



*Public Safety WINS, Version 2  
Policy Solutions—Funding*

**FINAL**

**July 2002**

## Policy Solutions Introduction

The recent acts of domestic terrorism have elevated and highlighted the importance of public safety wireless interoperability. As such, seamless interoperable communications between public safety related agencies, across all levels of government, has become a top priority. Seamless interoperability can be achieved only when stakeholders work together to address the key policy issue areas identified by the Public Safety Wireless Network (PSWN) Program. The PSWN Program has worked to understand the importance of each policy issue and has identified actions and approaches to meet current and future interoperability challenges. Our solutions offer insight, guidance, and resources for stakeholders in their efforts to improve interoperability. This section also provides a detailed review of the impact of each issue on interoperability and what constitutes success in addressing the issue.

## Funding—Relevance to Interoperability

Public safety wireless communications systems represent a sizable investment in capital infrastructure for any government entity. In past studies, the aggregate value of the nation's existing public safety wireless radio infrastructure has been valued at more than \$18 billion. These radio systems rely on an extensive infrastructure of towers, antennas, switches, and consoles. Also, public safety personnel require handheld (portable) and/or vehicle (mobile) radios to access and use the systems. In times when the domestic security of the Nation is threatened, it is critical to maintain and protect these wireless systems at all levels of government.

A majority of the systems currently in use across the Nation are aged and technically obsolete. Upgrading existing systems with new technologies and enhanced functionality will further drive up replacement costs. Overall, the development of a multi-agency statewide system with interoperable capabilities can require \$100-\$500 million. Also federal agencies must implement narrowband communications systems by 2005, thus forcing them to purchase new radio systems with even higher costs. It is becoming prohibitively expensive for individual public safety agencies to fund the replacement of their own radio system from their normal operating budgets. Therefore, public safety agencies must partner and work together to realize cost reductions through schedule-discounted purchases, consolidated procurements and system sharing. However, public safety agencies require long-term, sustainable funding sources for developing and upgrading wireless communications systems.

Securing adequate financing requires exploitation of a variety of funding sources and mechanisms that are generally not known or understood by the public safety community. Also, funding for wireless communications systems are in direct competition with other, more visible public sector capital investments and information technology projects. Funding mechanisms for wireless communications systems replacements, other than direct appropriations and bond initiatives, exist and are limited only by the tolerance for innovation within a particular jurisdiction. These diverse mechanisms include cost sharing, user fees, special taxes, grants, trust funds, and public/private partnerships.

Success in the area of funding will manifest as advancement to higher levels of interoperable public safety communication systems. The following matrix illustrates the common stages that public safety agencies may exhibit as they progress towards that desired end state—

New	Developing	Established	Mature
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiating a life-cycle funding plan and identifying funding sources</li> <li>• Emphasizing the high priority of funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presenting system life-cycle funding plan to appropriate authorities for approval</li> <li>• Identifying dedicated funding and development plans that include cost-reduction strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilizing multiple dedicated funding mechanisms</li> <li>• Implementing shared systems that consolidate cost/duplication efforts</li> <li>• Promoting financial incentives to join shared system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operating shared systems and conducting routine maintenance</li> <li>• Implementing sound fiscal strategies that are well received</li> <li>• Utilizing additional funding for system enhancements</li> </ul>

## Target Audiences Introduction

The PSWN Program understands that it cannot resolve the five policy challenges alone and that many people must assume the responsibility to achieve success in each policy area. These five challenges must be addressed by local, state, federal, and tribal public safety entities and the broader set of public safety communications stakeholders, including the U.S. Congress, regulatory agencies, civic leadership forums, and equipment manufacturers. These key public safety entities and stakeholders are jointly responsible for the resolution of interoperability issues. This section is designed to allow members of each group to identify specific actions they can take related to each issue area that can ultimately lead to the successful development of an interoperability solution.

## Relevance to State Decision Makers

State decision makers must understand the importance of funding and its effect on public safety wireless communications systems. Because they are judged by their ability to protect life, property, and critical public infrastructures, state decision makers must realize that a lack of interoperable communications can severely hinder the ability of public safety personnel to respond to large-scale incidents, (e.g., natural disasters and catastrophic events). In turn, the potentially critical consequences of not funding wireless communications systems should dictate the appropriate prioritization of these systems within the policy process.

