

FirstNet releases consultation packages: State talks are next

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On April 30, FirstNet released initial consultation packages to each state and tribal government. The package is the first step in states developing plans for a national broadband network. Through this process, each state will complete the consultation checklist prior to meetings and conference calls with FirstNet, starting in July.



Each state will have to meet with its stakeholders and other contacts in order to determine if it will opt in to the Radio Access Network (RAN) or opt out. If a state opts out, it will have 180 days to develop a plan for its own RAN, which must be approved by the Federal Communications Commission and FirstNet. The state would then initiate its own solicitation process. States that go this route will be able to apply for grant funding; however, the total allocation is not yet known. There will be a lot of work required of each state in order to make this decision; the consultation phase of the FirstNet process will essentially end when a final state plan is presented to its governor.

Analyst's Take

While it may be too soon to determine how many and which states will opt out of FirstNet, there will most certainly be states that make the decision to develop their own RAN. Like with Affordable Care Act, many states decided to build their own health insurance exchange rather than use the federally run network. Still, there were obvious hiccups with both state networks and the initial rollout of the federal network.

While RAN is not at all the same system or type of network, states may be wary of both scenarios. In either case, states that cannot afford their own network – even with grant funding – will join the feds. Other states that may see this as an opportunity to build out a stronger network will go at it alone.

Over the next six months, vendors need to follow the new [FirstNet website](#) for updates and state consultation results. While these state consultations will take place from July 1 through November 30, 2014, they will be occurring on a rolling basis and some states will complete tasks ahead of others. States that decide to opt out early may begin developing solicitations soon, while others may clearly be in favor of joining the federal RAN.

Several states have already begun the process of building out their own broadband networks. [Pennsylvania](#) is currently reviewing vendor proposals, and [Minnesota](#) awarded a contract to Televate for its own broadband

system. Surely, the next six months will be a very important and exciting time as FirstNet inches closer to reality.

Read more about state initiatives in the links provided. Non-subscribers can gain access to GovWin IQ with a [free trial](#).