

## **Request for Information (RFI)**

### **Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) Interoperability Task Force**

### **Governance for Testing Program**

**May 22, 2024**

## **Introduction**

In 2022, the NG9-1-1 Interoperability Task Force (“Task Force”) was formed to advance the development of a cost-effective and equitable testing program to promote conformance with Next Generation 9-1-1 (“NG9-1-1”) standards and interoperability of NG9-1-1 systems and services. The Task Force is led by representatives from the public and private sectors and includes various federal, state, and local government agencies, and non-governmental organizations. More information on the Task Force is available at <https://ng911interop.org>.

This Request for Information (“RFI”) is being issued to collect information from interested stakeholders for the purpose of helping the Task Force establish an NG9-1-1 Test Program. In particular, the RFI seeks input on important governance issues including the identification of suitable candidate organizations to serve as or participate in the Governance Structure for the program. The purpose of this RFI is to gather information only. While information gathered through the RFI process will be used to inform the Task Force regarding potential next steps, the RFI will not be used to make a final decision regarding the selection of a Governance Structure for program oversight.

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## **I. Purpose and Objectives**

### **A. Purpose**

The purpose of this RFI is to solicit information from interested stakeholders related to the establishment of an NG9-1-1 Test Program (“Test Program”) that would facilitate testing of NG9-1-1 components, systems, and services. In particular, the RFI seeks input on the identification of entities that would be suitable candidates to oversee the management of the Test Program, consistent with parameters outlined by the Task Force.

**All interested stakeholders are strongly encouraged to respond to this RFI and to provide answers to any or all questions so the Task Force will have a full record of responses on which to base future decisions on program governance. Response to the RFI is not required for further consideration in the governance process, will not prohibit those who respond from further participation in the process, and is not intended to select a particular entity for the management of the Test Program.**

### **B. Background**

NG9-1-1 is a standardized, IP-based system used to provide the public with access to emergency response services. It enables Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) and Emergency Communications Centers (ECCs) to receive, process, and analyze all types of 9-1-1 requests for assistance and is dramatically changing the way the public gains access to emergency services. In addition to supporting traditional voice 9-1-1 calls, it also enables the public to transmit text, images, video, and other rich data to PSAPs / ECCs and, as a result, provides first responders with increased access to information that improves emergency response and situational awareness. NG9-1-1 is still evolving and will continue to offer more advanced technologies in the future.

The promise of true NG9-1-1 will only be realized if implemented in a standards-based, secure, and fully interoperable manner. The Task Force was created to support these goals by developing a Test Program that would perform several interrelated functions: (1) promote a more uniform interpretation of NG9-1-1 standards in support of the NENA i3 centric architecture; (2) develop open-source testing tools that establish a reference test for NG9-1-1 products, systems, and services; (3) develop and manage a standards conformance and interoperability testing and certification program; and (4) promote the work of the Test Program and publish positive test results.

The Task Force recognizes that the telecommunications sector is not static. Communications services and the technologies that support them will continue to evolve, and NG9-1-1 systems and services will evolve with them. The Task Force stresses the importance of ensuring that the proposed Test Program accommodate the evolving nature of the telecommunications industry (e.g., the introduction of 5G and 6G technologies) and the essential need for our nation’s NG9-1-1 systems to interoperate with these future communications networks. As a result, the program must evolve as communications services, technologies, and standards evolve. A failure to do so risks undermining our nation’s emergency response systems including by exposing them to increase vulnerability from cyber-based attacks.

The Test Program is envisioned as a stakeholder-led program managed by both public and private sector representatives from the 9-1-1 community. Its success relies substantially on the creation of an effective governance framework to guide its implementation and ongoing operations. In support of that goal, the Task Force has adopted a Governance Model that outlines key attributes, components, policies, and processes that should be part of any effective governance framework. This Governance Model is described in more detail in the next section and included for reference in the appendix.

