

# Recap of Ohio APCO/NENA state conference

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This is the third installment of GovWin's [blog series](#) for National Public Safety Telecommunicators week.

Earlier this week, the Ohio chapter of the Association of Public Safety Communication Officials (APCO) and the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) held their annual joint conference, which brought together nearly 150 public safety communication officials throughout the Ohio region. As expected, the hot-button topic of the conference was next generation 911 (NG911). Given the unique location and makeup of the state, Ohio, with its three major cities, has a larger requirement than most states when it comes to providing its citizens with enhanced 911 capabilities. This was evident throughout the conference sessions as many of the questions and concerns raised by dispatch officials regarded call handing and capacity. NG911 is coming and it is coming fast. Agencies recognize this and are doing their research and planning now to ensure their citizens have the best 911 service possible.

As stated, NG911 was the topic of choice at the Ohio APCO/NENA conference. Technical Issues Director for NENA Roger Nixon gave an overview of NG911. On top of providing a brief overview of the capabilities and needs for NG911, Nixon outlined the drivers of NG911, the difference between E911 and NG911, and the design features of NG911. Nixon outlined the following:

Drivers of NG911:

- New Technologies and Services
- Improving survivability
- Improving interoperability, flexibility, and information sharing
- IP technology

NG911 Difference:

- Packet-based vs. circuit-switched
- Uses GIS
- No longer a "local" service (interoperability)

Design features:

- Supports interoperability
- Based on open standards
- Promotes open competition
- Enables a transition to a competitive NG911 service provider environment

Nixon also made a point to tell agencies to design request for proposals (RFPs) around a transitional NG911 system as opposed to a full-blown NG911 system based on NENA's i3 standards. Nixon stated that while NENA's i3 document is a good baseline for understanding NG911, no vendor can truly say they adhere to it completely. Nixon stated that agencies should work with their vendor to build out a transition plan for NG911. Nathan Teodoro of 911 Inc. also touched on NG911. He provided additional insight into NG911, but also suggested ways for agencies to minimize their risks in developing a NG911 network. These include:

- Performing network analysis
- Educating dispatchers about new technologies
- Familiarizing the department with the i3 document
- Carefully choose a vendor
- Begin developing funding options early

GovWin's Take

One of the key ingredients in making NG911 a reality within any agency is obtaining the necessary funding to get the project off the ground. During the conference, GovWin presented on federal grants for public safety agencies. Other than outlining potential grant programs that could be used to fund NG911 projects, we presented on tips and tricks associated with grant proposals. One tip of great significance for agencies applying for grants is planning. The grant application process really should start a year in advance. Agencies will need

to plan ahead to ensure they have the correct data and plans, so when the application is announced, they have the necessary information to accurately and effectively apply for the grant dollars.

Part of this planning includes budget planning. Many grant programs have a match program, which means that the awarded agency will need to match a certain percentage of the awarded dollar amount. These programs typically operate on an 80/20 match program where the awarded agency will need to match 20 percent of the grant either through budgeted dollars or in-kind contributions. This is why it is important for agencies to plan ahead for grant programs; they will need to properly set aside funding to cover these match requirements. Given the size and scope of most NG911 projects, this could be a large dollar amount.