

## **Public Safety Wireless Network Program White Paper Regarding State Interoperability Executive Committees**

1. The Public Safety Wireless Network (PSWN) Program respectfully submits the following white paper regarding the creation of State Interoperability Executive Committees as recommended by the Public Safety National Coordination Committee (NCC). Specifically, this white paper addresses the PSWN Program's support for the establishment of these Committees to manage and administer the interoperability spectrum and offers the program's direct assistance with the creation and operation of these Committees.

### **I. STATEMENT OF INTEREST**

2. The PSWN Program is a federal initiative operating on behalf of all local, state, and federal public safety agencies. The Department of Justice and the Department of the Treasury are jointly leading the PSWN Program's efforts to plan and foster interoperability among public safety wireless networks. The PSWN Program is a 10-year National Partnership for Reinventing Government (NPRG) initiative.<sup>1</sup> The NPRG, previously known as the National Performance Review, is an effort to reengineer how government provides services to citizens through more effective use of information technology and through more concerted partnership efforts among government at all levels.

3. Consistent with the NPRG, and in concert with the public safety community, the PSWN Program hopes to achieve a shared vision of interoperability—seamless, coordinated, and integrated public safety communications for the safe and efficient protection of life and property.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See the Public Safety Wireless Network NPRG booklet, which contains a general overview of NPRG initiatives, as described by the Vice President; copies of NPRG action items IT04 (for establishing a national law enforcement/public safety network) and A06 (for establishing the intergovernmental wireless public safety network); and a one-page summary of the PSWN program vision and mission.

<sup>2</sup> See the *PSWN Program Strategic Plan*, April 1998 (submitted with the PSWN Program Comments) at page 2.

The PSWN Program is developing partnerships and working closely with the public safety community throughout the first five-year phase of the program to develop a comprehensive strategy for interoperability among wireless networks.<sup>3</sup> The program is now past the halfway mark of the first phase and planning a transition into the second phase. During the second five-year phase, the program will assist the public safety community with its implementation of interoperability in accordance with the national plan.<sup>4</sup>

4. Consistent with its NPRG charter, and building on the findings of the Public Safety Wireless Advisory Committee (PSWAC), the PSWN Program has made spectrum one of its priority areas of activity.<sup>5</sup> The PSWN Program has identified six key spectrum issues that require resolution for improving public safety radio communications: insufficient aggregate amount of spectrum, excessive number and undetermined appropriateness of frequency bands, insufficient interoperability spectrum, lack of affordable multi-band technology, complicated spectrum management processes, and lack of a migration strategy.<sup>6</sup> In an effort to help resolve these issues and realize improvements in this area, the PSWN Program has undertaken several spectrum-related activities.<sup>7</sup> These activities are designed to raise awareness, improve understanding of processes and policy, and analyze issues in more specific detail as appropriate. They include making direct contributions to these and other Commission proceedings related to public safety spectrum.

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<sup>3</sup> The information obtained and developed by the PSWN program through its activities is openly available via the program's web page at <http://www.pswn.gov>.

<sup>4</sup> See the *PSWN Program Strategic Plan*, at pages 5, 9, and 10 for information regarding the PSWN program phases (e.g., their definitions, relative timing, and types of activities within each phase).

<sup>5</sup> See the PSWN Program Comments at paragraph 5.

<sup>6</sup> See *Id.* at paragraph 6.

<sup>7</sup> See *Id.* at paragraph 7.

5. In conjunction with First Report and Order and Third Notice of Propose Rulemaking *In the Matter of The Development of Operational, Technical and Spectrum Requirements for Meeting Federal, State and Local Public Safety Agency Communication Requirements Through the Year 2010*<sup>8</sup>, the NCC was chartered to provide recommendations on the operational and technical parameters of the use of 700 MHz public safety band. A major responsibility of the NCC is to develop recommendations for the development and implementation of a plan to achieve interoperability throughout the nation. This plan is to include a shared or priority system among users of the interoperability spectrum for both day-to-day and emergency operations and is required to include recommendations on three specific issues. These issues are the establishment of technical standards necessary for interoperability, whether trunking should be mandated on all or a portion of the nationwide interoperability spectrum, and ways to permit public safety licensees' temporary use of the interoperability spectrum until final rules are developed. In addition, the NCC is to provide policy recommendations on an advisory basis to regional planning committees and provide recommendations on other technology, telecommunications and public policy matters that relate to the expedited planning and deployment of a reliable nationwide interoperable public safety and emergency responsiveness network.

6. Recent deliberations of the NCC have resulted in the development of a Policy Recommendation on the Administrative Oversight of the Interoperability Channels by the NCC's Interoperability Subcommittee.<sup>9</sup> This item includes a recommendation requiring the formation of State Interoperability Executive Committees to manage the interoperability spectrum and

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<sup>8</sup> See *In the Matter of The Development of Operational, Technical and Spectrum Requirements for Meeting Federal, State and Local Public Safety Agency Communication Requirements Through the Year 2010*, WTB Docket No. 96-86, FCC 98-191 (rel. September 29, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> At the most recent National Coordination Committee meetings, the Interoperability Subcommittee presented a *Policy Recommendation for Administrative Oversight of Interoperability Channels*, January 27, 2000.

administer a State Interoperability Plan in each state and territory. The recommendation was approved by the Subcommittee members, forwarded to the NCC Steering Committee, approved by the Steering Committee, and advanced to be included in the NCC's first annual report to the Commission.

