

RFP for FirstNet's massive network released

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FirstNet, the government authority charged with standing up a \$7 billion nationwide, high-speed wireless broadband communications system for first responders, issued its finalized solicitation Wednesday, calling on companies to spell out their long-term plans for deploying and supporting the network.

"We have developed this [request for proposals] in an open forum to create a 'first of its kind' public-private partnership for the network," said FirstNet Chief Executive Officer Mike Poth, referring to a lengthy process of drafting and consultation with vendors and other stakeholders as the RFP was being prepared. Over the past year, there have been 13 formal pre-solicitation requests for information issued and two industry day events held, and officials have answered more than 650 questions related to network specifications.

"As we move into the next phase of the process, we look forward to receiving competitive offerings to deliver the best possible network for public safety," Poth said.

The RFP seeks proposals for a single award, Indefinite Delivery-Indefinite Quantity, or IDIQ, contract with fixed price payments for each of the 56 states and territories that FirstNet will cover.

The interoperable Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network, or NPSBN, will carry voice, data, message and video traffic, and be robust enough to support encrypted communications like VPNs.

"This is an opportunity to revolutionize how first responders do their job, and we appreciate the valuable public safety feedback we have received to make this happen," said FirstNet President TJ Kennedy. "FirstNet is thrilled to issue an RFP that will promote innovation and deliver the best value to the public safety community."

The authority will host a public webinar Friday to "to review key RFP elements with interested parties" including state and local agencies and potential vendors.

Bidders have until April 29 to submit proposals, with questions due Feb. 12 and capability statements due March 17. An award is expected to be announced in the fourth quarter of 2016, FirstNet said.

In the leadup to the RFP, various telecom companies have gone public to express their interest in the contract. According to an October report in Investor's Business Daily, analysts believe Verizon is currently the [front-runner for the contract](#). At a telecommunications conference in Las Vegas earlier this month, however, an AT&T executive said his company will "[aggressively](#)" go after FirstNet deployment as well.

Officials said they expected the contract to be won either by a coalition of vendors, or a large player with a lot of good partners.

FedScoop has reached out to both Verizon and AT&T for comment and will update if they respond.

FirstNet, which lives under the Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration, has broken the 20 year contract into five-year segments. The \$7 billion initial price tag is expected to be covered by Federal Communication Commission's recent AWS-3 auction, but some analysts believe the price will eventually [balloon to \\$20 billion-30 billion](#).