Questions on: Next Generation 911 (NG911) Conformance and Interoperability Program Overview – Presented by Sridhar Kowdley

Disclaimer-- Sridhar Kowdley: The answers to these questions are our current thoughts at this time and may change are we further realize this program based on feedback from the community at large (vendors, users, stakeholders), available funding and available information.

1. Question: Conformance Testing is different than Interoperability Testing. Conformance to a standard is usually involving 1 vendor's NG911 solution. Interoperability Testing involves 2+ vendors. Will this NG911 Certification program focus on both?

Answer:

> **Budge Currier**
> *There is definitely a difference between these two types of testing. The program is still being developed but the requirement is to support both conformance testing and end to end testing with multiple vendors so that the 9-1-1 community has a certification for both.*

> **Sridhar Kowdley**

> *Concur- Interoperability testing does not equal conformance to standards. However, conformance testing will greatly improve the probability that systems will be interoperable. For the purposes of our program—lets call Interoperability and conformance as "Certification".*

2. Question: What if a jurisdiction has already started rolling out NG911 systems, can we still take advantage of the certification program and Federal funding?

> *Answer*:

Yes. If solutions have already rolled out, a vendor can obtain **Certification** and then these solutions can use federal grant funding. Furthermore, it would be in the best interest of the vendor to update those fielded systems to Certified systems. It is highly recommended that these updates are documented within the Operations and Maintenance or support contract.

3. Question: Many vendors already fund their own interoperability labs. I can see challenges with vendors finding additional funding to participate in this interoperability program as well, and some will not have that funding. How will that be managed?

> *Answer:*

This requires additional discussion and decision. If independent vendors (vendors not providing NG911 solutions) already have interoperability labs and are ISO 17025 Accredited, they could upgrade their Certification to include NG911 testing in coordination with and approval by DHS S&T during their bi-annual Accreditation maintenance process. If the laboratory is not

Accredited, then they will coordinate with DHS S&T and then get Accreditation. Also, it is unclear how a vendor would be able to do interoperability testing (end-to-end) without access to multiple systems. (Note DHS will coordinate with Accreditation bodies to ensure they understand DHS' requirements.)

4. Question: Have you considered using NIST compliance instead of ISO?

   Answer:

   I do not believe that NIST does compliance of laboratories for interoperability and conformance – we had worked with NIST and ITS in the 2010 timeframe for P25 and they recommended using accreditation bodies such as ANAB and A2LA and using ISO-certification with guidance provided by NIST's NVLAP. If I am mistaken, please provide references.

5. Question: How does DHS S&T help existing local, county, state and federal 911 Agencies develop transformation plans for NG911/ESInet and interconnection between NG911 Emergency Communications Center installations? Is there Federal funding for this transformation?

   Answer:

   For Clarification, I think that DHS S&T's role is that we will lead the NG911 Certification program and provide guidance and support to the NG911 transition. I would refer to the broader group (Governance and Technical teams formed by DoT, DHS CISA, NENA, NIOC, NASNA, FCC, NTIA) to develop the transformation plans. This may warrant additional discussions.

6. Question: What part of DoD is involved? Is it the Defense Information Systems Agencies which supports Global Public Safety Communications across all DoD divisions?

   Answer:

   I would defer to our DISA partners on this one.

7. Question: Great effort, we are trying to get a similar effort going in Canada (National Testing Centers), wondering if this initiative is open to public safety agencies in Canada as well?

   Answer:

   Absolutely. DHS S&T has a partnership on several initiatives with DRDC Canada (POCs from DRDC Canada have already been invited and information shared) and would like to build in their testing requirements. This reduces the burden on vendors by providing a single Certification program. Please conduct DHS S&T so that we can ensure that all relevant POCs can be engaged.

8. Question: Is this type of NG911 certification program part of any legislative bills before Congress today? If so, which one(s)? If not, is this being proposed by others for inclusion in the future?

   Answer:

Great question. We would really like this coordination-- Recommend that we promote this effort across all stakeholders and support from key Public Safety users would be greatly appreciated. DHS S&T can engage with legislative affairs office- but we have limitations as a federal entity.