All levels of government will be seeing funding requests for upgrades of wireless communications systems. However, complex multi-year information technology projects are often not included in capital plans or financial forecasts. Because more than half of the public safety agencies across the Nation have planned to replace their existing radio systems, funding requests of this magnitude require creative funding solutions and multiple funding sources. It is the responsibility of state decision makers to evaluate these funding requests ensuring maximum efficiencies and savings achievable through the systems planning and development life-cycle are realized. State decision makers must also understand the importance of accurate cost estimation and life-cycle funding implications that are crucial to fiscal planning.

## Actions/Solution Steps for State Decision Makers

State decision makers can take the following steps to ensure that funding is adequately addressed to meet interoperability requirements. They can establish state-level organizations charged with ensuring adequate funding is available for statewide public safety. These organizations can establish working groups that will raise the visibility and priority of funding. Also, the state-level organizations can help other public safety stakeholders recognize public safety wireless communications as a critical national infrastructure.

The following resources will prove useful to state decision makers in raising the visibility and priority of funding to meet public safety communications system interoperability requirements—

- *Public Safety Wireless Communications Systems: A Priority Investment for America's Future Safety*
- *The Role of the States in Public Safety Wireless Interoperability*
- *Public Safety Communications Funding Awareness Guide*

State decision makers can provide guidance and leadership in developing partnerships with federal and local entities. By supporting the idea of combining resources to develop shared systems, state decision makers can help eliminate the duplication of physical infrastructures and adopt common procurement strategies that will maximize efficiencies and savings throughout the planning and development life-cycle. State decision makers can also use their control of funding

to hold public safety officials accountable for incorporating interoperability into planned system development.

State decision makers can also establish state-sponsored funding mechanisms to finance the public safety communications system over the life-cycle of the system and smooth overall budgetary impact to the state in the long term. By incorporating accurate maintenance/replacement costs in capital improvement planning processes, state decision makers can ensure that adequate funding will be included in out-year budget forecasts.

The following resources will prove useful to state decision makers in understanding the costs associated with funding a public safety radio communications system—

- *LMR Replacement Cost Study Report*
- *Cost Study Data Characterization Report*

Several funding mechanism opportunities exist that can be targeted for public safety communications. State decision makers can initiate the exploration of opportunities for funding assistance through federal and state grant programs, foundations, corporate donations, surcharges, user fees, and taxes. They can also explore public/private partnerships as well as cooperative agreements that provide required non-financial resources. Overall, state decision makers can discuss funding strategies and learn from the experiences of other states that have developed shared statewide systems.

The following resources will prove useful to state decision makers in identifying and implementing funding strategies for public safety communications systems—

- *Report Card on Funding Mechanisms for Public Safety Funding Strategies for Public Safety Radio Communications*
- *Funding Strategies for Public Safety Radio Communications*
- *Funding Mechanisms for Public Safety Radio Communications*
- *Funding of Public Safety Wireless Communications Systems: Report of the Interagency Working Group*

## Relevance to Regional Decision Makers

Regional decision makers must understand the importance of funding and its effect on public safety wireless communications systems. Because they are judged by their ability to protect life, property, and critical public infrastructures, regional decision makers must realize that a lack of interoperable communications can severely hinder the ability of public safety personnel to respond to large-scale incidents, (e.g., natural disasters and catastrophic events). In turn, the potentially critical consequences of not funding wireless communications systems should dictate the appropriate prioritization of these systems within the policy process.

Funding requests for upgrades of wireless communications systems are being submitted at all levels of government. However, complex, multi-year information technology projects are often not included in capital plans or financial forecasts. Because more than half of the public safety agencies across the Nation have planned to replace their existing radio systems, funding requests of this magnitude require creative funding solutions from multiple sources. It is the responsibility of regional decision makers to develop detailed evaluation criteria for funding requests and promote the importance of accurate cost estimation and life-cycle funding implications that are crucial to fiscal planning.

