

SCOPE STATEMENT

Office of Information Technology Services: Reviewing the State's Options Related to the FirstNet Emergency Telecommunications System

The First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) was created by Congress in 2012. The law gives FirstNet the mission to build, operate and maintain the first high-speed, nationwide wireless broadband network dedicated to public safety. Congress committed as much as \$7 billion in funding for development of the network. To help contain costs, the system is supposed to use existing telecommunications infrastructure and assets when possible. Through the assessment of fees, FirstNet is required to generate sufficient funds to enable it to operate, maintain, and improve the network each year.

The FirstNet website provides some details on how the process of implementing the federal FirstNet program works at the state level. FirstNet officials meet with officials in each state and, based on state officials' input, develop a network deployment plan designed to meet each state's needs. Kansas should receive its plan sometime in the first quarter of 2017. The Governor then has 90 days to choose whether to "opt in" and accept the federally funded plan provided by FirstNet, or to "opt out" and deploy the state's own radio access network at the state's expense. If the Governor decides to opt out, the state then has 180 days to develop and complete plans for the construction, operation, and maintenance of its network. If the Governor does not make a choice, FirstNet will implement its own plan in Kansas by default.

Legislators have expressed interest in knowing whether Kansas has any viable options for building an emergency telecommunication system should state officials decide to opt out of the federal FirstNet program.

A performance audit in this area would address the following question:

- 1. What viable options does the state have to build an emergency telecommunication system if it opts out of the federal FirstNet program?** To answer this question, we would interview officials from the Office of Information Technology Services (OITS), the Adjutant General's Office, and members of the State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) and also review federal law to determine what options the state currently has if it opts out of the federal FirstNet program and under what conditions. Interview OITS officials and other IT officials in several other states (it does not appear that any other states have implemented either a federal or state emergency system as of March 2016) to understand how a state-funded network might be built and to identify the primary advantages and disadvantages of that approach. Work with state agency officials and private sector vendors as necessary to estimate the costs, implementation timelines, and network quality for the various options we identified. We would perform additional work in this area as necessary.

Estimated Resources: 3 LPA staff

Estimated Time: 4 months (a)

(a) *From the audit start date to our best estimate of when it would be ready for the committee.*