Enhancing Statewide Communications Interoperability:

SAFECOM Recommendations on a Funding Strategy for the State of Nevada

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Introduction

SAFECOM, a communications program of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office for Interoperability and Compatibility (OIC), works with its federal partners to provide research, development, testing and evaluation, guidance, tools, and templates on communications-related issues to local, tribal, state, and federal public safety agencies.

OIC was directed by Section 7304 of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-458) to address communication issues facing public safety. As such, OIC, through SAFECOM, is conducting two Regional Communications Interoperability Pilot (RCIP) projects. The purpose of each RCIP project is twofold, to improve interoperable communications by developing models and tools that can be used nationwide and to improve interoperability within the selected pilot sites. SAFECOM is conducting the first of these pilot projects in the State of Nevada through a partnership with the Nevada Communications Steering Committee (NCSC).

This report to the NCSC presents SAFECOM's suggested strategy to secure sustainable funding streams for Nevada's communications interoperability model. Information presented in this document is organized as follows:

- *Background:* Provides a brief overview of the Nevada Regional Communications Interoperability Pilot (RCIP) project.

- *Recommendations for the Development of the State of Nevada's Funding Strategy:* Outlines a strategic approach to secure consistent and stable funding for communications interoperability efforts in Nevada.

- *Available Funding Mechanisms:* Contains an overview of the potential funding mechanisms from local, state, and federal sources.

Background

The Nevada Regional Communications Interoperability Pilot Project

Phase I: Development of a Statewide Strategic Plan

During Phase I of the Nevada RCIP project, SAFECOM worked with the NCSC to complete a strategic planning process to inform and further improve the statewide communications interoperability plan. During this process, six regional focus groups held across the State gathered input and comments from public safety practitioners. The input came from representatives of local, tribal, state, and federal agencies as well as elected and appointed officials. The focus group participants addressed the current realities of regional communications interoperability in Nevada, shared a vision of improved communications interoperability, and suggested a course of action to move Nevada closer to that shared vision. Phase I culminated in a strategic planning session, conducted in Las Vegas on September 14, 2005.

During this session, members of the public safety community validated and prioritized the following four strategic initiatives:

- Governance*:* Establish a governance structure to allow a single point of contact for all interoperability activities.

- Capabilities assessment*:* Conduct a capabilities assessment and gap analysis using the results to:

  - Maximize existing capabilities pending the development of improved communications interoperability.
  - Increase training and awareness of first responders on how to make current equipment and communications systems operationally effective.

- Funding*:* Secure consistent funding for ongoing development, capital replacement, and maintenance costs, and identify partnerships where resources will be provided.

- Public education*:* Increase education of the public, elected officials, and policy makers on the requirements and priorities for public safety communications so that they have realistic expectations and provide appropriate levels of support.

SAFECOM used the practitioners' input and their strategic initiatives to develop a strategic recommendations report with specific implementation tasks in order to enhance public safety interoperable communications capabilities. On January 10, 2006, the NCSC adopted SAFECOM's recommendations. It established working groups to determine how to incorporate the recommendations, and any modifications, into the Nevada Communications Interoperability Plan.

Phase II: Support for Implementation of the Statewide Plan

SAFECOM committed to developing several specific guidance documents during Phase II of the Nevada RCIP project in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signed between it and Nevada. These guidance documents are intended to specifically address Nevada's needs on funding, procurement, and governance as well as inform the development of case studies and models that may be useful to communities across the Nation. Specifically, SAFECOM agreed to provide Nevada with a detailed approach to securing funding for interoperable communications.

Current State in Nevada

While the NCSC has the authority to develop the statewide communications interoperability plan and the Nevada Commission on Homeland Security (NCHS) has the authority to approve the plan developed by the NCSC, neither entity has direct implementation authority. In addition, as of this writing, there is no allocated funding for implementation. If funds are allocated, it appears the two agencies in Nevada that may impact the allocation of funds are the NCHS Finance Committee and the Nevada Department of Public Safety Division of Emergency Management (DEM).