7. The PSWN Program fully endorses the NCC's recommendation and commends the Subcommittee on its efforts to address the management and administration of a crucial public safety resource. As an organization dedicated to promoting interoperability solutions, the PSWN Program is keenly interested in the activities of the NCC and has been an active participant. The PSWN Program, at this time, reiterates its commitment to the goals of the NCC and offers its direct assistance with the creation and operation of the State Interoperability Executive Committees.

## II. STATE INTEROPERABILITY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES

8. The PSWN Program applauds the NCC's recognition of the importance of interoperability to public safety by establishing a specific Subcommittee of the NCC to formulate recommendations for a national interoperability plan and recommendations regarding Federal users of the 700 MHz interoperability spectrum. Increased threats and changing mission requirements have placed new responsibilities on public safety agencies, changing the very nature of their operations, making interoperable communications a necessity of all public safety agencies. The PSWN Program feels that the NCC's collective experience and understanding of the criticality associated with public safety communications uniquely positions the group to offer high impact recommendations that can help meet the operational needs of public safety agencies.

9. The PSWN Program recognizes that the very spirit of interoperability necessitates coordination and partnerships among all levels of public safety. However, these efforts can often

be complex and time consuming to agencies already hard pressed for resources. The PSWN Program agrees with and endorses the NCC's recommendation and believes that the creation of State Interoperability Executive Committees can help public safety agencies overcome these challenges by providing a central forum to share successful interoperability solutions and provide rules and guidelines for the management and use of the interoperability spectrum.

10. In addition, the PSWN Program commends the NCC's suggestion that this coordination occur at the state level. The PSWN Program feels that state level coordination is key to achieving nationwide interoperability as it can leverage and formalize existing local ad hoc interoperability arrangements as well as develop them where lacking. The PSWN Program sees statewide developments as the linchpin in improving interoperability throughout the nation. As state initiatives are often effective for providing the structure, funding, and motivation for participation at the local level, coordination led at the state level is an appropriate choice. In fact, as pointed out by the NCC in its recommendation "most large scale interoperability events, in particular large scale disasters that cause mutual aid plans to be activated, are governed by state statute (e.g., Mutual Aid Pacts) in most states. Indeed under normal circumstances even Federal assistance will not be provided until it is requested by the governor of an impacted state."<sup>10</sup>

11. The PSWN Program further commends the NCC for its provisions for federal participation and representation in the proposed State Interoperability Executive Committees. As the Commission recently established rules that allow federal organizations to share, under certain circumstances, state and local licensee spectrum in the newly allocated public safety 700 MHz bands (i.e. co-equal access), the PSWN Program believes it is imperative that federal agencies participate in the planning and management of this spectrum. Additionally, the realization of

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<sup>10</sup> See *Id.* paragraph 7.

interoperability nationwide requires coordination and partnerships among public safety agencies at all levels of government. The PSWN Program feels that the inclusion of federal agencies in these state level coordination bodies aids in reinforcing the concept of partnerships at all levels and helps to establish nationwide coordination as federal representatives will be in a position to ensure federal interoperability requirements and concerns are addressed in the State Interoperability Executive Committees. These requirements and concerns relate to federal-to-state as well as federal-to-local day-to-day, mutual aid, and task force communications needs.

12. The PSWN Program recognizes the funding and general resource challenges characteristic of committees of this type. By offering its assistance, the PSWN Program hopes to seed resources for start up of the State Interoperability Executive Committees. Currently, the program is transitioning into its second five-year phase, which will focus on providing interoperability services that assist the public safety community in implementing interoperability solutions. As the PSWN Program makes this transition, it finds itself in a unique position to support the development initiatives it feels could help the public safety community effectively and efficiently achieve interoperability. While specifics would need to be discussed and negotiated with the NCC and the Commission and would be subject to the program's resources constraints, the program is well positioned to offer support and resources to enable the development and initial operation of the NCC-recommended State Interoperability Executive Committees until they become self-sustaining.

13. The NCC's recommended creation of State Interoperability Executive Committees coincides with the PSWN Program's shifting focus in the second phase, where it will be concentrating additional efforts and resources on state level coordination. The program has

already begun a concerted outreach effort to form state working groups to address the obstacles to interoperability, particularly coordination and partnerships and funding challenges. In the interest of resource maximization and sound government management, the PSWN Program strongly suggests that the Commission and the PSWN Program work together to establish these State Interoperability Executive Committees. The Committees may then be a joint forum to fulfill the NCC's recommendation and serve as the PSWN Program's interoperability working group to address other matters.

14. In addition to working directly with each of the individual State Interoperability Executive Committees, the PSWN Program offers to be the national coordinator of the Committees. This would ensure that information sharing among and between state public safety interoperability efforts occurs. As the guidelines for the development of these Committees have yet to be established, the explicit nature of PSWN Program coordination is unclear. However, as the program is already an established nationwide support and resource-sharing initiative, operating among all levels of government, the PSWN Program believes that it is well suited and distinctively qualified to provide this type of overarching support to the public safety community.

### III. CONCLUSION

15. The PSWN Program commends the efforts of the NCC and urges the Commission to carefully consider the recommendations that arise from the advisory group's deliberations. The PSWN Program fully supports the creation of State Interoperability Executive Committees and volunteers its resources, subject to negotiation, to see the implementation of this concept. As a demonstration of the merit of these Committees and the role that the PSWN Program can play in making them a reality, below please find the endorsement of the PSWN Program Managers, the

Executive Vice-Chair of the PSWN Executive Committee and the Chair of the PSWN Executive Committee Spectrum Working Group.

Respectfully submitted,

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