

Statewide Public Safety Communications System Planning RFP

Questions & Answers

(21 September 2023)

28 Aug 2023:

Vendor A

1. Regarding the below solicitation, I would like to request the estimated budget for this project?

Bid title: Statewide Public Safety Communications System Planning
Bid # DPS08222023A

ANSWER: Per Act 78: Up to \$1,000,000 shall be available for the retention of technical experts to assist the Task Force with the analysis and planning required by Sec. C.112 of this act and to fund the administrative expenses incurred by the Public Safety Communications Task Force. If the Task Force determines in calendar year 2023 that additional funding is necessary to achieve its purposes, it may submit a request to the Joint Fiscal. The Joint Fiscal Committee is authorized to approve up to an additional \$1,000,000.

7 Sep 2023

Vendor B

1. If a firm proposes on this RFP, does it preclude them from proposing on the Public Safety Communications Task Force Project Management Support (Version 4) RFP?

ANSWER: The Task Force seeks to retain a project manager, as an independent third party to assist the Task Force and represent its interests in interactions with the successful bidder(s) of the Public Safety Communications System Planning RFP. The successful bidder for Project Management Support is not precluded from bidding on portions of additional work as scoped in the Public Safety Communications System Planning RFP. It is unlikely that the State would award all components of this RFP and the Project Management Support to the same vendor.

2. Is it the desire of the Task Force for the successful proposer to visit all 36 dispatch centers?

ANSWER: The Task Force has not made any such decision and expects to work collaboratively with the successful bidder on the best approach to accomplish the scope of work. It is highly likely that some site visits will be required.

3. Is it the desire of the Task Force for the successful proposer to interview the state agencies/departments, that have existing systems, to obtain communications dead zones?

ANSWER: The Task Force has not made any such decision and expects to work collaboratively with the successful bidder on the best approach to accomplish the scope of work, which includes dispatch centers run by State, County and Local governments. Please note that the underpinning legislation specifies: *Identification of the communications dead zones in the State, meaning those areas that lack the infrastructure to support public safety land- mobile-radio communications or cellular voice and data service, or both, and taking into consideration all cell towers, including those that are part of the FirstNet statewide public safety radio access network; cellular mapping efforts conducted by the Department of Public Service; and any existing, relevant mapping data collected by a dispatch center, State Agency, Department or other entity, and, the RFP requires that the successful vendor develop a mechanism to receive public input regarding communications dead zones.*

4. Is it the desire of the Task Force for the successful proposer to provide independent coverage studies to develop a ubiquitous existing coverage depiction of the state?

ANSWER: Potentially. It is unknown what the total inventory of available propagation maps is or how old or relevant they may be. Bidders should plan to use relevant resources where they are available. Bidders should anticipate that recommendations on where new propagation studies are needed may be part of the statewide system design. Pricing for any recommended propagation studies can be offered a la carte.

5. Is the goal of the Task Force to allow any resident in the state to comment on both LMR coverage as well as cellular coverage, or is this limited to public safety users?

ANSWER: The Task Force would like the public and the first responder community to have opportunity to offer comments related to public safety communications on all aspects of this project.

6. Is the goal of the Task Force to develop a statewide LMR voice communications system plan or to develop a statewide interoperability plan?

ANSWER: It is the goal of the Task Force to receive recommendations on a reliable, secure and interoperable statewide public safety communications system that is redundant and resilient, equitable, accessible and sustainably financed. This may, or may not, include these plans.

8 September 2023

Vendor C

1. Can a bidder propose to work only on selected portions of the project?

ANSWER: Yes

- a. One specific example under the previous question: Can the communications dead zones tasks be taken separately from the dispatch system inventory and related pieces? They are conceptually different, one dealing with hardware and personnel, and one dealing with RF propagation.

ANSWER: Yes

2. Does the pilot project task 2.6 include these items?: **NOTE: Pilot Projects are section 2.5**

a. Two-way radio systems

ANSWER: Yes

b. Microwave links among relevant sites

ANSWER: Potentially, depending on the recommendation of the contractor (based on location and nature of selected pilot project sites) and the decision of the Task Force.

c. Failover between paired PSAPs

ANSWER: If this question refers to failover of E911 calls, the answer is no, this is within the purview of the Vermont E-911 Board and its contract with its service provider. If the question refers to failover of other public safety communications including but not limited to phone calls and radio communications, between paired communications centers (which may or may not be PSAPs) the answer is yes.