DEM is Nevada's point of contact for grants from the DHS Office of Grants and Training (G&T) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). DEM's responsibilities include preparing and submitting applications, preparing program financial reports, and overseeing program financial audits. If Nevada decides to implement the communications interoperability plan, then there are a number of ways to move forward that are explained below in the recommendations.

Recommendations for the Development of the State of Nevada's Funding Strategy

Create a Funding Working Group Under the NCSC or the Entity Established to Implement the Statewide Plan

To develop a comprehensive funding strategy, Nevada should establish a regionally representative funding working group. Its purpose would be to aid in the coordination between multiple jurisdictions and agencies so that utilized funds help achieve common goals. This working group would allow Nevada to better coordinate funding initiatives while still managing other activities. In addition, it may be suited to address the implementation needs of the local and state communities.

The function of the working group should be clarified through a charter. The charter would be used to:

- Identify the mission and purpose of the working group (e.g., raising funds for state agencies, developing a backbone system that can be used in local communities, or distributing funds to local agencies for their own purchases).

- Establish the rules concerning group membership, selection, and decision-making criteria.

- Reference formal agreements (e.g., MOUs) between jurisdictions and disciplines that describe how funds will be allocated.

The Finance Committee and DEM may be helpful in determining the allocation of funds. If this funding working group is established, then SAFECOM suggests inviting public officials, such as county commissioners with budgetary authority, to participate.

Estimate and Prioritize Needs

SAFECOM recommends that the working group develop cost estimates and prioritize the funding needs of localities and state agencies. The Nevada Communications Interoperability Plan established a communications interoperability framework for Nevada, which should inform the prioritization of funding needs.

SAFECOM suggests the following method for prioritization of needs:

- Compare the needs to the state's near- and long-term strategies (as documented in the Nevada Communications Interoperability Plan).

- Determine whether addressing the needs is part of a sound acquisition plan.

- Determine whether addressing the needs builds upon the coordination and collaboration across disciplines and jurisdictions.

- Assess the available funding mechanisms.

However, until a baseline capabilities assessment is completed and all of the communications interoperability needs are identified, the size of the gap between the funding needed and the

funding available cannot be quantified. Using the baseline capabilities assessment will determine the extent of the outstanding needs identified in the statewide plan.

Review Acquisition Plans

As mentioned above, SAFECOM suggests the working group review all communications-related acquisition plans to gain an understanding of the current and planned acquisition projects across the state. The review would allow the working group to better support localities and regions in identifying appropriate funding mechanisms for their needs. Specifically, the working group should review acquisition plans for the following purposes:

▪ To identify common goals.

▪ To determine shareable resources.

▪ To reveal opportunities for combined purchasing (e.g., buying wholesale or negotiating discounted prices).

Identify Available Funding Mechanisms

An array of funding sources for communications interoperability efforts is available at different levels of government. It should be noted when considering federal funding that it is often limited, constrained, and requested by many competing sources. In addition, not all financing methods are appropriate to all public safety agencies. Consequently, public safety agencies should not only identify available and qualified funding sources for their projects, but should also consider the level of effort required to win funding from the chosen sources. Success is more likely if efforts are focused on the most appropriate funding mechanisms for the state's wireless communication needs.

Establish Valuable Partnerships

SAFECOM suggests the working group explore partnerships with private, local, tribal, state, and federal entities to leverage resources and maximize cost savings. The purpose of multi-jurisdictional partnerships and public-private partnerships is to reduce the resources needed for interoperability and help build political and public support. Such partnerships could increase the state's ability to leverage the capabilities assessment data. The data can be used to identify and raise awareness about opportunities for multi-jurisdictional, multi-agency, and public-private partnerships across Nevada. Further, the results of partnership efforts may include sharing infrastructure and equipment, cooperative purchases, and joint grant applications.

Essential actions toward this aim include:

▪ Identify existing partnerships and formal agreements for sharing resources within Nevada in order to document templates, lessons learned, and best practices.