Ultimately, the Task Force seeks to establish a Governance Structure, consistent with the Governance Model, that will oversee management of the Test Program. This Governance Structure could be an existing Non-governmental Organization (NGO), or similar entity, that satisfies the criteria identified by the Task Force, or it could be a new entity explicitly created for the purposes of managing the Test Program. This RFI is focused primarily on collecting information from interested stakeholders that will assist the Task Force in identifying any existing entities that may be both qualified and interested in serving as the Governance Structure.

### **C. Governance Model**

The success of the Test Program relies substantially on the creation of an effective governance framework to guide its implementation and ongoing operations. The Task Force has adopted a Governance Model, included in the appendix, that outlines what an effective governance framework looks like for such a program. It describes the attributes and organizational framework the Task Force believes are important to effective governance and provides specific objectives in the areas of Executive Oversight, Program Functions, Committee Structure, Policies & Processes, Finances, Legal Matters, and Risk Management.

This Governance Model will be used to identify suitable candidates that might serve as the Governance Structure for the program, and the Task Force encourages respondents to refer to it when answering questions included in the RFI.

### **D. Objectives**

The primary purpose of the RFI is to collect information that will assist the Task Force in identifying existing entities that may be qualified to serve as the Governance Structure for the Test Program. Consequently, it seeks information on any existing entities that may have the required governance framework, experience, and interest to serve as the Governance Structure for the Test Program. It asks respondents to describe how governance of the existing entity aligns with the objectives outlined in the Governance Model. Where the entity does not meet some of these objectives, the RFI asks respondents to describe how their governance framework and operations might be adjusted to better align with the vision, mission, and objectives of the proposed Test Program.

Secondarily, the RFI seeks input on the Governance Model itself and on additional factors the Task Force should consider in selecting an entity to serve as the Governance Structure. Importantly, the RFI is not intended to select a particular entity, and the Task Force may ultimately choose to create a new NGO, or similar entity, to serve in that capacity. If that is the

case, the Governance Model would be used as a guide to create the new Governance Structure.

## **II. Instructions to Respondent**

### **A. Timeline**

RFI Respondents are asked to conform to the following timeline.

May 22, 2024	RFI published.
June 11, 2024	Due date for submission of Respondent questions.
June 21, 2024	Publish date for Task Force's answers to Respondents.
July 22, 2024	Due date of Respondents' submissions. Evaluation period and follow-up with Respondents begins.

### **B. Point of Contact**

The single point of contact for this RFI and the delivery point for responses and correspondence is: [RFIresponse@ng911interop.org](mailto:RFIresponse@ng911interop.org).

### **C. Format of Response**

Respondents should use the structure of Section III as the outline for their response and submit their responses below each section header in this outline. Additional submittals beyond the limitations of the format presented should be included as Attachments.

#### **1. Response Instructions**

RFI questions are directed both at prospective candidates interested in acting as the Governance Structure of the Test Program, as well others that may have information to provide that is relevant to creation of the program.

For the sections below, please respond in-line following each question / requested item. Include appropriate supporting figures and graphics as needed to clarify the responses.

Responses should be submitted in Arial 11 pt. font (exclusive of tables, figures, and any supporting documentation).

#### **2. Submission Instructions**

RFI responses must be submitted by email to the point of contact shown above in a PDF file that supports searching and notations and marked as "Response to NG9-1-1 Task Force Test Program RFI."

**Any responses not received by email cannot be accepted.**

### **III. Respondent Questions**

#### **A. Respondent Contact and General Information**

Respondents are asked to provide the following information where applicable:

1. Legal Name of the Entity;
2. Type of Entity (Corporation, Academic, Foundation, Public Safety Agency, Etc.);
  - 9-1-1 Authority (PSAP or similar State/Local 9-1-1 Agency)
  - Other State/Local Government Agency
  - Federal Government Agency
  - Non-Governmental Organization (Public Safety)
  - Non-Governmental Organization (Commercial)
  - Corporation (e.g., NG9-1-1 Vendor, Carrier)
  - Testing Laboratory
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Name, Title and Contact Information of Primary Contact;
4. Entity headquarters address;
5. Additional Information about the Entity (2 pages maximum);
6. Provide any brochures / literature, if relevant (10 pages maximum); and
7. In addition, the Respondent may submit any existing White Papers or publications that provide relevant information to the scope of this RFI.

