# FirstNet's Request for Information (RFI) and Statement of Objectives (SOO)

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### HOW DOES THE RFI SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF FIRSTNET'S STRATEGIC PROGRAM ROADMAP?

In March 2014, the FirstNet Board approved FirstNet's preliminary strategic roadmap. The roadmap focused on several important milestones to ensure that FirstNet continues to progress toward deploying a nationwide public safety broadband network (NPSBN), including:

- Initiate a public notice and comment on certain program procedures, policies, and statutory interpretations;
- Release a draft comprehensive network request for proposal for comments;
- Release a draft request for certain network equipment and services proposal for comments; and
- Begin formal consultation with the states and territories on plans for building the network, as required under the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012.

FirstNet has made significant progress toward achieving these milestones. With the release of the Request for Information ("RFI"), FirstNet is taking an important step in its ongoing procurement strategy to ensure the building, deployment, operation, and maintenance of the NPSBN. The RFI will help shape requests for proposals ("RFPs") and enable FirstNet to implement a performance-based acquisition plan for a comprehensive, nationwide network solution.

### WHAT IS FIRSTNET'S ACQUISITION STRATEGY FOR BUILDING A NPSBN?

FirstNet is committed to conducting an open, transparent, and competitive process to acquire a dedicated public safety network solution. The process will involve issuing public RFPs that meet FirstNet's objectives as set out in a draft statement of objectives (a "SOO") that is incorporated in the RFI. Among FirstNet's most important objectives in its acquisition strategy are to (1) minimize public safety user fees; (2) deliver advanced, resilient wireless services; (3) minimize the amount of capital and operating expenses incurred by FirstNet; (4) leverage synergies with existing networks and other infrastructure where economically desirable to FirstNet; and (5) maximize the value of the excess network capacity to keep costs low for public safety.

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS RFI, AND HOW WILL FIRSTNET USE THE INFORMATION IT RECEIVES?

This RFI provides an opportunity for interested parties to supply FirstNet with information about industry capabilities for deploying a nationwide network, as well as feedback on important FirstNet acquisition-related strategies and proposals. It also provides interested parties with greater visibility into FirstNet's proposed direction for deploying the network.

FirstNet is asking for specific information on industry capabilities and business models that will enable FirstNet to move rapidly towards an RFP for a comprehensive network solution and an operational network. FirstNet encourages all interested parties, including the public, industry, public safety, and small businesses (such as mobile providers in rural areas and American Indian tribally-owned, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian concerns), to participate by supplying information that would contribute to this effort.

The goal of the RFI questions is to have all available information from any and all respondents provided to the FirstNet team as quickly and accurately as possible. Importantly, however, FirstNet is also seeking feedback on a draft SOO that will shape an important part of the ultimate RFP.

## WHAT IS A SOO AND WHY IS IT IN INCLUDED WITH THE RFI?

A SOO outlines the essential elements of the comprehensive network solution contemplated by FirstNet, leaving the specific implementation of those elements to vendors who may propose different, creative solutions for meeting those elements. The SOO is a performance-based acquisition method used under federal acquisition regulations. Offerors use the SOO to develop a performance work statement, which provides details about how the offeror plans to achieve the objectives.

## WHAT IS FIRSTNET SEEKING TO LEARN FROM RESPONSES TO THIS RFI?

FirstNet wants a better understanding of existing market capabilities to structure the future RFP, including the SOO. The RFI asks questions regarding:

- The buildout, deployment, operations, and maintenance of the NPSBN;
- Cost considerations and financial sustainability;
- Speed to market;
- System hardening and resiliency;
- Use of existing infrastructure assets owned and operated by governmental jurisdictions;
- Priority and preemption;
- Customer care and marketing; and
- General compliance with the FirstNet authorizing legislation (The Middle Class Tax Relief and Jobs Creation Act of 2012).

## HOW IS THIS RFI DIFFERENT FROM PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED RFIS? HOW IS FIRSTNET LEVERAGING THAT INFORMATION?

In 2013, FirstNet released 12 RFIs seeking input on various equipment and technology applications for the construction of the network. FirstNet has examined and applied the information received from industry to develop an analysis of the technical objectives and requirements needed to build and operate the network. This new RFI incorporates this analysis into the draft SOO and asks questions about how these objectives will affect the ultimate RFP. It also asks for feedback on how FirstNet should best organize and conduct the acquisition process to the ultimate benefit of public safety.

## WHAT ARE THE KEY OUTCOMES AND NEXT STEPS AFTER THE RFI?

The RFI responses will lead to three key outcomes that will assist FirstNet with the development of the subsequent draft RFP for a comprehensive network solution. Specifically, the responses will:

- augment FirstNet's market research efforts to ensure the development and issuance of a responsive and achievable RFP for a network solution;
- help design a productive industry day that will occur closer to the release of the draft RFP; and
- provide industry and interested parties an opportunity to provide feedback about the network acquisition approach and information on other areas or issues that FirstNet should consider.

Additionally, the RFI will help to inform the public, State and local officials, as well as public safety users on how FirstNet is considering the various elements needed to establish a public safety network solution.

## WHEN DOES FIRSTNET PLAN TO RELEASE THE DRAFT RFP?

FirstNet has not set a specific date for the release of the draft RFP. However, our goal is to release it in 2015. FirstNet plans to request feedback from industry on the draft and will set a deadline for that feedback. FirstNet will use the feedback received on the draft to prepare the final RFP for release.

## ARE ENTITIES ADVANTAGED OR DISADVANTAGED IN THE RFP PROCESS BY RESPONDING TO THE RFI?

The government pays very close attention to information disclosed in RFI responses and thus participants in the RFI can materially influence the ultimate RFP process. Information that is submitted under the RFI is not shared publicly and is treated as business proprietary to encourage the most participation and to gather detailed and relevant data.