## Actions/Solution Steps for Regional Decision Makers

Regional decision makers can take the following steps to ensure that funding is adequately addressed to meet interoperability requirements. They can establish regional-level organizations with the responsibility for improving public safety communications interoperability. These organizations can specialize in examining life-cycle costs, commissioning cost-benefit analyses, and finding adequate funding that will raise the visibility and priority of funding for public safety communications systems. In addition, regional decision makers can provide good public management by eliminating duplication of physical infrastructures whenever possible.

The following resources will prove useful to regional decision makers in raising the visibility and priority of funding to meet public safety communications system interoperability requirements—

- *Public Safety Wireless Communications Systems: A Priority Investment for America's Future Safety*
- *The Role of the States in Public Safety Wireless Interoperability*
- *Public Safety Communications Funding Awareness Guide*

Regional decision makers can also establish regionally sponsored funding mechanisms to finance the region's public safety communications system over the life-cycle of the system and smooth overall budgetary impact to the region in the long term. By incorporating accurate replacement costs in capital planning processes, regional decision makers can ensure that adequate funding will be included in budget forecasts and replacement plans for the region's public safety communications systems.

The following resources will prove useful to regional decision makers in understanding the costs associated with funding a public safety radio communications system—

- *LMR Replacement Cost Study Report*
- *Cost Study Data Characterization Report*

Several funding mechanism opportunities exist that can be targeted for public safety communications. Regional decision makers can initiate the exploration of opportunities for funding assistance through federal and state grant programs, foundations, corporate donations, surcharges, user fees, and taxes. They can also explore public/private partnerships and cooperative agreements that provide required non-financial resources. Overall, regional decision makers can discuss funding strategies and learn from the experiences of states and other regions that have developed shared systems.

The following resources will prove useful to regional decision makers in identifying and implementing funding strategies for public safety communication systems—

- *Report Card on Funding Mechanisms for Public Safety Funding Strategies for Public Safety Radio Communications*
- *Funding Strategies for Public Safety Radio Communications*
- *Funding Mechanisms for Public Safety Radio Communications*
- *Funding of Public Safety Wireless Communications Systems: Report of the Interagency Working Group*

## Relevance to the Public Safety Community

The public safety community must understand the importance of funding and its effect on public safety wireless communications systems. A lack of interoperable communications can severely hinder the ability of public safety personnel to respond to large-scale incidents, (e.g., natural disasters and catastrophic events). Without sufficient resources, public safety agencies may become ill-equipped to handle current and future public safety communications requirements. Therefore, the potentially critical consequences of not funding wireless communications systems should dictate the appropriate prioritization of these systems within the policy process.

Partnerships, especially at all levels of government, can also benefit public safety agencies through cost efficiencies brought about by increased economies of scale. Partnerships, public safety coalitions, and opportunities for sharing across jurisdictions can also improve interoperability. Public safety agencies can also help bridge funding shortfalls by participating in the development of shared systems.

## Actions/Solution Steps for the Public Safety Community

The public safety community is in the best position to describe how wireless communications are used locally to provide vital public safety services. The public safety community can also advance the notion that public safety wireless communications systems are critical national and state infrastructures. The end result is the increase of visibility and priority of funding for public safety communications systems.

The following resources will prove useful to the public safety community in raising the visibility and priority of funding to meet public safety communications system interoperability requirements—

- *Public Safety Wireless Communications Systems: A Priority Investment for America's Future Safety*
- *Public Safety Communications Funding Awareness Guide*

Also, the public safety community can develop comprehensive wireless communications system replacement plans. These plans should document age and replacement cycles while providing accurate cost estimates for out-year budget forecasts. These plans can also be funded through the exploration of opportunities for funding assistance through federal and state grant programs, foundations, and corporations. The public safety community can also explore public/private partnerships, cooperative agreements, and other funding strategies used by other jurisdictions to secure both financial and non-financial resources.

The public safety community can partner with agencies that have similar coverage requirements to eliminate duplication of physical infrastructures. By examining life-cycle costs and performing cost-benefit analyses of shared system approaches, the public safety community can also remind equipment manufacturers and software developers of the market size and competition for public safety systems.