#### **B. Respondent Interests/Qualifications**

Respondents are asked to briefly describe their interests and qualifications as they relate to the issues outlined in this RFI. This includes their knowledge of and experience with emergency communications services, NG9-1-1 systems and related standards, testing of advanced technologies, program management, and any other areas pertinent to the RFI.

#### **C. Identification of Existing Entity for Governance Structure**

In this section, respondents are asked to provide ONLY information relevant to the Task Force's identification of an existing entity qualified to serve as the Governance Structure responsible for overseeing the management of the Test Program. The Task Force seeks information about those candidate organizations that respondents believe are both qualified and interested in serving in this capacity, however, it is not seeking a commitment from prospective candidates.

In providing this information, please refer to the Governance Model provided in the appendix. It is understood that some entities that wish to be considered as candidates may not currently meet all the objectives outlined in the Governance Model and may require some adjustments to their structure and/or operations in order to do so. Recognizing that fact, please provide answers to the following questions in a manner that clearly explains how the organization you propose for consideration complies, or could be made to comply, with the objectives outlined by the Task Force.

- Do you seek to identify an existing organization as a candidate to oversee management of the Test Program? If yes:
  - Please describe your affiliation (if any) with the organization you wish to identify. If you are not affiliated with the organization, please answer the remaining questions in this section to the best of your ability.
  - Please provide the official name of the organization, contact information for the Executive Director, CEO, or other officer of the organization, information regarding the organization's mission, scope, and legal status, and a statement describing how the organization's mission aligns with the mission of the Test Program.
  - Please describe the organization's governance framework and why you believe it would meet the objectives outlined in the Governance Model developed by the Task Force. If the organization cannot currently satisfy all of these objectives, please identify which it cannot satisfy and describe what adjustments it could make to align with the overarching goals of the Task Force.
  - Please describe the operational structure of the organization and its available staffing resources including the number of staff supporting executive functions, operations, finance, marketing, etc. Describe the technical expertise the organization has, or could gain access to, that would allow it to effectively manage a Test Program that will continue to evolve with changes in technology. Include in your description any details related to the organization's experience in the areas of testing, interoperability, cybersecurity, and any other areas relevant to the effective implementation and operation of NG9-1-1 systems. See Section III.D for additional information sought by the Task Force regarding technical issues.
  - Please describe the organization's business model and provide any related information regarding how the organization and its operations are funded (e.g., private, fee-based, membership subscription). Include information relevant to how the organization could sustain sufficient funding in the future to support NG9-1-1 testing for the long term. See Section III.D for additional information sought by the Task Force regarding financial issues.



- The goal of the Task Force is to establish a stakeholder-led Test Program, and the Governance Model describes how executive oversight functions performed by an Executive Board could ensure that important stakeholder groups are effectively represented in this process. Does the organization you identify as a candidate have an Executive Board, or similar structure, that provides executive oversight of the organization? If yes, does it include individuals representing different stakeholder groups? Please provide a description of the current structure of the Board and identification of those stakeholder groups represented by Board members (e.g., State/Local 9-1-1 Authorities, Law Enforcement, Fire Service, EMS, Other Government Agencies, Commercial, etc.). If the organization does not have an Executive Board, or does not include individuals representing different stakeholder groups, please describe how it administers executive oversight and how it considers input from relevant stakeholder groups.
- Do you have additional input to provide the Task Force regarding the identification of an existing entity to serve as the Governance Structure? If yes:
  - Please provide a detailed description of your recommendations for how the Task Force should identify and select an entity to serve as the Governance Structure for the proposed Test Program. Your response can include input related to the criteria used by the Task Force, or any other information you deem relevant to the identification and selection of an entity to serve as the Governance Structure.

#### **D. Additional Information Supportive of the Task Force's Efforts**

In this section, respondents are asked to provide any additional information they believe is relevant to the Task Force's efforts to establish a governance framework for the Test Program.

