

# FirstTech Strategic Plan 2021

## History

The First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet Authority) is an independent authority at the federal level that is responsible for building, operating, and maintaining the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN), also known as the FirstNet Network. It was formed at the federal level by legislation in 2012. The same legislation also created the State and Local Implementation Grant Program (SLIGP) which is administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and requires the designation of a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to oversee the grant and serve as the contact for the FirstNet Authority. The First Responders Emerging Technologies program (FirstTech) was formed mid-2018 as an evolution of the work from the early days of North Carolina's engagement with the federal FirstNet project. The FirstTech program is housed under the DIT's Broadband Infrastructure Office and continues the focus on the FirstNet project with a broader scope to encompass technologies and policies related to public safety's use of data connectivity. North Carolina designated the FirstTech program director as the SPOC and the program expands on that role to focus on related technologies that impact first responders. The program is responsible for the program requirements of the SLIGP grant. This includes maintaining an on-going consultation role with the FirstNet Authority and NTIA. This strategic plan serves as guiding principles for FirstTech. It is the intent of FirstTech to deliver this program to better serve first responders at all levels of government so that they can focus on their mission of protecting the public.

## Vision

To create a North Carolina where all responders can seamlessly and securely communicate using advanced technologies.

## Mission

To serve North Carolina's responder community through thought leadership, direct experience, and unbiased information to support responders' understanding, adoption, and usage of the best technologies available.

## Overview

Technology is accelerating at an exponential rate and new technologies have recently been accelerated by the work being done by the FirstNet Authority. First responders, like many in the public sector, are slow to adopt new technologies and are often exploring solutions within the scope of their own discipline or agency. FirstTech will approach technologies that are being used by multiple disciplines (emergency management, law enforcement, 911, fire, emergency medical services, and other responders) to serve as a collaboration effort between such disciplines. The program can serve as an adjunct to the technologists from individual agencies to bring a broader depth of knowledge reviewing the impact of a new technology. The impact can occur at the operational, financial, as well as the technological level.

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The FirstTech program is comprised of 3 main pillars with associated goals along with general program management. FirstTech will work to promote North Carolina as a technology hub for public safety technologies and prioritize engagements with organizations that highlight the workforce in North Carolina such as RIoT and the Wireless Research Center. The program will provide oversight management of any federal grants received and maintain accountability over state appropriated funds to remain within budget parameters. The below goals are not an exhaustive list but provides guidance as many emerging technology projects can spring up quickly and move at a fast pace.

## ***Pillar #1: Responder Engagement***

- 1.1. Investigate and research technology impacts on budgets, public policy, operational, and other non-technical implications.
- 1.2. Serve on the State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) as an identified member.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.3. Support the Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP) as published by the SIEC.<sup>2</sup>
  - 1.3.1. “Promote data sharing to improve situational awareness and remain network neutral from a data interoperability standpoint.”
  - 1.3.2. “Identify mission critical voice and mission critical data public safety communications interoperability gaps and develop solutions for current and emerging technologies.”
- 1.4. Enhance effective governance across partners with a stake in emergency communications, embracing a shared responsibility of the whole community from traditional emergency responders and supporting entities to the citizens served<sup>3</sup>
- 1.5. Work with responder agencies by invite to identify problems where technology can provide a solution.
- 1.6. Work with all public safety and first responder agencies to continue eliminating silos and encourage sharing networks as identified in the State Broadband Plan.<sup>4</sup>
- 1.7. Participate in training and exercise events to remain knowledgeable of current responder operational environments and technology usage. Help exercise planners develop communication relevant injects and trainings. Provide subject matter expertise to trainings and exercises incorporating new technologies.
- 1.8. Provide subject matter expertise to North Carolina Emergency Management or local response agencies as requested during disasters, emergencies, or planning activities for large scale events. Serve as State Emergency Response Team partner for North Carolina Emergency Management (NCEM) as identified in the Emergency Operations Plan<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> NCEM SIEC overview <https://www.ncdps.gov/emergency-management/emergency-communications/interoperability/statewide-interoperability-exec-committee>

<sup>2</sup> NCEM Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP) [https://files.nc.gov/ncdps/documents/files/2018\\_North\\_Carolina\\_SCIP-4-20-18.pdf](https://files.nc.gov/ncdps/documents/files/2018_North_Carolina_SCIP-4-20-18.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP) National Priorities <https://www.cisa.gov/necp>

<sup>4</sup> NC DIT Broadband Infrastructure Office. (2018). *State Broadband Plan - Public Safety*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbroadband.gov/connectingnc/public-safety/>

<sup>5</sup> NCEM 2020 Emergency Operations Plan [https://files.nc.gov/ncdps/documents/files/Divisions/EM/EOP/NCEOP\\_2020\\_FINAL-Entire-Plan-488-Pages.pdf](https://files.nc.gov/ncdps/documents/files/Divisions/EM/EOP/NCEOP_2020_FINAL-Entire-Plan-488-Pages.pdf)

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- 1.9. Provide subject matter expertise to the Department of Public Safety, Department of Health and Human Services – Office of EMS and Office of Rural Health, Department of Insurance – Office of State Fire Marshall, Criminal Justice Information Network (CJIN), the North Carolina 911 Board, and the many public safety agencies throughout the state, especially smaller entities with limited staff to explore emerging technologies and identifying areas where a cost savings can be achieved.
- 1.10. Enable agency decision-makers to be well informed regarding implementing new technologies, hosting a Technical Expo as one method to engage with agencies.
- 1.11. Explore the concept of a lending library for emerging technology to allow first responder agencies to use them for an extended period of time to evaluate if the technology would benefit the agency and allow FirstTech to receive direct feedback for such technology.

## ***Pillar #2: Industry Engagement***

- 2.1. Engage with the technology industry to understand the latest hardware and software being developed for responders such as:
  - 2.1.1. Network advancements to include cellular (5G, 6G, etc.) and others (WiFi, satellite, etc.)
  - 2.1.2. End-user specific hardware appropriate for first responder operating environments
  - 2.1.3. Software applications appropriate for first responders for desktop and mobile operating systems
- 2.2. Collaborate with industry subject-matter experts to create opportunities for evaluating new and emerging technologies within the first responder market. Provide input and feedback so NC agencies' help develop meaningful products and offerings.
  - 2.2.1. Execute the standard DIT Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) with third party organizations to allow the sharing of confidential information in support of activities as needed.

## ***Pillar #3: Partner Engagement***

- 3.1. Continue to forge strong partnerships with local governments and build awareness of available DIT resources, including IT procurement, shared services, and cybersecurity tools.
- 3.2. Monitor FirstNet's rollout and provide support and information to local governments that subscribe or are deciding whether to subscribe to the oversight service as identified in the Program Evaluation Division report.<sup>6</sup>
- 3.3. Serve on national efforts to further technology projects that will impact North Carolina responders such as projects led by the US Department of Homeland Security, Federal Communications Commission, National Telecommunications & Information Agency, and others.
- 3.4. Support the Public Safety Research Center as part of the Memorandum of Understanding between NC DIT, UNC-TV, and the Wireless Research Center.<sup>7</sup> Explore ways to expand the services offered to public safety, including the delivery of dispatch information over digital television.

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<sup>6</sup> NC Program Evaluation Division. (2018). *PED VIPER-FirstNet Study*. Retrieved from <https://ncleg.net/PED/Reports/2018/VIPER-FirstNet.html>

<sup>7</sup> UNC-TV ANNOUNCES NEW PUBLIC SAFETY RESEARCH CENTER PARTNERSHIP <https://www.unctv.org/about/pressroom/psrc/>