



## FirstNet Releases Request for Proposals (RFP) for Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network

*The RFP is objectives-based to encourage innovative solutions and seeks a single contractor to build and operate the nationwide network.*

FirstNet released its long-anticipated RFP on January 13. Rather than provide a detailed set of requirements, the RFP is based upon a “Statement of Objectives” strategy intended to allow bidders to be as innovative as possible. Along with the 16 objectives, there is a set of minimum requirements and recommendations, but these are limited, with the RFP’s clear intention being to encourage bidders to propose “outside the box” solutions. Since being released, more than 400 questions have been submitted and answered, resulting in clarifications and amendments; however, none could be considered material changes to the initial procurement strategy.

Proposals must be submitted by May 31, 2016. FirstNet plans to evaluate the proposals and make an award to a single prime contractor as early as November 1, 2016. The selected contractor and FirstNet will then develop a New York State Plan over the next six months. Upon presentation of a FirstNet constructed and operated State Plan, the State’s public safety stakeholders will evaluate it and present a recommendation to the Governor to Opt-In or Opt-Out of the proposed plan. This decision will be due 90 days after presentation of the final State Plan by FirstNet.

The RFP-defined implementation schedule is aggressive, with Initial Operational Capability of the NPSBN occurring 12 months after award. Final Operational Capability of the proposed design is to be complete five years after award, with yearly milestones for coverage, functionality, and services clearly spelled out. Based on these dates, the first manifestation of the NPSBN in New York could be by late 2017, with full implementation by 2022. The contract will cover 25 years of operation and has provisions for enhancement and evolution.

## 3GPP and Mission Critical Push-to-Talk

### Release 13 to include MC-PTT

The December issue described how the NPSBN is to be built to 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP) standards and the resulting benefits to public safety from following this broadly accepted commercial standard. The newsletter also discussed how FirstNet has been working with 3GPP to include or add public safety requirements into that standard. On March 15, the 3GPP completed its work on Release 13, citing as its most significant accomplishment the inclusion of standards for Mission Critical Push-to-Talk (MC-PTT) functionality. Manufacturers can now rely on the “frozen” Release 13 standards and develop their products in preparation for its expected rollout in 2018.

Of significance to our readers is that it was public safety advocates who led the selection of the speech vocoder – the algorithm used to convert voice into a data stream for transmission, and vice versa. A proper vocoder for public safety must work well in loud environments, under imperfect radio frequency (RF) conditions, be field proven, and be implemented in all devices wishing to communicate with one another. These standards established the Adaptive Multi-Rate Wideband (AMR-WB) vocoder as the single mandatory vocoder for Mission Critical Push to Talk (MC-PTT), assuring intelligible and interoperable MC-PTT over NPSBN and 3GPP Release 13 compliant devices.

When and where the NPSBN will provide suitable coverage for a given public safety agency’s area of operation is a separate question, but with this recent release, the NPSBN is one step closer to being able to support MC-PTT. Someday, NPSBN coverage may be sufficient to replace public safety Land Mobile Radio (LMR) systems for voice. In the meantime, public safety will need to continue to maintain existing voice communications, perhaps using the NPSBN to augment coverage or extend MC-PTT voice onto a common data/voice device. “Standby” for an update.

*Do you want to learn more about MC-PTT over Long Term Evolution (LTE)? Read FirstNet’s [blog post](#) summarizing a recent round table discussion.*

## Ask Your SPOC

### Must I use the NPSBN?



Q: What determines whether I have to use the NPSBN? What if I like the broadband service that I already have?

A: Whether or not to use the NPSBN will be determined by the users or their agency and its own policy. However, the winning contractor should be motivated to provide a compelling service offering to public safety that encompasses factors of accessibility, coverage, reliability, public-safety relevant features, security, public-safety grade devices, deployable coverage solutions, and interoperability to name a few. The contractor is also required to provide “most favored customer” pricing to public safety users, assuring that the cost of the NPSBN is competitive relative to consumer options.

If you have a question for New York’s SPOC, please contact us via email:

[DHSES.OIEC@dhses.ny.gov](mailto:DHSES.OIEC@dhses.ny.gov)

## New York's Role

The NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (NYS DHSES) Office of Interoperable and Emergency Communications (OIEC) has been designated as the State's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to assist the FirstNet Authority regarding the NPSBN buildout in New York State. The OIEC has also created the Public Safety Broadband Working Group (PSBBWG), consisting of more than 50 public safety professionals from across the State, experienced in public safety communications. The PSBBWG meets periodically to discuss topics of interest and provide input to the SPOC on behalf of NY stakeholders.

## FirstNet Outreach in 2016

FirstNet has identified several outreach goals for 2016. These include: (1) expanding outreach and education to the user community; (2) obtaining State input to inform the State Plan and network deployment policies and procedures; and (3) preparing key decision-makers for State Plan delivery and network deployment.

Of great interest to the user community is the development of deployment policies and procedures that will determine how public safety will be able to use the network. In short, these policies and procedures will differentiate NPSBN services from commercial broadband services. FirstNet will be identifying specific issues needing user input, then establishing task teams to discuss and provide consensus input. The first identified topic is Quality of Service, Priority, and Preemption (QPP), with more to be identified in the future. FirstNet will establish Consultation Task Teams (CTTs) for each topic and has requested that each state provide a few representatives to participate. In support of the CTT's task, FirstNet will gather input, via surveys, from the public safety community at large. The goal is to obtain input from diverse users: different services, technical, operational, seasoned/experienced, new entrants, etc. Please watch for and participate in any future FirstNet surveys in order to give the CTTs solid information to work with.

### Upcoming Events What's Happening

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| May 6     | <a href="#">NYS Subject Matter Expert Survey responses due</a> |
| May 16-17 | <a href="#">APCO 2016 Broadband Summit</a>                     |
| May 17-19 | <a href="#">NYS 911 Coordinators Association Conference</a>    |

Visit [New York's Public Safety Broadband website](#) for additional information on FirstNet in NY.

## Calling All Subject Matter Experts!

The successful design, buildout, operation, and policies for public safety's effective use of the NPSBN will require knowledgeable input from many different backgrounds and specialties. In order that it best meet the needs of New York stakeholders, the SPOC is looking for subject matter experts (SMEs) to provide guidance. To identify SMEs, a brief on-line survey has been created so that individuals from the public safety community can let the SPOC know of their area(s) of expertise. Please take a few minutes to take the survey. If you know of others you feel may have relevant expertise or skills, please forward the survey link to them as well. If you might be a future user of the NPSBN, or if you have experience or a background in any or the following areas, we want to hear from you: Public Safety, Operations & Administration, Technical, Security, or Finance.

Over the course of this year, New York State will be asked by FirstNet to provide stakeholder feedback on specific questions. In 2017, the State will be presented with FirstNet's deployment plan for New York State and will be required to evaluate it relative to the needs and concerns of NY stakeholders and to advise the Governor accordingly. We will draw from our pool of SMEs to respond to these needs. Taking the survey will not obligate you; however, your name and skillset will be added to New York's roster. If a question arises that matches your "wheelhouse," your assistance may be requested. Please let us know of your background by participating in the survey here:

[NYS Subject Matter Expert Survey](#)

## When Fixed Coverage is not Enough

New York has defined aggressive coverage needs for the NPSBN, but what will public safety use when operating where fixed coverage does not exist? In a recent [blog post](#), FirstNet describes their vision for the Vehicle Network System (VNS) role in incident deployment and as an option to extend coverage.