The following resources will prove useful to the public safety community in identifying and implementing funding strategies for their public safety communications systems—

- *Funding Strategies for Public Safety Radio Communications*
- *Report Card on Funding Mechanisms for Public Safety Funding Strategies for Public Safety Radio Communications*
- *Funding Mechanisms for Public Safety Radio Communications*

## Relevance to Civic Leadership Forums

Civic leadership forums must understand the importance of funding and its effect on public safety wireless communications. Civic leadership forums must realize that a lack of interoperable communications can severely hinder the ability of public safety personnel to respond to public safety incidents (e.g., day-to-day activities, emergencies, natural disasters). In turn, the critical consequences of not funding wireless communications systems should dictate the prioritization within the policy process.

Civic leadership forums can also raise public awareness of the need for communications interoperability and increased funding. These forums can also begin outreach programs to enhance relationships with other agencies and provide coordination and partnerships within each region or state. Civic leadership forums can also advocate for public/private partnerships and cooperative agreements that provide required non-financial resources.

## Actions/Solution Steps for Civic Leadership Forums

Civic leadership forums can take the following steps to ensure that funding is adequately addressed to meet interoperability requirements. They can act as a link between officials at all levels of government and public safety agencies to ensure that interoperability is a high public safety priority. These forums can also encourage use of federal and state grant programs, as well as funds from foundations and equipment from corporations.

The following resources will prove useful to civic leadership forums in raising the visibility and priority of funding to meet public safety communications system interoperability requirements—

- *Public Safety Wireless Communications Systems: A Priority Investment for America's Future Safety*
- *Public Safety Communications Funding Awareness Guide*
- *Report Card on Funding Mechanisms for Public Safety Funding Strategies for Public Safety Radio Communications*

## Relevance to the U.S. Congress

The U.S. Congress should be aware of the importance of funding and its effect on protecting citizens. Because they are viewed on how the public feels its interests are addressed, the U.S. Congress must realize that a lack of interoperable communications can severely hinder the ability of public safety personnel to respond to large-scale incidents (e.g., natural disasters and catastrophic events). Domestic security issues also make interoperability a national concern. In turn, the potentially critical consequences of not funding wireless communications systems should dictate the appropriate prioritization of these systems within the policy process.

The U.S. Congress is one of the primary organizations that develops and influences funding mechanisms for wireless communications systems nationwide. Grant programs administered by the Departments of Commerce and Justice are frequently identified as potentially major sources of funding. However, these sources are routinely reduced in the federal budget.

## Steps/Solutions for the U.S. Congress

The U.S. Congress can take the following steps to ensure that funding is adequately addressed to meet interoperability requirements. They can support wireless communications systems interoperability as a high public safety priority. By holding congressional hearings and highlighting the difficulties of public safety interoperability, the U.S. Congress can change policy, provide financial support, and aid the development of grant programs (e.g., Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA]) to improve public safety interoperability. They can also sponsor bills (e.g., Wyden-Allen Science and Technology Emergency Mobilization Act) that provide funding for shared systems development that maximizes use of partnerships and realizes resource efficiencies.

In terms of support, the U.S. Congress can continue to uphold the efforts of key Federal Government programs (e.g., Public Safety Wireless Network [PSWN], Federal Law Enforcement Wireless Users Group [FLEWUG], National Institute of Justice [NIJ]) to foster public safety interoperability and shared systems nationwide. The U.S. Congress can also request annual briefings or progress reports on the state of interoperability nationwide from the PSWN Program and the FLEWUG to aid in their decision making process.

The following resources will prove useful to the U.S. Congress in raising the visibility and priority of funding to meet public safety communications system interoperability requirements—

- *Public Safety Communications Systems—A Priority Investment for America's Future Safety*
- *Public Safety Communications Funding Awareness Guide*
- *Report Card on Funding Mechanisms for Public Safety Funding Strategies for Public Safety Radio Communications*
- *The Role of the States in Public Safety Wireless Interoperability*
- *The Role of the Federal Government in Public Safety Wireless Interoperability*

The U.S. Congress can instruct the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to provide the timely re-allocation of additional spectrum for public safety agencies. They can also urge equipment manufacturers and software developers to produce public safety equipment that better meets public safety requirements and is as affordable as cellular telephones.

