



Utilizing Partnerships to Make NG911 Possible

In many states and jurisdictions, 911 offices have limited resources and staff. This can make the implementation of NG911 appear more daunting, yet the multifaceted aspects of both NG911 and public entities can be leveraged to make NG911 a reality. This document lists a variety of resources inside and outside government agencies that should be tapped to ensure proper planning, procurement, and implementation of NG911. Those same resources can provide guidance and clarity in a variety of specialized areas to 911 offices. It is noted that every state is different, and 911 programs are structured differently in every state. Not all 911 directors are employees of the state, however each should be able to leverage similar resources.

Finance

Funding is usually the first question and concern when considering the transition to NG911. Before spending significant time and effort, start the process with an introduction to a finance officer. While some state and federal 911 grants are available, understanding the specific financial needs and nuances of each individual system is key. Consider the following questions to start the conversation:

- How much funding is currently available for 911?
- How much funding could be available for NG911?
- How can 911 obtain additional funding if needed?
- How should we best budget for vendor service contracts?
- What auditing requirements will apply to the elements of NG911 implementation?
- Is funding available for outside experts to assist with the project?

IT Office/CIO

Because NG911 is an IP-based system, it is important to involve all IT stakeholders from the very beginning of any NG911 project. These experts can assist in explaining existing systems and cybersecurity requirements. They can also be invaluable in drafting requirements and reviewing proposals. Consider the following to commence a discussion with IT leaders:

- What network infrastructure currently exists in the state?
- What are the requirements for procuring NG911/technology services?
- Are there any applicable baseline security and coding requirements?
- How involved should IT be in the procurement process, such as reviewing proposals?

Procurement

Each jurisdiction has different and specific rules governing the procurement process. NG911 procurement is usually a competitive process. To help navigate all requirements and ensure that everything is done properly, assistance with procurement is vital. Identifying an individual or team experienced in technology acquisition to assist with procuring NG911 components or services will ease and improve the process considerably. Once an appropriate contact has been made, these basic considerations can be discussed:

- Is there a template for this type of procurement?
- Are there bond or bid requirements?
- Can they assist in drafting a request for proposals or equivalent document?
- What other requirements must be included?
- What are the requirements to procure industry expertise to assist in this project?

Legal

The support of legal counsel is vital early on and throughout the transition process. These experts can advise on existing legal and regulatory requirements and assist in drafting any needed changes. They can also assist in developing RFPs or other procurement tasks such as creating required contract clauses. Their support is also valuable in drafting the contract and negotiating with the successful vendor. Existing counsel may be available to assist with NG911 through a variety of channels including city councils, county commissions, 911 boards, departments within state government, attorney generals' offices, or by contract. Initial topics of conversation could include:

- Is NG911 legally authorized in this jurisdiction?
- If NG911 is not authorized, what steps must be taken to obtain the necessary authority?
- Do the laws or administrative rules need to be updated in any other way to allow for NG911 implementation?
- What contract terms must be included in an RFP?
- Can they assist in the procurement process? In drafting and negotiating contracts?

PUC/PSC

While most states have deregulated 911 services, the ongoing role of public utilities and public service commissions cannot be overlooked. Prior to beginning any NG911 project, the regulatory environment and requirements must be understood. PUCs/PSCs usually have staff available who can assist with basic questions. Legal counsel could also provide a valuable resource in this area to determine:

- What role does the commission play in 911/NG911?
- Does the commission regulate 911 funding or vendors?
- Are there any regulations or requirements that would prohibit NG911?

Legislative Liaison

Various branches and offices of government usually have a legislative liaison or contact who is familiar with the legislative process. Regardless of whether legislation is necessary to begin NG911, it is important to be aware of legislative requirements, including annual reports or other requests for information that an NG911 project may generate. Even if there is no formal designation, try to find a person with legislative experience who can discuss items such as these:

- What is your process for proposing legislation?
- Legislation may be related to a variety of aspects including authority, funding, governance, or other unique issues; does the process differ depending on the subject matter? (Funding is often reviewed by a different committee and follows a different process than substantive legislation.)
- Can they assist you in drafting appropriate legislative proposals? (You may also need legal assistance.)
- Are there specific legislators interested in 911 issues?

State 911 Leaders

Expertise exists in your state, even if they are not employees of the state 911 office. Finding these passionate, experienced 911 professionals and stakeholders to participate in your project will pay dividends throughout planning, procurement, and implementation. There is likely a state chapter of the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) and The Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO); sometimes they are combined as NENA/APCO. These individuals volunteer their time to make 911 the best it can be in your state. There are often officers and annual chapter meetings that you can attend to meet these potential stakeholders. Other users of the 911 system, such as first responders, can also be invaluable resources and advocates for NG911. These individuals could include:

- State NENA/APCO Presidents
- State NENA/APCO Chapter active members
- PSAP directors and employees who are interested in NG911
- Representatives of first responder agencies
- State and local GIS representatives

Conversation starters may include:

- I'm looking to form a focus group for NG911 implementation. Are you interested in participating?
- Do you know of other people in our state who could bring additional perspective and expertise?
- What would ideal NG911 implementation in our state look like to you?
- What functionality of NG911 most excites you?

Legislators

Whether or not new or additional legislation is required for NG911, it will be important to engage with finance, IT, legal, and internal legislative experts before bringing anything to the legislature. However, legislators themselves are the ones best able to communicate their questions or concerns. Legislators who have worked on 911 issues in the past are a great starting point, but the 911 office may have relationships with other legislators who are also interested in NG911 and public safety issues. It is best to invite legislators to learn about NG911 and the need for NG911 before you ask them for their assistance. Some good background information for legislation and other conversation starters include:

- What committee(s) will hear your bill(s)?
- What questions do legislators have? (It may be best to start with legislators on applicable committees and work on establishing broader contacts from there.)
- From which stakeholder groups do legislators most want input and feedback?

Other State Directors

Other states are also a source of knowledge and experience regarding NG911. Many states have been through both statewide and regional implementations and have learned lessons that they will gladly share. While every state is different in terms of laws and structure, there is much to be learned from those with similar structures, challenges, and strengths. The National Association of State 911 Administrators (NASNA) is a great resource to assist in contacting other state 911 offices. Reaching out to another director one-on-one is an effective way to gain knowledge and talk through next steps. Conversation starters may include:

- Can you share where your state is in terms of the NG911 implementation process and your specific problem areas?
- Outline current challenges; have you had similar experiences? What did you do to overcome them?
- What efforts were made in your state to promote NG911 to all of the different stakeholders?

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- What were the most important strategies you employed that led to a successful NG911 implementation?
- What suggestions do you have for specific tasks needed to make NG911 successful in my jurisdiction?

Local Leaders and Associations

Local expertise and experience is an important resource when trying to build an NG911 system. These local or municipal groups are stakeholders in the 911 system and have resources that may be helpful in planning, legislation, procurement, and implementation. These groups could include:

- First responder association
- City/county associations
- City/county leadership
- State municipal associations

Conversation starters could include:

- Are you interested in participating in planning for a statewide NG911 system?
- Do you know of other stakeholders in our region or state who could bring additional perspective and expertise? Do you know of any other groups or resources we should be reaching out to?
- What would you like to see improved locally as a result of a statewide NG911 system?
- What functionality of NG911 most excites you?