3. Is bidding restricted to contractors that have a physical presence in Vermont?

ANSWER: No

4. How should gaps in cellular coverage be addressed? More specifically:

a. Is it sufficient to simply identify likely roads and populated where coverage is inadequate?

ANSWER: No. See section 2.3(d).

b. Should we propose a means to identify potential new common infrastructure that would support at least LMR and cellular?

ANSWER: The RFP calls for a high-level plan to allow public safety communications, while addressing dead zones. The Task Force does not anticipate directly addressing expansion of mobile wireless (cellular) coverage but the bidder should identify areas where there is either overlapping need for LMR or cellular, or an acute need of either and recommend expansion in these areas.

c. Will the State provide, under confidentiality, a complete database of cell sites, to form the basis of the coverage modeling, or does it trust the public maps provided by the carriers?

ANSWER: No. The vendor shall use data in the public domain, or other data that it obtains independently. In addition to the resources listed in the RFP the vendor may consider information for tower permits, including those issued by the Vermont Public Utility Commission under 30 VSA 248a, partially compiled by the Vermont Department of Public Service.

<https://publicservice.vermont.gov/telecommunications-and-connectivity/tower-locations>

5. It is standard practice for network designers and contracted managers to not have access to actual CJIS data, which should remain encrypted. Some tasks are less proximate to CJIS data than others. If bidder is not proposing any tasks that require access to CJIS-covered data, do the CJIS requirements still apply to that contractor, its systems, and its artifacts?

ANSWER: No. Please See section 2.7 for more detail

8 September 2023

Vendor D

1. Please clarify the role and involvement of the Radio Technology Services (RTS) group, the Agency of Digital Services, the Department of Public Safety, and the E911 Board on this project.

ANSWER: The RTS group is a division of the Department of Public Safety. DPS, along with ADS and the E911 Board, are key stakeholders and resources from the State enterprise. The State is a consumer of the statewide public safety communications strategy and also may be implementers of components of the plan. Their role is also to support the SMEs in understanding the current landscape of emergency communications and assist in making introductions to other stakeholders in the county and municipal first responder community.

The Commissioner of Public Safety and the Executive Director of the E911 Board are the Co-Chairs of the Task Force. DPS is legislatively obligated to provide administrative support to the Task Force.

2. Exactly what level of involvement is expected of the subject matter experts (SME) involved in this project with the other in-flight initiatives ongoing in the state and called out in the RFP? Will the SME be expected to attend meetings related to these other initiatives? If so, how frequently?

ANSWER: The SME should have sufficient familiarity with the other initiatives to identify potential conflicts, opportunities for efficiencies and shared resources. The Task Force would expect the SME to attend meetings related to these other initiatives if there were matters of joint interest/concern on an agenda.

3. Since the state is already involved in a separate statewide NG911 project, please confirm that the scope of this project focuses on PSAP/dispatch center regionalization and LMR connectivity from the dispatchers to the first responders, and not on development/support of the NG911 infrastructure and connectivity to the PSAPs.

ANSWER: Confirmed

4. Pricing Form: If respondents choose to complete Section B (rather than Section A), is the state seeking only a list of hourly rates, or do you also require a NTE estimate of anticipated hours per person? Please clarify the state's requirements for the price proposal.

ANSWER: Bidder should complete section A and/or B according to the billing approach being proposed.

5. Pricing Form: Please confirm that respondents are asked to complete either Section A or Section B, but not both sections (as stated in response to the Task Force Project Management Support RFP).

ANSWER: Bidder should complete section A and/or B according to the billing approach being proposed

6. Confirm that each sub-task analysis listed under SOW Section 2.2. “Assessment of Existing Governance Models and Communications Standards and Deliverables” is to be completed for each of the 38 dispatch centers.

ANSWER: Confirmed

7. Are the six out-of-state dispatch centers also to be included in each area of this project’s analysis? Are they willing to share data?

ANSWER: Confirmed, this information should be included to the extent possible.