- Do you wish to provide the Task Force with information related to the establishment of a new entity, rather than identification of an existing entity, to serve as the Governance Structure? If yes:
  - Please provide any information you believe is important for the Task Force to consider in establishing a new entity to serve as the Governance Structure.
  - If you believe establishing a new entity is the preferred approach, even when qualified candidates already exist, please clearly state why the Task Force should pursue such an approach.
- Do you wish to provide the Task Force with information related to the Governance Model used to assess the suitability of candidates for the Governance Structure? If yes, please answer the following questions:

- Do you support the Governance Model developed by the Task Force? Please describe specific sections and objectives outlined in the document that you believe are especially important to ensuring the establishment of an effective Test Program.
- The goal of the Task Force is to establish a stakeholder-led Test Program, and the Governance Model describes how executive oversight functions performed by an Executive Board could ensure that important stakeholder groups are effectively represented in this process. Are there other ways to ensure that program governance includes a diverse set of stakeholder interests aside from including these stakeholder representatives on the Executive Board? Are there process factors that the Governance Structure should consider and include as part of governance to ensure all relevant stakeholders are adequately represented?
- Do you believe the Governance Model developed by the Task Force, or any aspect of it, should be modified? If yes, please identify the specific section(s) of the Governance Model you believe should be modified, provide details about what aspect(s) should be changed, and discuss an alternative approach for achieving the Task Force's objectives.
- Do you wish to provide the Task Force with more specific information related to technical matters, financial issues, cybersecurity, or other issues important to the successful operation of the proposed Test Program?
  - How should the proposed Test Program be designed to best accommodate the evolving nature of the telecommunications industry and NG9-1-1 systems and services? How can it ensure that changes in NG9-1-1 testing requirements and processes accommodate technological changes in a timely manner?
  - How should the Governance Structure ensure the Test Program has the required technical expertise and input from a diverse group of technical experts to ensure testing is performed consistent with industry standards and in an unbiased manner?
  - How can the proposed Test Program promote cost effective testing and competition in the provision of NG9-1-1 systems and

- services? What is needed to ensure the Test Program has access to sufficient funds over the long term?
- How should the Test Program be designed to address the critical cybersecurity requirements of NG9-1-1 systems? What roles do the U.S. Government and other stakeholders play in ensuring adequate protections against cyber threats? How can the establishment of a Governance Structure best ensure that NG9-1-1 testing aligns with our nation's interests in protecting its emergency response systems from cyber-based threats?
  - How should the Test Program be designed to promote greater NG9-1-1 accessibility for the speech and hearing-impaired communities?
- Do you have any other information you would like to provide the Task Force regarding efforts to establish a Test Program? If yes: Please provide specific, detailed information to support your statement(s).

## **IV. RFI Terms and Conditions**

### **A. General**

This RFI is issued for information and planning purposes only. It does not commit the Task Force to a contract for any service or even to transition to a Request for Proposal ("RFP") at some point in the future. The Task Force will make a decision regarding next steps after evaluating RFI responses. Not responding to this RFI, however, could affect a Respondent's status relative to a future RFP, if one is issued. It is the responsibility of the Respondent to monitor the status of the RFI.

The Task Force will not provide compensation to any Respondent to this RFI for any expenses incurred by Respondent for response preparation. Respondent submits its response at its own risk and expense. All responses to this RFI and any supporting documentation will become the property of the Task Force and will not be returned.

The Task Force considers all information, documentation and other materials submitted in response to this RFI to be of a non-confidential and/or non-proprietary nature, and all such materials are subject to public disclosure. Respondents should not include in their submissions any proprietary and/or confidential materials, as access to such materials cannot be restricted. By responding to the RFI, Respondents acknowledge and agree that the Task Force shall have no liability to the Respondent, or to any other person or entity, for disclosing the information included in received responses.

**B. Evaluation**

The Task Force is comprised of a small staff and relies on industry volunteers for the development of its standards and practices. It is led by representatives from the public and private sectors and includes various federal, state, and local government agencies, and non-governmental organizations. Responses to this RFI will be reviewed by staff and industry volunteers.

## **Appendix**

### **Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) Interoperability Task Force**

#### **Governance Model**

**December 7, 2023**