▪ Develop Interlocal Agreements or Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) templates with policies and procedures for how to fund these agreements and to ensure each party understands its rights and obligations.

▪ Communicate with federal agencies operating in Nevada to see if potential partnerships exist.

- Identify criteria that are often important to successful partnerships such as mutual benefits and shared decision making.

Consider Laws and Limitations

The working group should consider the laws and limitations concerning capital projects, the legislature's biennial budget process, the prevailing political climate, and the overall difficulty of pursuing specific funding mechanisms. These factors affect the availability and accessibility of funding mechanisms. As other priorities for funding at the state or local level arise, education of public officials will be important to ensure appropriate investment levels for public safety interoperability projects.

Establish a Process for Distributing Funds to Local Communities and State Entities

Before any funds are received, the working group should establish a method for how they will be allocated. Nevada should ensure that local communities and state entities are maximizing the funding resources by developing and publicizing a process that expedites the obligation of funding resources. Nevada may consider the following sample steps for the grant application process as the state develops its own funding distribution model and process:

- Publish guidelines that provide specific information relevant to the grant application process, scheduling, matching fund requirements, and other special conditions.

- Develop a set of criteria for grant evaluations that is shared and understood prior to beginning the grant application process.

- Ensure that local and state agencies and jurisdictions submitting grant applications include a reimbursement agreement.

- Ensure that local and state agencies understand that favorable consideration is given to applications developed through regional coordination and collaboration.

- Establish a timeframe for local and state agencies to submit their grant applications and when award notifications will be released.

- Establish a timeframe for local and state agencies to submit their invoices for reimbursement and notice for when payments will be processed.[1]

Incorporate Continuous Improvement into the Funding Strategy

Because funding needs and funding availability may shift, SAFECOM recommends that the working group maintain flexibility with the funding strategy. It should regularly consider whether the funding strategy needs revision to increase its effectiveness.

Available Funding Mechanisms

A comprehensive funding strategy combines funding mechanisms from local and state sources as well federal programs. The information below, including examples and links, provides an

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[1] For a sample homeland security grant distribution process, please reference the South Dakota Homeland Security Web site at http://www.state.sd.us/homeland/Working/2005_ComingSoon.asp.

overview of the local, state, and federal funding mechanisms available for communications interoperability efforts. Although this information reflects some of the examples identified through SAFECOM's research and experiences, it should not be considered an exhaustive list.

Local and State Funding Mechanisms

Local and state governments use a variety of funding mechanisms to support the development, deployment, maintenance, and upgrade of public safety wireless communication systems. While researching local and state funding mechanisms, planners should consider the potentially restrictive factors that may limit funding availability. For example, funds derived from local and state budget appropriations are affected by the funding available within a budget year. Because government budgets are reviewed annually or biannually, the amount of funding available for communications interoperability projects often fluctuates based on this cycle. Funding mechanisms that are derived from debt, such as the sale of bonds, can be constrained by the debt limits of the government.

When developing a funding strategy, a review of local and state funding mechanisms will help planners determine the most appropriate ones. Typical funding mechanisms within most local and state budgets are described in the sections that follow. Examples of how specific localities and/or states used each funding mechanism and links to more information are provided for reference.

Local and State Budget Appropriations

Direct appropriation from the local or state government funds is one of the most prevalent funding mechanisms available at the local and state level. Public safety agencies should adjust their strategy based on the duration of the budget process. An accelerated approach is necessary in localities and states operating on an annual budget cycle in which the budget provides appropriations for one fiscal year.

In June 2005, the State of Kansas began a project to integrate communications among emergency responders in a 17-county area of Southeast Kansas. Financed by one-time Homeland Security grants and the redirection of state transportation funds, the $16 million project will help local governments build towers to link communication systems from different counties and the state government. The Kansas Department of Transportation will lease the towers to private communications companies to cover a portion of the state's bill for providing tower space. The money will be funneled back into new communications equipment purchases by county agencies. For more information, please see:
http://www.ksdot.org/offtransInfo/News05/ground_breaking.asp.