## Relevance to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

The FCC must understand the importance of funding and its effect on public safety wireless communications systems. Because public officials are judged by their ability to protect life, property, and critical public infrastructures, the FCC must realize that the lack of interoperable communications can severely hinder the ability of public safety personnel to respond to large-scale incidents, (e.g., natural disasters and catastrophic events).

The FCC generates revenue for Congress by auctioning spectrum resources. Even following the addition of 50 megahertz (MHz) of broadband spectrum, the public safety community is not allocated adequate spectrum for their use. They also lack the resources to purchase the additional spectrum they need while competing with commercial interests. Additionally, allocating spectrum in incongruous bands forces the public safety community to spend already limited funding to build non-interoperable systems. By allocating spectrum in congruous bands for public safety, new equipment is not required or can be inexpensively manufactured in the new band.

## Steps/Solutions for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

The FCC can take the following steps to ensure that funding is adequately addressed to meet interoperability. The FCC can reestablish support for the development of grant programs for public safety communications systems. They can also support alternative funding approaches through the promotion of resource sharing arrangements that benefit public safety organizations through cost avoidance. Additionally, the FCC can develop dedicated funding sources for public safety communications through spectrum-use fees on commercial entities. The FCC can also extend support to the efforts of the National Communications Commission (NCC) and the Regional Planning Committees (RPCs). The FCC can also show their support by attending and participating in public safety interoperability forums (e.g., Public Safety Wireless Network [PSWN] Program symposiums and the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials International, Inc. [APCO]).

The FCC can also develop rules such that they encourage partnerships involving the sharing of funding and spectrum resources. They can also improve the current rules to allow state and local spectrum resources to be shared easily with federal organizations in exchange for system use at limited cost. The FCC can initiate additional support waivers for the use of frequencies in exchange for system usage at a limited cost.

The following resources will prove useful to the FCC in raising the visibility and priority of funding to meet public safety communications system interoperability requirements—

- *Public Safety Wireless Communications Systems: A Priority Investment for America's Future Safety*
- *Public Safety Communications Funding Awareness Guide*
- *Report Card on Funding Mechanisms for Public Safety Funding Strategies for Public Safety Radio Communications*
- *Funding of Public Safety Wireless Communications Systems: Report of the Interagency Working Group*
- *The Role of the States in Public Safety Wireless Interoperability*
- *The Role of the Federal Government in Public Safety Wireless Interoperability*

## Relevance to Equipment Manufacturers

Equipment manufacturers must understand the importance of funding and its effect on public safety wireless communications systems. Currently, public safety customers have difficulty obtaining adequate funding to upgrade and maintain their wireless communications systems. However, with additional funding, public safety agencies could afford system upgrades and enhancements that would better help them prepare for domestic security initiatives and protect the lives and property of citizens within their jurisdictions.

Equipment manufacturers are in a position to create lasting partnerships with communities that can lead to future business opportunities. Due to Homeland Security initiatives, local and state public safety agencies are receiving federally funded grant monies that represent a significant market opportunity for equipment manufacturers. Any additional funding allocated to public safety through state grants, foundations, taxes, and surcharges would provide even greater market opportunities.

## Actions/Solution Steps for Equipment Manufacturers

Equipment manufacturers can take the following steps to ensure that funding is adequately addressed to meet interoperability requirements. They can develop affordable wireless communications equipment that meets public safety systems requirements and maximizes resource sharing. Manufacturers can also comply with Telecommunications Industry Association (TIA) Electronic Industries Alliance (EIA) 102 standards to increase the level of competition in the public safety communications marketplace. Equipment manufacturers can sponsor pilot and demonstration projects while promoting their equipment and continuing to invest in the public safety community. Offering grants and/or equipment can also help manufacturers build lasting partnerships that will lead to future business opportunities.

