

## **FirstNet announces new staff positions as organization prepares for post-award challenges**

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[FirstNet](#) this week took steps to begin the transition from a startup organization focused on the procurement process to build a nationwide public-safety broadband network to one that is prepared to deliver services to first-responder customers, including the establishment of two new units.

An evaluation team is assessing bids from offeror team that submitted proposals by May 31 to build and maintain a FirstNet's nationwide public-safety broadband network. FirstNet Chairwoman Sue Swenson stressed the need for the FirstNet organization to make the "transition from planning to execution" in an effort to best serve its public-safety user community.

"We're going to be moving into an operational mode, and so we really need to be thinking about how the organization needs to be prepared for that," Swenson said during today's board meeting, which was webcast. "We're working on that now, so that—on Day 1, after the award—we can hit the ground running."

With this in mind, FirstNet announced that it has established a chief customer office (CCO) that is expected to coordinate consultation efforts and advocate for public-safety users, as well network program office (NPO) that will work with the FirstNet contractor on radio-access-network (RAN) deployments throughout the 56 states and territories.

Rich Reed has been named as FirstNet's chief customer officer that will lead the CCO effort, while Steve Fletcher was appointed to head the NPO.

FirstNet Vice Chairman Jeff Johnson said that even Reed's title is a reflection of FirstNet's public-safety-centric mindset.

“It would have been real easy to call Rich Reed our bureau chief of services, but that isn’t the choice we made,” Johnson said during the board meeting. “We picked Rich Reed to be our chief customer officer, because indeed Rich is going to be focused on our customer. Culturally and organizationally, we are focused on the public-safety users for whom we build this network.”

FirstNet President TJ Kennedy said that he is glad to be part of the FirstNet organization at this particular juncture, as reflected in the establishment of the CCO.

“It’s such an exciting time, to be focused now on moving into operations and gearing up the staff to have a chief customer office and to have people that are going to be focused on product management and product marketing, so we really meet the needs of public safety 24 hours per day, 7 days per week,” Kennedy said Wednesday during an interview with [IWCE](#)’s *Urgent Communications*

Indeed, with [FirstNet](#) officials hoping to conclude its massive procurement process and make a contractor award late this year, things are “getting very, very real very fast,” Kennedy said, reiterating the organization’s need to be focused on serving public safety’s communications needs.

“Public safety is a our partner and our customer,” Kennedy said. “We need to treat them like that. We need to make sure that we’re meeting their every need. Because they will be buying services from FirstNet, they’re going to expect an extremely responsive level of service. That’s the kind of organization that our chief customer officer will be able to respond to.

“I think it’s critically important, because they have options, in terms of who they buy services from. We want to make sure that we have the best-value proposition for each police department, fire department and EMS agency in this country.”

To achieve this goal, Swenson repeatedly stressed the need for FirstNet to be a lean, agile organization that is nimble enough to adapt and take actions quickly, because that inherently is the environment that public safety finds itself when responding to incidents.

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