

## A do-over for LA-RICS?

Posted At : July 29, 2011 1:00 PM | Posted By : Kristin Howe

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As reported in this morning's [Los Angeles Times](#), Los Angeles County announced its estimated \$700 million Regional Interoperable Communications System (**LA-RICS**) project is in jeopardy. Patrick Mallon, the project's executive director, announced yesterday that, to comply with various California codes, the project should have been divided into three separate contracts: one for design and implementation of the system's technical components; one for the design of the signal towers and other structures; and one for the actual building of the towers and structures. As it stands now, the project was only procured for through one, all-encompassing solicitation meant to lead to a single contract.

The goal of the project, which has been in the works for three years, was to create a modern, integrated wireless voice and data communications system to support more than 34,000 first responders and mission-critical personnel within the Los Angeles region. The project was originally designed after September 11, 2001, when it became clear that interoperability among first responders was a vital, yet severely lacking component to emergency response. The county began planning the project to ensure the thousands of first responders and emergency workers could communicate in the event of a large-scale crisis. While the events of 9/11 precipitated dozens of hearings on the issue of interoperability, and hundreds of similar ventures across the county, the LA-RICS project is one of the largest and most well-known of its kind. The county received more than \$250 million in federal funding to complete the project, which could be lost if the procurement process has to start over since the majority of funding streams have strict deadlines associated with them. Without federal funding, the entire project could be in jeopardy. Members of the project's oversight board are expected to travel to Washington, D.C. to request extensions of the various deadlines so the money can still be used.

### **Analyst's Take:**

This contract has been marred with numerous problems, including delays and protests, since the early procurement stages. A solicitation released on April 5, 2010, was open until August 4, 2010, and required potential vendors to attend two mandatory conferences. The county began negotiating a contract with Raytheon just last month after resolving an initial protest from Motorola. Given the recent developments, it seems Motorola and other interested parties may still have a chance to secure involvement in at least a portion of the project. The field of participants is likely to open up now that the scope of work is smaller, and more specialized firms will now have a chance to get a piece of the pie.

Los Angeles County has shown its cards, and while the details of the new solicitations remain unknown, the specifications and requirements are likely to be largely the same. This will give vendors already familiar with the project a leg up as they begin to rework their responses. Interested vendors should begin to gear up again and start reviewing previously submitted proposals and pricing requirements. Vendors should also begin determining which solicitation they will respond to in case restrictions limit companies from responding to more than one. With so much up in the air, including whether the project will even survive if federal funding is lost, vendors are likely to have a significant amount of time to prepare their new responses; however, they should begin reaching out to project officials in the near future.