

FirstNet Seeks Public Safety And Industry Input In Developing Network Strategy

Homeland Security Today By Amanda Vicinanza

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The [First Responder Network Authority](#) (FirstNet) Board has taken crucial steps in its efforts to deploy a nationwide public safety broadband network by approving resolutions relating to the release of a public notice, a request for information (RFI) and a fiscal year 2015 budget.

"Today's actions demonstrate FirstNet's ongoing commitment to the program roadmap that we approved in March 2014 and offer additional opportunities for stakeholders to provide us with feedback on key considerations for executing our network strategy," board chairwoman Sue Swenson said during a September 17 board meeting at FirstNet's headquarters in Reston, Virginia.

"The FirstNet board and management team have made significant progress implementing the roadmap over the last six months, and because of that we are well positioned for continued success," Swenson said.

Created under the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012, FirstNet is an independent authority within the National Telecommunications and Information Administration responsible for creating and maintaining the first nationwide public safety broadband network for law enforcement, firefighters, emergency medical service professionals and other public safety entities.

With the [release of the 15-page RFI](#) , FirstNet hopes to obtain insight from the vendors and suppliers that typically respond to RFIs to "better understand industry's capabilities, evaluate best procurement approaches and determine how to best leverage existing capabilities and best practices to meet public safety needs."

Specifically, FirstNet's RFI seeks proposals for "a network solution or solutions allowing it to control and operate a nationwide core network, radio access networks in opt-in states and devices, deployable capabilities, applications, integration, and maintenance and operational services required to fully function as an operational wireless standards-based LTE network

nationwide.”

The draft Statement of Objectives (SOO) included in the RFI seeks input from interested parties on how to better define FirstNet’s acquisition goals, strategy and objectives. Rather than dictating a specific solution, FirstNet laid out program objectives in the SOO to generate innovative solutions from public safety experts, industry and the general public on building, deploying and financially sustaining a public safety broadband network.

The RFI follows a series of prior RFIs, including a May 2013 RFI on devices; July 2013 RFIs on network partners, radio access network, the core network and other items; and a November 2013 RFI on applications platforms.

To respond to the RFI, interested parties must electronically submit responses in accordance with instructions posted on the Federal Business Opportunities website within 30 days of its official posting.

With the board’s approved resolutions, Swenson said FirstNet is “on track” with its strategic program roadmap that was approved in March and represents a major milestone towards the draft Request for Proposal (RFP)—a precursor to the final RFP—to be delivered during the first quarter of 2015.

“We are going to be making some critical decisions based on this information, some of which are going to be popular and some of which may not be quite so popular, because they are decisions in trying to get to the specifics of what FirstNet will really look like,” Swenson said during the board meeting, which was webcast. “It is going to start to get down to some of the real critical things we’ve all been talking about. But we have to make the decisions, or we’re not going to be able to move forward.”

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