The following resources will prove useful to equipment manufacturers in raising the visibility and priority of funding to meet public safety communications system interoperability requirements—

- *Public Safety Communications Systems—A Priority Investment for America's Future Safety*
- *Public Safety Communications Funding Awareness Guide*
- *Report Card on Funding Mechanisms for Public Safety Funding Strategies for Public Safety Radio Communication*

## The Federal Law Enforcement Wireless Users Group (FLEWUG)

The FLEWUG must understand the importance of funding and its effect on public safety wireless communications systems. All federal public safety departments and agencies are judged by their ability to protect life, property, and critical public infrastructures. However, without sufficient resources, public safety departments and agencies may become ill-equipped to handle current and future public safety communications requirements, especially in times when the domestic security of the Nation is threatened.

Federal public safety departments and agencies are increasingly under scrutiny to share limited federal resources for nationwide wireless communications systems replacement. The FLEWUG is in a position to help federal public safety departments and agencies bridge funding shortfalls by encouraging participation in shared systems. As federal agencies act to meet the narrowband mandate, local, state, and federal public safety agencies can all benefit from the cost efficiencies resulting from the increased economies of scale in partnerships. In turn, these partnerships, public safety coalitions, and opportunities for sharing across jurisdictions can improve interoperability.

## Actions/Solution Steps for the Federal Law Enforcement Wireless Users Group (FLEWUG)

The FLEWUG can take the following steps to ensure that funding is adequately addressed to meet interoperability requirements. They can encourage partnerships between agencies with similar coverage requirements to eliminate duplication of physical infrastructures. By examining life-cycle costs and performing cost-benefit analyses of shared system approaches, the FLEWUG can remind equipment manufacturers and software developers of the market size and competition for public safety systems.

The FLEWUG can explore public/private partnerships as well as cooperative agreements. They can establish a funding Integrated Program Team (IPT) to act as a group of experts to advise the FLEWUG on funding-related issues. The FLEWUG can also reestablish support for the development of grant programs for public safety communications systems. By identifying and providing information on the funds necessary for upgrading existing systems, the FLEWUG will facilitate system sharing between local, state, and federal communications systems.

The following resources will prove useful to the FLEWUG in raising the visibility and priority of funding to meet public safety communications system interoperability requirements—

- *Public Safety Wireless Communications Systems: A Priority Investment for America's Future Safety*
- *Public Safety Communications Funding Awareness Guide*
- *Funding Strategies for Public Safety Radio Communications*
- *Funding Mechanisms for Public Safety Radio Communications*
- *Report Card on Funding Mechanisms for Public Safety Funding Strategies for Public Safety Radio Communications*
- *The Role of the Federal Government in Public Safety Wireless Interoperability*

## Relevance to Federal Decision Makers

Federal decision makers must understand the importance of funding and its effect on public safety wireless communications systems. While federal appropriations and grant programs are frequently identified as a major source of funding, they are often cut from the Federal budget. Additional funding sources need to be available to public safety agencies so that access to funding mechanisms can be leveraged throughout the complete life-cycle of wireless communication systems projects. Federal decision makers are also in a position to offer matching funds to sponsor interoperability equipment, pilot programs, and demonstration projects, especially in times when the domestic security of the Nation is threatened.

Federal public safety departments and agencies are increasingly under scrutiny to share limited federal resources for nationwide wireless communications systems replacement. Federal decision makers are in a position to help federal public safety departments and agencies bridge funding shortfalls by encouraging participation in shared systems. As these agencies act upon the narrowband mandate, local, state, and federal public safety agencies can all benefit from the cost efficiencies resulting from the increased economies of scale brought about by such partnerships.

## Actions/Solution Steps for Federal Decision Makers

Federal decision makers can take the following steps to ensure that funding is adequately addressed to meet interoperability requirements. They can first encourage the nationwide development of interoperable wireless communications systems by promoting joint funding solutions with local, state, and federal entities. Policy changes in addition to financial support can also be promoted to improve public safety interoperability.

Federal decision makers can support the development of statewide systems as the linchpin for achieving effective national public safety interoperability. Efforts of key federal government programs (e.g., Public Safety Wireless Network [PSWN], the Federal Law Enforcement Wireless Users Group [FLEWUG], and the National Institute of Justice [NIJ]) that foster public safety interoperability and shared systems can be used as resources. Federal decision makers can also request annual briefings or progress reports on the state of interoperability nationwide from the PSWN Program and the FLEWUG to aid in their decision making process.