911 and E-911 Surcharges

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires 911 systems to meet standards and perform possible upgrades. E-911 surcharges are typically used to pay for 911 system upgrades required in a jurisdiction to meet FCC standards. However, once the system upgrades are paid for, the states could potentially use the tax revenue to fund wireless communication networks. Currently, 13 states have specifically designated money from this revenue stream for the maintenance of their current wireless systems.

The State of Arizona levied a tax of 37 cents per month for each activated wire and wireless service account for the purpose of financing emergency telecommunication services. For more information, please see: http://www.911.state.az.us/.

Targeted Taxes

Many states collect revenue through targeted taxes. Examples include motor vehicle-related taxes and targeted sales taxes that establish special revenue funding streams. If public safety agencies want to pursue the creation of a new targeted tax, they must determine whether the political climate will allow the establishment of a new targeted tax. Alternatively, it may be possible to redirect the revenue from an existing tax. On the other hand, the political climate and state residents' opinions may react more favorably toward targeted taxes directed at non-residents, such as hotel taxes and car rental taxes.

An example of an attempt to use targeted taxes occurred when the Florida State Legislature passed a bill to allow a municipality that maintains an independent 800 MHz radio system to draw $12.50 from each motor vehicle violation to offset system operations and maintenance costs. However, the bill was vetoed in June 2002 with opponents citing unclear language that could encourage municipalities to create and maintain independent radio systems.

Local and State Bonds

Various opportunities for funding exist through the issuance of bonds. Revenue bonds are the primary example discussed in this section because they are applicable to communications systems used to achieve interoperability.

Revenue bonds are a type of municipal bond. The principal and interest secured by revenues from user charges is combined with the proceeds of the bond issue. This type of bond is ideal for wireless systems supported by subscription fees and is generally not tied to borrowing limits or voter approval. Some bonds are dependent on legal limits set on debt levels or the ability of the state or locality to incur debt. Most state and local governments face constitutional and statutory limits on the amount of debt they can incur for capital projects. When considering bonds as a potential funding source, it is important to check local, state, and federal laws for restrictions.

The Governor of Nebraska signed a bill in April 2002 that allows the state to issue bonds for the build-out of a statewide radio communications system. The law also initiated the creation of a telecommunications board, composed of public safety and government users, to assess the financial development of the system.

State Emergency Response Commission (SERC) Grants

In some states, the SERC awards grants through funding received from the Federal Government. It also uses fees collected from facilities within the particular states that comply with reporting requirements mandated by the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act. Grant requests for these funds must support state or local hazardous materials emergency response plans and relate to the risk analysis contained in the plans.

The State of Ohio currently utilizes SERC grants to fund statewide interoperability projects. According to the state code, the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know fund authorizes grants to Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPC), fire departments, and SERC agencies. The fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30, and grants awarded from the fund are based on this annual timeline. Successful grant applications must meet requirements to ensure that all funds are used for approved emergency planning activities. Of this fund, 65-75 percent is allotted to LEPCs, 5-15 percent is allotted to fire departments, and

15-25 percent is allotted to SERC agencies. For more information, please see:http://www.epa.state.oh.us/dapc/serc/Grant_Ap.pdf

Usage Fees

Although the majority of a communications system may be funded with a large grant or bond, some systems incorporate usage fees into their funding mechanisms. Usage fees are a popular option in Nevada. As the name suggests, usage fees are typically based on a proportional measurement of usage or subscriber fees.

