory Ruderman from the U.S. Department of the Interior—the source-selection authority (SSA) for FirstNet under a federal interagency agreement—will replace Terrie Callahan as the contracting officer for FirstNet. In an e-mail response to an [IWCE's Urgent Communications](#) inquiry, a Department of the Interior official described Ruderman as a "long-term employee" who has "extensive experience in highly complex IT and telecommunications acquisitions."

Callahan has served as the contracting officer as FirstNet released its [draft request for proposals \(RFP\) last spring](#) and its [final RFP in January](#)

. Next month, Callahan will leave her current post at the U.S. Department of the Interior to join FirstNet.

"Terrie Callahan will be coming in house at FirstNet in May," FirstNet spokeswoman April Ward said in a statement provided to *IWCE's Urgent Communications*. "She will be working in the Office of the Chief Procurement Officer and will work closely with DOI on the RFP. We're pleased she is joining the FirstNet team and expect it to be a seamless transition to the new contracting officer."

Callahan applied for the FirstNet job that was advertised in February and will report to Chief Procurement Officer David Dasher, according to Ward. Dasher was announced as FirstNet's chief procurement officer at last December's FirstNet board meeting. At that same meeting, the [FirstNet board approved the release of the final RFP](#)

FirstNet's RFP asks offeror teams to submit proposals to build and operate the much-anticipated nationwide public-safety broadband network—using [LTE](#) as the technology for terrestrial coverage—that meets 16 core objectives for first-responder communications. In return, the selected contractor will gain access to the 20 MHz of prime 700 MHz spectrum that is licensed to FirstNet that can be leveraged to sell services to public-safety users on a priority basis and to commercial users on a secondary basis.

FirstNet's contractor also will have access to \$6.5 billion in federal funding, but the RFP calls for the contractor to make [regular payments to FirstNet over 25 years that total at least \\$5.625 billion](#) —a figure that could increase, based on a number of bid and [performance factors](#)

Multiple offeror teams in March submitted a Capability Statement, indicating their ability to meet the objectives outlined in the RFP and the right to receive additional input from evaluators, according to FirstNet. Final bids are due on May 31.

These proposals will be evaluated by an evaluation team, [the members of which have not been disclosed](#), in accordance with federal procurement rules. FirstNet officials have stated that the [evaluation process will include negotiations with offerors](#) and that they hope to sign a 25-year agreement with the selected contractor by Nov. 1.

Ruderman will serve as the contracting officer, who ensures that all rules and regulations associated with a federal procurement are followed properly. Theoretically, the contracting officer could select a vendor team other than the one recommended by the evaluation team, but that “rarely, if ever, happens,” according to a Beltway source familiar with the process.

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