Federal decision makers can also urge equipment manufacturers and software developers to produce public safety equipment that better meets public safety requirements and is as affordable as cellular telephones.

The following resources will prove useful to federal decision makers in raising the visibility and priority of funding to meet public safety communications system interoperability requirements—

- *Public Safety Communications Systems—A Priority Investment for America's Future Safety*
- *Public Safety Communications Funding Awareness Guide*
- *Report Card on Funding Mechanisms for Public Safety Funding Strategies for Public Safety Radio Communications*
- *The Role of the Federal Government in Public Safety Wireless Interoperability*

## Relevance to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)

The NTIA must understand the importance of funding and its effect on public safety wireless communications systems. Because public officials are judged by their ability to protect life, property, and critical public infrastructures, the NTIA must realize that a lack of interoperable communications can severely hinder the ability of public safety personnel to respond to large-scale incidents, (e.g., natural disasters and catastrophic events). These types of events make interoperability a national concern. The NTIA, as an agency of the Department of Commerce, provides grants for telecommunications research activities related directly to the development of a national information infrastructure. The Technology Opportunities Program (TOP) exists within the NTIA to administer state and local grant requests. However, the TOP does not currently fund equipment for statewide systems. The TOP is able to offer outreach and educational materials in addition to matching grants for local agencies that are interested in funding for their smaller systems.

## Actions/Solution Steps for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)

The NTIA can take the following steps to ensure that funding is adequately addressed to meet interoperability requirements. They can support a budget increase for the TOP and develop additional grant programs for public safety communications systems. Alternative funding approaches can be supported through the promotion of resource sharing arrangements that benefit public safety organizations through cost avoidance

The NTIA can also allow federal spectrum resources to be easily shared with state and local organizations in exchange for system use at limited cost. They can support public/private partnership waivers for the use of frequencies in exchange for system use at limited cost. Funding sources can also be developed by the NTIA for public safety communications through spectrum-use fees on commercial entities.

The following resources will prove useful to the NTIA in raising the visibility and priority of funding to meet public safety communications system interoperability requirements—

- *Public Safety Communications Systems—A Priority Investment for America's Future Safety*
- *Public Safety Communications Funding Awareness Guide*
- *Report Card on Funding Mechanisms for Public Safety Funding Strategies for Public Safety Radio Communications*
- *The Role of the Federal Government in Public Safety Wireless Interoperability*

## Relevance to the Public Safety Wireless Network (PSWN) Program

The PSWN Program has identified, promoted, and is now working toward developing solutions to several key funding related issues. As a result, the program is increasing its knowledge of existing funding mechanisms and encouraging new sources for public safety wireless communications systems. The PSWN Program is also promoting the knowledge and use of successful funding strategies as well as developing sources for on-site technical support to assist system developers with funding strategies and proven cost reduction methods.

Currently, the PSWN Program is involved in several activities to help resolve public safety communications funding issues. The program is developing funding strategy primers to aid agencies in the replacement or upgrade of public safety wireless communications systems, conducting detailed studies and analyses that help the public safety community better understand funding issues, and performing outreach to raise the level of priority for funding public safety wireless communications systems. The program has developed several reports that identify grant programs and funding mechanisms that correspond to the complete life-cycle costs associated with public safety wireless communication systems. Throughout its efforts, the PSWN Program is monitoring and documenting ongoing funding issues affecting public safety.

## Actions/Solution Steps for the Public Safety Wireless Network (PSWN) Program

The PSWN Program can take the following steps to ensure that funding is adequately addressed to meet interoperability requirements. The program can increase the visibility of interoperability as a high-priority public safety communications issue by encouraging ongoing progress on funding issues through interoperability assistance services. The program can continue to sponsor and support several outreach forums and mechanisms (e.g., PSWN/Federal Law Enforcement Wireless Users Group [FLEWUG] meetings, PSWN Program symposiums, one-day events, the National Interoperability Forum [NIF]) and the PSWN Program Web site) to capture and exchange best practices.

The PSWN Program can demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of common regional systems and the flexibility to meet unique needs within a common architecture through collaborative pilot systems. The program can also create a funding outreach program to organize and help various state public safety agencies to obtain funding while meeting their interoperability needs.