During the mid- to late-1990s, several cities and counties collaborated with the Nevada Department of Transportation (DOT) and agreed as a cooperative effort to replace and/or expand their existing radio communication systems. As a result, these entities signed an Interlocal Agreement that provided for the development of a regional trunked radio communications system, known as the Washoe County Regional Communications System (WCRCS). An agency joining the WCRCS subsequent to the adoption of this agreement is responsible for paying its pro rata share of the one-time construction costs for the radio frequency and microwave backbone. This share will be based on the proportionate number of radios of the joining agency as a percentage of the total number of radios in use by all agencies participating in the WCRCS. In addition, the ongoing operations, maintenance, repair, and capital outlay costs for the radio frequency and microwave backbone are shared equitably by the participating agencies. In this system, two of the participant cities also agreed to provide, operate, and fund the operation of the dispatch center and backup dispatch center.

The Southern Nevada Area Communications Council (SNACC) system used federal funding from the Urban Area Security Initiative[2] to add infrastructure to the existing system. The City of Las Vegas was the recipient of the 2003 U.S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant program award to add additional radios to the system. The COPS grant provided for 75 percent of the cost of the subscriber unit and 75 percent of the cost of the SNACC system buy-in. The system user is responsible for the balance of the cost of the radio and buy-in. The current operating fee is $185/per radio per year; it provides for the yearly operating fee of having a radio on the system. This fee supports the operating budget for salaries and services. This does not include parts, warranty, or maintenance. Purchase and maintenance of the subscriber is the responsibility of the end user. The buy-in concept is comparable to "buying shares" because users are the owners of the system. The formula to calculate the cost of additional users joining the SNACC system is: 1/number of units in the system times the equity or value of the system equals the proportional cost for users. The benefit of this funding structure is that SNACC does not have to request additional funding from the users or spend funding from the system's capital account.

Trust Funds

Certain states established trust funds to finance their interoperability purchases for equipment, training, and infrastructure. The greatest challenge for many of these efforts lies not within the effort to establish the trust fund, but in drafting a set of regulations for the administration of the funds.

Colorado created a trust fund for administering discretionary distributions of public safety communications funds and repayment of them by state and local governments. The primary

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[2] For more information, please see the summary on DHS funding in this document.

intent of such distributions are for the acquisition and maintenance of statewide public safety communications systems for use by departments including, but not limited to, the state departments of public safety, transportation, natural resources, and corrections. For more information, please see: http://www.colorado.gov/dtr/pubsaf.htm.

Certificate of Participation

As an alternative to issuing bonds based on the state's credit, certificates of participation (COP) allow localities to raise funds through private investors. Because COPs are typically tax-exempt, they attract a larger base of investors. COPs function similarly to a home mortgage—a bank acts as a broker between the vendor and the government authority to secure the funding for the certificate from the investment community. Jurisdictions that use this funding mechanism often form public authorities or new governmental entities that can invite a private firm or vendor to negotiate the lease or purchase of radio equipment.

COPs are used by local public safety agencies within the City of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, the City and County of San Francisco, and Maricopa County, Arizona. In these cases, the COPs cover the operations and maintenance costs for the communications systems and provide funding for upgrades to allow the local systems to become interoperable with larger, surrounding systems.

Public/Private Partnerships

Public/private partnerships provide alternative funding approaches such as private ownership of a statewide system with state and local agency sharing arrangements. In exchange for providing the services specified in the system contract, a system vendor can be paid an advance payment as well as the ongoing proceeds from a registration surcharge. This revenue stream to the system vendor provides for the system infrastructure (towers, antennas, system equipment, system maintenance, radio consoles for dispatch) as well as for communications service. The contract also provides for revenue sharing between the state and the vendor using a co-location of the conveyed towers and third-party system subscribers.

The partnership is reinforced through the daily operational needs of the system. The vendor can provide operational management through a contract with the state. The state CIO's office, the system vendor, and a users advisory committee can work together to help provide cost savings and manage the expense of operating the statewide system.

The State of Florida public/private partnership for the Statewide Law Enforcement Radio System has a unique funding strategy. Florida paid a private vendor a $40 million advance for services in the contract. The vendor also receives the ongoing proceeds from a motor vehicle and vessel registration surcharge (approximately $13-17 million annually), less certain stipulated expenses incurred by the state. For more information, please see: http://eits.myflorida.com/slers/.

