



Report in Brief

June 12, 2024

Background

The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 (the Act) established the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet Authority) to ensure the building, deployment, and operation of the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN) dedicated to first responders. On March 28, 2017, FirstNet Authority entered into a contract with AT&T for the construction and operation of the NPSBN. The contract and a later task order originally included coverage/capacity and device connection target requirements that AT&T had to meet with six different milestones through the network buildout. All milestones have payments associated with them. FirstNet Authority and AT&T are responsible for verifying AT&T's performance against performance standards, and FirstNet Authority must also verify that AT&T met device connection targets.

Due to the importance of maintaining and growing public safety adoption of the NPSBN, we sought to determine whether FirstNet Authority took appropriate action to ensure that AT&T's reported device connections are accurate and meet contract requirements.

Why We Did This Review

We announced two concurrent audits to determine whether FirstNet Authority is ensuring that AT&T is achieving the desired results for (1) device connection targets for each state and territory and (2) network coverage for each state and territory. We separated these objectives into three components that include (1) the evolution of the desired results for device connection targets and network coverage as executed through contract modifications, (2) oversight of device connection targets, and (3) oversight of network coverage. This report focuses on the second component: FirstNet Authority's oversight of device connection targets.

FIRST RESPONDER NETWORK AUTHORITY

FirstNet Authority's Lack of Contract Oversight for Device Connection Targets Puts the NPSBN at Risk of Impacting First Responders' Use of the Network

OIG-24-027-A

WHAT WE FOUND

We found that FirstNet Authority did not adequately assess contractor performance to ensure AT&T achieved the desired results for device connection targets for each state and territory. Specifically, FirstNet Authority did not

- develop measurable performance standards and methods of surveillance to assess if reported device connections complied with the Act and contract requirements;
- develop an adequate performance metric to accurately measure public safety use and adoption;
- review AT&T's quality control program results or consistently conduct audits of raw data; or
- remediate deficiencies for device connections.

WHAT WE RECOMMENDED

We recommended that the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information and NTIA Administrator direct FirstNet Authority's Chief Executive Officer and Chief Procurement Officer to do the following:

1. Modify the current quality assurance surveillance plan (QASP) to ensure:
 - a. surveillance methods are sufficiently defined and detailed to verify that AT&T's performance meets contract requirements and the Act's requirements for all work requiring surveillance, including all the criteria of a device connection.
 - b. device connection target key performance indicators are sufficiently designed to accurately measure performance.
2. Direct the contracting officer's representative to document and maintain all surveillance activities, to include surveillance activities conducted by subject-matter experts, in the official contract file.
3. Direct the contracting officer's representative to follow the QASP to conduct sufficient surveillance of device connection targets, to include performing random audits, reviewing AT&T's Quality Control Plan results, and holding AT&T accountable via remediation actions for deficiencies in reporting and performance.