8. SOW 2.3.d: Please confirm that the state does not expect the awarded firm to conduct additional signal strength/coverage field testing, but that all analysis will be based on information as referenced from the State’s prior testing and publicly available information.

ANSWER: The vendor should propose how it can best meet the requirements of the RFP, with consideration for quality, time and cost and the availability of existing data.

9. SOW Section 2.3.e: What level of assistance and support is anticipated from the Vermont Leagues of Cities and Towns?

ANSWER: VLCT has been an active participant in previous work that led to the creation of this Task Force, and it is anticipated that they will continue to support the Task Force's objectives to the extent that they are able. It should be noted however that VLCT's mission is to serve and strengthen Vermont local government.

10. SOW Section 2.3.e: The RFP states there are currently six PSAPs serving the State of Vermont. Section 2.3.e describes consolidation to two State-run PSAPs. Has the State already determined the location of the two consolidated regional centers? What is the anticipated role of the other four PSAPs currently serving citizens across the state?

ANSWER: 911 call taking is outside the scope of this RFP. This RFP focuses on dispatching and public safety communications.

There are currently six PSAPS in the State – each contained within an emergency communications center. Four are run by local or county police agencies. Two are run by the VT Department of Public Safety. There were previously four State run PSAPs – in Rutland and Derby – which were consolidated to the two existing centers in Westminster and Williston under a prior Administration.

11. SOW Section 2.3.g: Please clarify the meaning of the sub-bullet: “Consolidated Point of View (POV) of deliverables requested deliverables”

ANSWER: sub-bullet “Consolidated Point of View” is an erroneous insertion, please disregard.

12. Section 2.4.B: Does “sites” refer to PSAP locations?

ANSWER: Sites refer to all Emergency Communications or “dispatch” centers in the State, which includes six sites that house PSAPs.

13. Section 2.5 Pilot Projects: Should support of a pilot project be included in the pricing for the two-year project, or would this be an optional add-on future task?

ANSWER: Support for pilot project(s) should be listed as a separate line item.

14. Section 3.1.3 Retainage: Please confirm that the State does not anticipate withholding retainage on project payments.

ANSWER: Retainage is not anticipated but the State reserves the right to incorporate retainage into final contract negotiations with the successful bidder.

8 September 2023

Vendor E

1. Entire document: Please confirm that the “public safety communications system” incorporates the following:

a. Call taking subsystems/NG911

ANSWER: The existing statewide 911 system is in place and is expected to integrate with any new public safety communications system.

b. Computer-aided dispatch systems (CAD) Record management systems (RMS)

ANSWER: Yes

c. Radio dispatch consoles

ANSWER: Yes

d. Land mobile radio systems

i. VCOMM

ANSWER: Yes

ii. VSP radio system(s)

ANSWER: Yes

iii. Local radio systems

ANSWER: Yes

e. Backhaul

ANSWER: Yes

f. Power subsystems

ANSWER: Yes

g. Logging recorders

ANSWER: Yes

h. Paging systems (if separate from Land Mobile Radio [LMR] systems)

ANSWER: Yes

i. Emergency alert/mass notification systems

ANSWER: No

j. Emergency response systems (*IamResponding* or similar)

ANSWER: No

k. Mobile computing

ANSWER: Yes to the extent feasible given our rural topography.

l. FirstNet and other commercial broadband being used by State & local public safety

ANSWER: Yes

m. Network management for any of the above

ANSWER: We are unclear what this question refers to.

n. Facilities

i. Radio/Dispatch/PSAP/Control sites

1. Towers

ANSWER: Yes

2. Shelters

ANSWER: Yes

3. Back-up power

ANSWER: Yes

4. Site security/monitoring

ANSWER: Yes

ii. Maintenance facilities

ANSWER: Yes

2. 1.1 - Scope and Background: Should the State decide to award the contract to multiple parties, how would the work be divided and allocated?

ANSWER: This would be decided following review of all bids and may become part of contract negotiations.

3. 2.2: Please confirm that the term “standards” used in this section is referring to operational procedures implemented in the existing dispatch centers rather than to external industry standards documents.

ANSWER: No. The RFP refers to both standards currently in place and also industry standards for best practices and a gap analysis. The vendor is expected to identify industry standards for operational best practices.