Federal Funding Mechanisms

When reviewing the applicability of the potential federal grants available for public safety wireless communications, local and state representatives should speak with their assigned preparedness officer. The preparedness officer, assigned from the DHS Office for Grants and Training (G&T), will have the most current information regarding federal funding opportunities.

While SAFECOM does not provide grants, it developed the Grant Guidance Document (http://www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/grant/default.htm) to try to coordinate the manner in which funding is allocated and to maximize the prospects for communications interoperability. This document outlines grant eligibility and the purposes for which grants can be used and provides guidelines for putting a wireless communication system into effect. It is important to note that the SAFECOM Grant Guidance is periodically reviewed and updated.

System planners can research potential federal funding sources first by using the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) (http://www.cfda.gov). Using this tool, system planners can explore federal funding sources such as grants, loans, equipment, technical assistance, direct payments, insurance, advisory services, counseling, and training.

Some of the most often used federal funding resources for communications interoperability efforts are summarized in the sections that follow. For additional private and federal organizations offering non-financial support, see Appendix A.

Department of Homeland Security

A cornerstone of the DHS philosophy is its commitment to partner closely with other federal agencies, state and local governments, first responders, and law enforcement entities to ensure the security of the United States. Its Web site explains how DHS and local governments can work together: http://www.dhs.gov/.

Programs within DHS that provide funding are outlined below.

DHS Office for Grants and Training

G&T is the primary office responsible for providing training, funds for the purchase of equipment, support for the planning and execution of exercises, technical assistance, and other support to assist states and local jurisdictions to prevent, plan for, and respond to acts of terrorism.

Programs within G&T with specific funding objectives are outlined below.

Homeland Security Grant Program

The Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) integrates the following: State Homeland Security Program (SHSP), Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI), Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program (LETPP), Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS), and Citizen Corps Program (CCP).

The HSGP Program Guidance and Application Kit streamlines efforts of states and urban areas in obtaining resources critical to building and sustaining capabilities to achieve the interim National Preparedness Goal and to execute State and Urban Area Homeland Security Strategies. Specifically, the HSGP provides funding for planning, organization, equipment, training, exercises, and management and administration to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Territories.[3] A complete

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[3] A complete description may be found at this link:
http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/odp/grants_programs.htm#fy2006hsgp

list of current and past HSBP grants is posted on its Web site:
http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/odp/grants_programs.htm#fy2006hsgp.

U.S. Fire Administration Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program

The purpose of this program is to award one-year grants directly to fire departments of a state to enhance their abilities with respect to fire and fire-related hazards (http://www.usfa.fema.gov/fire-service/grants/afgp/grants.shtm).

Programs within DHS that provide equipment include those outlined below.

Commercial Equipment Distribution Assistance Program (CEDAP)

Although it does not directly provide funding, this program, managed by G&T, transfers technology systems and devices directly to local agencies, targeting law enforcement agencies. CEDAP provides interoperable communications equipment such as the Radio Interoperable System (RIOS) and the Incident Commander's Radio Interface (ICRI).

Preposition Equipment Program (PEP)

Another program that does not directly supply funding is PEP. Launched by G&T, it helps meet the needs of jurisdictions to be fully equipped and to provide an adequate, sustained response to a major terrorist incident. PEP consists of standardized, pre-positioned equipment sets in select geographic areas that permit rapid deployment to states and localities whose jurisdictions have become the target of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) terrorism (http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/odp/ta.htm).

Department of Justice (DOJ)

DOJ offers funding opportunities to conduct research, support law enforcement activities in state and local jurisdictions, provide training and technical assistance, and to apply programs that improve the criminal justice system.

Programs within DOJ that provide funding are outlined below. For more detailed information, please see: http://www.usdoj.gov/.

Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program

The Edward Byrne Memorial JAG Program allows states and local governments to support a broad range of activities to prevent and control crime and to improve the criminal justice system. JAG replaces the Byrne Formula and Local Law Enforcement Block Grant (LLEBG) programs with a single funding mechanism that simplifies the administration process for grantees (http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/grant/jag.html).

Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Interoperable Communications Technology Program

The DOJ Office of COPS administers this grant program. It provides equipment funding to law enforcement agencies to enhance multi-jurisdictional public safety interoperable communications and information sharing across the Nation. In 2005, COPS awarded $92.7 million in grants to 26 jurisdictions to support interoperable communications. Through an MOA with DOJ designed to ensure coordination between the programs, Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program (ICTAP) technical assistance is available to COPS grantees (http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/).

Department of Commerce (DOC)

Within DOC, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) works to spur innovation, encourage competition, create jobs, and provide consumers with more choices and better quality telecommunications products and services at lower prices (http://www.ntia.doc.gov/).

A program within NTIA that provides funding is:

Technology Opportunities Program (TOP)

TOP provides grants for model projects that demonstrate innovative uses of network technology (http://www.ntia.doc.gov/top/).

In short, SAFECOM recommends that Nevada develop a comprehensive funding strategy. Such an approach could include the following steps:

- Create a funding working group under the NCSC or the entity established to execute the statewide plan.

- Estimate and prioritize needs.

- Review acquisition plans.

- Identify available funding mechanisms.

- Establish valuable partnerships.

- Consider laws and limitations.

- Establish a process for distributing funds to local communities and state entities.

- Incorporate continuous improvement into the funding strategy.

Nevada should apply a diversified approach that incorporates multiple funding mechanisms from local, state, and federal sources. This report highlighted several examples of states and localities using various funding mechanisms. As the working group develops its state-wide funding strategy and plan, it should remember the unique circumstances within Nevada.

Appendix A: Additional Private and Federal Organizations Offering Support

This section outlines some other private and federal organizations that can provide funding.

Association of Public Safety Communications Officials – International, Inc. (APCO)

APCO is a not-for-profit professional organization dedicated to the enhancement of public safety communications.
http://www.apcointl.org/

Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

DHS Office for Grants and Training (G&T)

Homeland Security Preparedness Technical Assistance (TA) Program

The TA program provides direct assistance to state and local jurisdictions to improve their ability to prevent, respond to, and recover from threats or acts of terrorism involving chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, or explosive (CBRNE) weapons. TA provides a process to help resolve problems or create innovative approaches. All TA services are available to eligible recipients at no charge. TA programs in place or currently under development within G&T include the Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program.

Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program (ICTAP)

This technical assistance program is designed to enhance interoperable communications between local, state, and federal emergency responders and public safety officials; it is associated with G&T's Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) grant program. The goal of ICTAP is to enable local public safety agencies to communicate as they prevent or respond to a Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) attack. ICTAP also leverages and works with other local, state, and federal interoperability efforts whenever possible to enhance the overall capacity for agencies and individuals to communicate with one another.

Department of Justice (DOJ)

National Institute of Justice (NIJ)

NIJ is the research and development agency of DOJ and is solely dedicated to researching crime control and justice issues. The most recent solicitations issued by NIJ may be found at: http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/.

Justice Technology Information Network (JUSTNET)

JUSTNET, the official Web site for the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center system, lists many grants and funding sources in a virtual library. It also contains various publications on communications interoperability issues (http://www.nlectc.org/).

Office of Justice Programs (OJP) Information Technology Initiatives

The OJP Information Technology Initiatives Web site offers access to timely and useful insight on the information sharing process, initiatives, and technological developments. While OJP is not a funding source, the funding section of this site provides information on both federal and private funding sources, examples of innovative funding ideas, and tips on researching funding legislation (http://www.it.ojp.gov/).

Office of National Drug Control Policy, Counter-drug Technology Assessment Center (CTAC) Technology Transfer Program

The CTAC Technology Transfer Program assists state and local law enforcement agencies in obtaining the necessary equipment and training for counter-drug deployments and operations (http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/).