9. Question: What do you mean focusing on the NENA i3 standard? What interoperability are you focusing ESInet only?

    Answer:

    This question requires some clarification and I will request support from other stakeholders— What I meant was that this program during this Phase addresses the NENA i3 standard and ESInet based on availability of funding. We hope to expand this program to include other interfaces and standards such as CAD-to-CAD and potentially IMS if there is demand signal from vendors, users and stakeholders and funding availability. Note: DHS will actively work with the broader team including Carriers to further obtain funding and expand the program.

10. Question: For vendors who have supplied NG911 systems for nearly 10 years, what considerations will they receive regarding certifications?

    Answer:

    Vendors who are in this space should participate in the program and provide valuable insight and help establish the Certification program. To fully understand your expectations, I am not sure what other considerations could be but happy to discuss this offline.

11. Question: Are you indicating that certified vendor preferences for grant awards?

    Answer:

    This is voluntary program for vendors. That said, those vendors that want to access federal grants will be required to be Certified.

12. Question: How was Texas A&M selected as a university for this project?

    Answer:

    A DHS Center of Excellence, the Critical Infrastructure Resilience Institute (CIRI) proposed the initial effort to address this challenge area within their Center scope of delivering knowledge, tools, technologies, and solutions to the businesses and public entities that own and operate critical systems to enhance the security and resilience of our nation's critical infrastructure. Centers aim to have a diverse network of the best talent and within their network CIRI selected Texas A&M University. Centers regularly release requests for proposals to expand their partnerships as they continue to address key challenge areas aligned to their scope

13. Question: What type of advisory committee do you have? plan to have? [I would be happy to participate]

    Answer:

We are working on additional details on the program as we are setting up a website. So please do send us your contract information for us to reach out when we are ready to fully engage.

14. Question: We are a municipality, submitting data to the state's NG911 hub site. Where do we as data editors fall into the stakeholder lineup and how do we fit in with the certification program?

    Answer:

    We can provide additional details on the roles and responsibilities – We are working on additional details on the program as we are setting up a website. So please do send us your contract information for us to reach out when we are ready to fully engage.

15. Question: What is the Data Exchange approach between NG911 Centers? Is it NENA based data exchange? Or is it some other data exchange protocol standard, like CAD-CAD?

    Answer:

    We are working on these details and will provide additional details.

16. Question: What is the plan for rolling this out nationwide?   Is it state by state?

    Answer:

    Our structure is to create the certification program and enable any vendor or agency to use as needed (state, local, federal or international entity).

17. Question: Is the intention of the interop/conformance standard in dev by DHS and implement by CalOES to be brought forth at the federal, state, or local level? In other words, is the expectation that there will be many labs architected within various states or managed at the federal level?

    Answer:

    The goal would be to have multiple labs that are able to perform the testing. Plus, the scripts would be publicly available for vendors to use as they develop software platforms.

18. Question: Are you using DNSSEC with IPv6?

    Answer:

    Unknown

19. Question: Is there a plan in CA, to merge the 400+ NG911 centers to a much larger regional center but much smaller number of centers?

    Answer:

    Authority to consolidate PSAPs does not rest with Cal OES. This would take an act of legislation.

20. Question: How do you address an i3 call transfer with location info to a Legacy E911 neighboring jurisdiction since i3 call doesn't ingress with pANI?

    Answer:

    Any transfer to a legacy E911 neighboring state is done using a Legacy Selective Router Gateway.

21. Question: Do you foresee any EIDO issues with disparate CAD systems?

    Answer:

    Yes, but we have just signed a statewide CAD to CAD contract to begin to document and address these issues.

22. Question: Who is providing the IDX?

    Answer:

    I am not familiar with the acronym IDX.

23. Question: Does every Call Handling solution deployed in the state have to be tested in the lab and are they required to lab test every new software release in the lab before deployment to a live PSAP CHE solution?

    Answer:

    As of July 2020, every call handling solution had to be tested in the lab. Prior to 2020, Cal OES did not have a lab testing facility. Yes, every new software release is required to be submitted to a change control board and is tested in the lab before deployment.

24. Question: Has the calendar changed for moving forward with NG911 - we were supposed to move forward in December 2022 for Orange County. What is the update?

    Answer:

    Yes, due to some challenges with the existing on-premise call handling equipment that was not tested for NENA i3 compliance prior to deployment, the project has been delayed.