

Directions: Provide your responses to any or all of these questions within this Word document/file. Identify whether you are responding as/on behalf of the designated State Point of Contact (SPOC). Please email your responses no later than Friday, May 31st to Friendly Vang-Johnson at vangjohnsonf@gao.gov.

Name: Terry LaValley

SPOC (yes/no): Yes

Agency: Vermont Department of Public Safety

Please copy any correspondence on this to: Lisa Helme, Vermont DPS, FirstNet Program Lead, lisa.helme@vermont.gov, (802) 241-5535

ROLE OF SPOC

1. What is the role and key responsibilities of SPOCs with FirstNet post-contract award? With AT&T?

The FirstNet project remains assigned to the Vermont Department of Public Safety within the Radio Technology Services office. I serve as the Director of RTS, the SWIC and SPOC (Single Officer under the NTIA SLIGP 2.0 grant). The role of the SPOC is to administratively monitor the progress of the FirstNet buildout in Vermont, maintain working relationships with the FirstNet Authority and AT&T, oversee the SLIGP 2.0 grant and Vermont's activities and expenditures related to that grant.

2. What sorts of information from FirstNet do you believe the SPOC is entitled to? From AT&T?

The SPOC should be a first point of contact in Vermont for the FirstNet Authority and AT&T representatives. The SPOC should be entitled to all updates on the buildout, including detailed information on site builds, coverage and first responder subscriber numbers.

3. In what ways, if any, do your expectations for information from AT&T differ from your expectations for other telecommunications carriers? Why?

As conceived by Congress, the FirstNet Authority was given the responsibility of building out the NPSBN in cooperation with the public safety communities in each state. Due to the Congressional mandate and appropriated funding, our expectation for information is much higher than what we would expect from a general telecommunication carrier.

INTERACTIONS & COMMUNICATIONS WITH FIRSTNET

4. What sorts of interactions or communications have you had with FirstNet related to the deployment of the network in your state? (Periodic/routine or ad hoc? General updates or specific deployment issues/concerns? With FirstNet regional public safety advisor? Via online state plan portal? Other mechanisms?)

Vermont DPS primarily initiates contact with FirstNet and AT&T for updates. Generally speaking, we seek updates on a quarterly basis. As issues arise, we directly contact our

FirstNet Authority representative and the AT&T FirstNet regional external affairs vice president for Vermont.

5. In what ways, if any, have the quality and/or timeliness of interactions and communications with FirstNet changed post-contract award?

We have found the timeliness of interactions to lag behind the response rate we had previously from FirstNet. Now that the timeline pressure of the opt-in/opt-out decision has past, we have found the FirstNet national representatives to be much slower in responding to our requests for information. In particular, we find that information that FirstNet had promised would be available to us is delayed or is not forthcoming. For example, we were recently told that Vermont would no longer receive specific updates regarding subscriber numbers in the state. This is critical information for us, as this is one measure Vermont would have to determine whether AT&T is meeting the commitments to the state as part of the federal contract. Another example, Vermont has requested that the FirstNet Authority provide us with information on how they are validating coverage. To date, we have been refused that information. Again, such information is critical for us to (1) effectively use our SLIGP 2.0 grant funds for coverage validation; and (2) determine whether AT&T is meeting its coverage commitments as outlined in the opt-in process.

6. In what ways, if any, has the current level or quality of interactions or communications with FirstNet impacted your ability to meet your SPOC role and responsibilities? Please provide examples.

See response to question #5.

INTERACTIONS & COMMUNICATIONS WITH AT&T

7. What sorts of interactions or communications have you had with AT&T related to the deployment of the network in your state? (Periodic/routine or ad hoc? General updates or specific deployment issues/concerns? With sales/marketing staff, engineers, AT&T public safety advisors, or others?)

We try to work through our FirstNet Authority regional representative to schedule updates and discuss service issues. However, we have found the AT&T representatives to be responsive to our direct emails and phone calls for information specific to services for a public safety agency and in planning and educational outreach to keep our first responders informed.

8. In what ways, if any, has the current level or quality of interactions or communications with AT&T impacted your ability to meet your SPOC role and responsibilities? Please provide examples.

Please see our response to question #5. Inasmuch as the FirstNet Authority agrees with AT&T restrictions on information, Vermont lacks critical knowledge needed to ensure that our public safety community is well served by the developing NPSBN.

DEPLOYMENT PROGRESS

9. Please describe the progress made by AT&T to-date in deploying the network (coverage and adoption) in your state?

In Vermont, AT&T continues work on new site builds. AT&T has until 2022 to fulfill its commitment to build approximately 35 new tower sites in Vermont. Several of the new tower sites will be located in Essex County and will be built via a partnership with Great North Woods Wireless. Construction of the Essex County sites will begin this year, with plans for the sites to be on-air by the end of 2020 or sooner. More than half of the new tower sites are being built at locations where there currently is no cell tower. AT&T has contacted landowners at all of the new tower sites and continues work on the engineering process. Currently, AT&T forecasts that more than five new FirstNet sites will be activated in 2019. Additionally, AT&T continues to develop its existing commercial network. They forecast that three new commercial sites will be on-air by the end of this year. All of these sites will have FirstNet capabilities. An important part of AT&T's FirstNet buildout plan is upgrading existing towers with Band 14 throughout the country. In Vermont, there are now 14 towns with Band 14 equipment installed. As last reported to the Department of Public Safety by AT&T, there were approximately 2,000 FirstNet subscriber lines that had been activated in Vermont. However, FirstNet and AT&T are declining to be more specific. It appears the majority of these subscribers were already in areas of Vermont that had good AT&T coverage. The subscriber numbers reflect changes by existing AT&T customers who have shifted to a FirstNet plan to take advantage of lower prices and a growing product line.

10. How are you gauging progress? (Using State Plan Portal? Feedback / coordination with local PSEs? own agency use/testing?) If possible, please provide any after-action reports or testing results.

We were recently told by the FirstNet Authority that the coverage shown on our State Plan Portal does not necessarily represent actual coverage completed through IOC 1 and IOC 2, but is merely a plan. We have been unable to secure from them specific information on Vermont coverage, nor the methodology that the FirstNet Authority is utilizing to confirm coverage. Our Congressional delegation recently sent the Authority a letter expressing concern about this and asking FirstNet to share this information with Vermont.

11. Have you shared your assessments with FirstNet or AT&T? If so, what was the response?

We have shared our assessments several times with the FirstNet Authority and AT&T. They have delayed any substantive response to our request for information. Vermont did receive a letter whereby the FirstNet Authority refused to share with Vermont their methodology for determining coverage. Unable to secure a resolution to this, Vermont's Congressional delegation sent the letter mentioned in question #10.

12. What steps could either FirstNet or AT&T take to improve deployment (coverage and adoption)?

Vermont needs the timely sharing of information regarding coverage and specific adoption numbers as outlined above. Further, the strict confidentiality requirements on

such information by the FirstNet Authority and AT&T make it difficult for both administrators and the public safety community to determine whether AT&T is fulfilling the terms of the national contract.

13. Why do you believe FirstNet or AT&T have not taken these steps to-date?

Vermont has been told that such information will not be shared with us due to provisions in the federal contract between the FirstNet Authority and AT&T.