

# Dispatch Consolidation Planning

Poor response times. Duplication of services. Escalating costs. Fragmented operations. Poor coordination. All of these factors and more have motivated communities nationwide to consolidate dispatch operations with adjacent communities. Still, despite numerous success stories, the decision to consolidate should not be made without careful analysis. Even when consolidation makes sense, intensive planning must be undertaken to ensure that service and coordination improvements are realized for all affected first responder agencies.

NYSTEC can help your community assess the viability of a dispatch consolidation and guide you through all phases of the planning process. Leaders often focus on the technology considerations or potential cost savings of consolidation, but people and governance considerations are often more critical. How to provide the best-valued service is always a judgment call, and each situation is unique. But by equipping officials with reliable information, NYSTEC will help you make prudent decisions regarding quality of service, management, and budgets. NYSTEC will assist you in examining a full range of factors to assess and plan for a dispatch consolidation. Our comprehensive analysis encompasses human factors, governance, costs, and technology.



## Human Assessment Factors

When evaluating the viability of any dispatch consolidation, “people considerations” must include the following:

- What will happen to the 24 x 7 service window and the administrative functions that your dispatchers perform now?
- Will dispatchers working in a consolidated center be as knowledgeable about new communities as their current locales, and are creative measures needed to familiarize dispatchers with first responders from other communities?
- How would quality of service be affected during very busy times? How will it be measured?
- Would any dispatchers lose their jobs or seniority, and what would be the fallout?
- What actions are needed to minimize friction as personnel from different organizational cultures work together?



## Human Planning Factors

Consolidation will affect your citizens, businesses, agencies, public safety officials, and first responders. Mechanisms to develop, promote, and preserve trust must be put in place. These should include:

- Establishing clear and measurable goals for consolidation;
- Ensuring that all changes are transparent;
- Understanding how agencies currently do business;
- Clearly delineating the relationships between Chief Officers, responders and dispatchers; and
- Drafting clear agreements for responsibilities, tasks, command and control of field units, and relationships with the consolidated communications center.

## Governance

Understanding the expectations that leaders have for the quality and level of services in their communities is paramount. Governance tasks to be undertaken should include:

- Evaluating statistics pertaining to emergency and non-emergency call volumes, and dispatch workloads — and making projections for each;
- Identifying current and near-term threats, hazards, and problem areas that will affect public safety communications;
- Reaching consensus on the type of communications organization that would best serve participating communities; and
- Determining the new management structure and staff responsibilities.



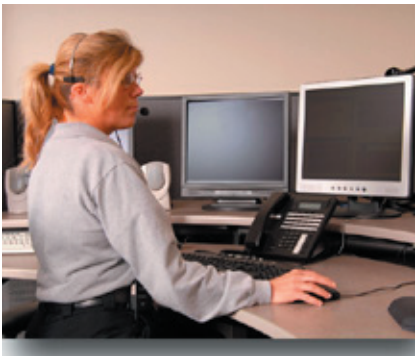
## Costs

Each unit of government has a fiduciary responsibility to local residents, and cost concerns often drive consolidations. The following budgetary considerations are essential:

- The current cost of operations must be quantified, including infrastructure, personnel, and administration;
- Audit and control obligations, financial controls, bonding authority, and regulatory requirements must be examined;
- Local methods of revenue generation must be analyzed, along with projected call volumes, to develop models for cost analysis;
- The cost of current technology must be quantified; and
- A cost-benefit analysis must be performed regarding any new technologies or facilities necessary for consolidation.

## Technology

Before acquiring new technology, communities must assess current capabilities, determine future requirements, and identify crucial needs that are not currently met. Technology-acquisition decisions and the evaluation of tools and products should encompass the following:



- Operational data must be assessed, including all aspects of emergency calls, non-emergency calls, dispatch, mutual aid response, and incident command procedures;
- A clear understanding of user requirements must be developed and consensus reached;
- Technical solutions must be assessed and correlations made to local requirements; and
- In some consolidation projects, field conditions must be assessed, including radio frequencies, channel availability, coverage, interoperability, towers and tower sites, redundancy, and more.

Remember: Successful consolidations require careful planning. Leverage NYSTEC's experience to make your consolidation project a success.

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