

FirstNet's Kennedy talks about RFP process, 911 collaboration

Urgent Communications By Donny Jackson May 5, 2014

[FirstNet](#) is completing request-for-proposal (RFP) processes and plans to seek public comments on some of the organization's rules and legal interpretations that will impact the proposed nationwide broadband network for public safety, FirstNet Deputy General Manager TJ Kennedy said during a speech today.

Kennedy—the top FirstNet staff member since Bill D'Agostino resigned as general manager last month—delivered the remarks this morning at the [Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials](#) (APCO)

Broadband Summit in Washington, D.C. A FirstNet spokesman shared Kennedy's prepared remarks with

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During the past two months, FirstNet's board has approved a program roadmap, the FirstNet finance committee has approved funding for efforts to implement the roadmap, and FirstNet has released a package that states and territories must complete before scheduling initial consultations with FirstNet. Today, Kennedy shed some light on the organization's progress toward releasing an RFP—something public-safety-communications vendors have eagerly anticipated since Congress established FirstNet in February 2012.

“We're completing RFP processes for both comprehensive network solutions, [as well as] equipment and services that could substitute for—or complement—a comprehensive network proposal,” according to Kennedy's prepared remarks. “We've been conducting market research to better understand the assets that all partners can bring to the table to better serve our country's public-safety community.”

Congress established FirstNet as “independent entity” within the [National Telecommunications and Information Administration](#)

(NTIA) and specified in legislation that FirstNet is exempt from disclosure laws, such as the Freedom of Information Act. However, in areas that are not specified by Congress, there have been debates whether FirstNet should act more like a government agency or an independent, company-like entity.

[FirstNet](#) hopes to clarify its rules and legal interpretations of the legislation in a public-comment proceeding, according to Kennedy.

“This is particularly true in areas that may be unclear under the legislation and/or where it would be helpful to give notice to public and private parties that will participate in the FirstNet program roadmap,” according to Kennedy’s prepared remarks. “Some topics we anticipate putting out for public comment include eligible users and state opt-in/opt-out.”

In addition to reiterating plans regarding outreach to states, territories and public-safety stakeholders, Kennedy expressed the need for FirstNet to work with the 911 community, especially in light of the evolution of [next-generation 911](#) (NG-911).

“With NG-911 being deployed in parallel – we need the 9-1-1 community at the table, too,” Kennedy said in his prepared remarks. “Building the first broadband network for first responders is going to be a collaborative process, and [public-safety answering points](#) —911 centers—are going to be a very important part of the process.

“And that process is already well underway. It’s very important that you establish a strong working relationship with your state’s 911 coordinator to get involved in the planning process being led by the [state point of contact] or the single point of contact designated by the chief executive of your state, territory or district.”

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