

FirstNet Deputy General Manager's Blog: Looking Back @ IWCE

Another successful IWCE is in the books. Congratulations to the organizers for putting together a strong lineup, including several tracks on the nationwide public safety broadband network. The FirstNet team saw a great deal of innovation and information sharing last week – on the floor of the exhibit hall, during many of the panels and sessions, and in the hallway conversations that took place throughout the convention center. Our General Manager, Bill D'Agostino, shared his initial impressions in a message he posted on the website last Thursday. Here's a quick recap of FirstNet's participation at IWCE.

For starters, IWCE was an opportunity for the FirstNet team to continue our outreach and dialogue with the public safety and technology community. Bill and I delivered Wednesday's keynote presentation during which we focused on key FirstNet priorities going forward – such as planning, outreach, partnership, and innovation for the network by talking about the art of the possible. In addition, we had three of our Board members participating in various panel discussions and walking the exhibit hall floor – including Chief Jeff Johnson, Chief Chuck Dowd, and Kevin McGinnis, who also provided a FirstNet update to the National Public Safety Telecommunications Council's (NPSTC) stakeholder forum held the day after IWCE.

On Thursday, Jeff and Chuck participated together on a panel that covered a range of topics that are critical to the long-term success of the network – including our business planning; the state consultation process; the development and use of applications; network security; and leveraging lessons learned from the BTOP projects. I think Chief Johnson summed it up best when he said that FirstNet is well positioned to develop a sustainable business plan for deploying the network now that we have more staff and a strategy to get there in the program roadmap. "Business planning is going on every day," he emphasized. "We have to build a business model that is going to evolve and innovate."

Chief Dowd made a great point when he said the state consultation process would be an ongoing conversation between FirstNet and the states that must account for all types of potential users of the network, including tribes, large and small cities, and rural jurisdictions, among others. He said FirstNet understands that the public safety stakeholder and vendor communities are eager for more details on next steps for planning and consultation and that our goal is to get details out as fast as we reasonably can.

Chief Dowd also had the opportunity to participate on a panel with representatives from a major telecommunications carrier and utility interests to discuss partnership opportunities for FirstNet. Chief Dowd said FirstNet would explore all potential options -- including commercial infrastructure, utility infrastructure, public safety and other infrastructure -- to deploy the nationwide network. "All of the cards are on the table," he said.

Those are a few of the key takeaways from my perspective. There were just too many to list in one blog entry. I want to thank everyone who I met with for providing me with their honest and open feedback on FirstNet. I enjoyed my meetings and conversations with public safety officials, Federal and state government representatives, vendors, telecommunications carriers, and journalists in attendance.

We will keep the dialogue going this week with our quarterly webinar with the state Single Points of Contact (SPOC) tomorrow, April 2. Among the agenda items, Bill and I will discuss the FirstNet program roadmap and provide an update on the state consultation process. Also tomorrow, the FirstNet outreach and state consultation teams will be meeting with staff of the Washington, DC-based associations that make up the Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC). The briefing will include an update on FirstNet's progress on network planning, outreach, and the state consultation process, and will be followed by a Q&A session and open discussion.

I look forward to providing you with more updates soon.

TJ



Chief Johnson and Chief Dowd talk to members of the audience after their IWCE panel discussion