4. 2.2 and 2.3: Please clarify whether the scope of these sections is to include out of state dispatch locations as defined in the “Current Environment” section (1.1).

ANSWER: This information for out of state dispatch locations should be included to the extent possible. The scope should consider how a statewide system would best serve all Vermont communities, including those that currently receive their dispatch services out of state.

5. 2.3(a): Please clarify whether any user equipment (portable and mobile radios and accessories, pagers, smartphones, mobile computers, and other broadband devices) is also to be included in the inventory.

ANSWER: An inventory of user equipment is not required but any proposal should ensure that the first responder community can communicate reliably and in a cost effective manner. Proposals should include options for UHF P25 digital, VHF Analog, tone and voice paging and any other common technologies.

6. 2.3(d), bullet 2: “The respondent shall obtain propagation maps for all LMR dispatch radio networks.” Do suitable propagation maps exist for State and local systems or do some of them need to be developed by the consultant?

ANSWER: It is unknown what the total inventory of available propagation maps is or how old or relevant they may be. Bidders should plan to use relevant resources where they are available. Bidders should anticipate that recommendations on where new propagation studies are needed may be part of the statewide system design. Pricing for any recommended propagation studies can be offered a la carte.

7. 2.3(e): Consolidation to 2 State PSAPs. Is the State considering reducing the number of State-run PSAPs? If not, to what does this bullet refer?

ANSWER: 911 call taking is outside the scope of this RFP. This RFP focuses on dispatching and public safety communications.

There are currently six PSAPS in the State – each contained within an emergency communications center. Four are run by local or county police agencies. Two are run by the VT Department of Public Safety. There were previously four State run PSAPs – in Rutland and Derby – which were consolidated to the two existing centers in Westminster and Williston under a prior Administration.

8. 2.3(e): Does the numbered list (1, 2, & 3) pertain exclusively to the final bullet, i.e., bullet #4?

ANSWER: Yes

9. 2.3(f): Considering all information already required in 2.2, what is the purpose of the 2.3(f) requirement?

ANSWER: The section cited are substantively different; 2.2 relates to standards, whereas 2.3(f) relates to services.

10. 2.3(g): Please define specific requirements for the Consolidated Point of View (POV)

ANSWER: sub-bullet “Consolidated Point of View” is an erroneous insertion, please disregard.

11. 2.5: Does the Task Force anticipate developing pilot projects, or does it plan to review and fund pilot projects developed by local authorities?

ANSWER: The Task Force may determine that pilot projects are feasible and desired but does not intend to impose such pilots on local authorities that are not desirous of partnering in this work. The Task Force will rely on recommendations from the contractor to determine where one or more pilot projects may be most beneficial for proof of concept.

12. 2.5: Does the Task Force already have potential pilot projects identified? If so, please provide examples.

ANSWER: No

13. 2.7: In our experience we have encountered differing interpretations of CJIS documentation handling requirements. Please provide examples of CJIS documentation containing CJI that needs

to be handled in compliance with CJIS security policies. During which parts of the projects would you expect consultants to encounter CJIS-protected information?

ANSWER: See section 2.7. If bidder is not proposing any tasks that require access to CJIS-covered data, do the CJIS requirements still apply to that contractor, its systems, and its artifacts?

14. Please confirm whether proposals are due at 3 PM EST or EDT.

ANSWER: Proposals are due at 3pm Eastern Standard Time.

15. If an offeror is submitting a redacted copy, please confirm that two files may be submitted (one unredacted, and one redacted). In such an instance, what is the maximum size per file?

ANSWER: Refer to the RFP, section 5.2.1.1. E-mail Bids.

16. Given the contents of the RFP, may we assume that only part B of the pricing schedule needs to be completed?

ANSWER: Bidder should complete section A and/or B according to the billing approach being proposed.

17. How many LMR systems/sites are currently being used by the dispatch centers and first responders, and are any of those systems operated by out-of-state entities?

ANSWER: It is within the scope of this RFP to determine this information.

18. Most cellular carriers consider their site data to be confidential. Does the State have a full and current list of sites for each of the cell carriers, including associated spectrum bands and corresponding technical data?

ANSWER: No