



School Interoperable Communications Planning and Fundraising Workbook

Introduction

Interoperable communications enables schools and school districts to communicate in real-time with first responders during a school emergency.

Our companion video at https://youtu.be/O_sNIwAu0vs shows a full-scale active shooter exercise at a Colorado high school that incorporated interoperable communications between school staff and law enforcement and rescue workers to coordinate a rapid response.

During the exercise, school safety team members were able to communicate with one another on their own channel to help teachers evacuate parts of the school and get their students to an off-site shelter as soon as it was safe to do so. Other teachers stayed in lockdown with their students while police and rescue workers combed through the school looking for victims and the shooters, and for bombs or traps left behind by the intruders.

The trained school safety team also communicated directly with the first responders on another channel to feed them status updates and new intel. Video footage of the entire event was captured using dozens of surveillance cameras, body cams, and news cameras for after-action video analysis.

Fundraising

We present here a School Interoperable Communications Planning and Fundraising Workbook to help schools fund, launch, and maintain a high-quality crisis communications program with their community response agencies.

Over 10 years of pilot testing in over 200 Colorado schools has shown that a well-practiced interoperable communications program can result in:

- Saving and protecting lives in the school
- Saving and protecting emergency responder lives
- Increasing emergency responder effectiveness and coordination
- Improving response times, and
- Reducing property loss

To raise the money to acquire this resource, a successful business case must be prepared that demonstrates the value of the interoperability effort, provides a clear picture of the future of interoperability in the community, and speaks to the interests and concerns of schools, teachers, students, parents, community leaders, and others. This workbook is designed to help school officials and their community partners develop a compelling business case by presenting steps and considerations to follow in order to tap into critical funding sources for interoperability efforts.

Develop a Compelling Case for Ongoing School Interoperability Funding

A successful business case should demonstrate that the necessary research and analysis has been completed to justify the proposed solution to secure ongoing local funding. The following details key considerations and steps when developing a business case to support an interoperability project.

1. Conduct Stakeholder Analysis
2. Conduct Needs Analysis
3. Conduct Alternatives Analysis
4. Define Project Context
5. Identify Project Objectives
6. Estimate Full Lifecycle Project Costs & Funding Requirements
7. Develop a Work Plan
8. Determine Implementation Impacts

Conduct Stakeholder Analysis

Support for the interoperability project depends largely on identifying and involving school community partners and other stakeholders that have an interest in or will be affected by the proposed interoperability project. Project coordinators can build a coalition of support for the proposed project by identifying a diverse group of stakeholders. For projects as complex as interoperability, it is essential to have support from as many agencies, disciplines, and jurisdictions as possible.

By identifying and involving stakeholders in the early stages of the business case development process, the business case will provide a clearer picture of interoperability gaps, opportunities, impacts, and risks associated with the project. Through canvassing the stakeholders, the project coordinator will also be able to determine what stage in the process each group of stakeholders should become involved, as well as how they should be involved.

Conduct Needs Analysis

An analysis of interoperability needs forms the basis of the business case. Any proposed interoperability effort will be justified by its alignment with current interoperability requirements. The needs analysis will help emergency response officials identify current business and user interoperability requirements, opportunities, and solutions for resolving interoperable communications gaps. Further, it will ensure that any proposed solution meets the identified needs.

A compelling need can mean the difference between securing funding for your project or not.

Conduct Alternatives Analysis

To determine the best solution for addressing interoperability needs, project coordinators should conduct an alternatives analysis. The alternatives analysis should consider all viable options for meeting needs identified in the needs analysis.

A thorough analysis of alternatives will not only help you select the best solution to resolve interoperability gaps, but will also demonstrate that due diligence was performed for all possible options.

Define Project Context

When developing a business case, project coordinators should consider how the interoperability effort they are seeking to fund fits into the community or region's larger interoperability vision and efforts. Setting the context for new interoperability projects within the landscape of current interoperability efforts creates a convincing case for the importance and benefits of the new project. Additionally, projects aligned with existing

interoperability efforts can be valuable additions to the work already underway. The success of an interoperability project often depends on how much a community understands current interoperability efforts, and how it can leverage those efforts for its own individual success.

Having a clear understanding of the environment you are entering helps you answer questions that may arise and enables you to associate the project with work that has already been supported.

Identify Project Objectives

To justify an interoperability project, project coordinators must explicitly state the objectives of the project in measurable and achievable terms. Project objectives should address what the community can expect to gain by investing in this project, and how the funds invested in interoperability will benefit the agency, jurisdiction, and citizen.

Clearly stated objectives will provide a baseline by which project performance can be measured and will help demonstrate the value of the proposed project.

Estimate Full Lifecycle Project Costs and Funding Requirements

A detailed cost plan facilitates an understanding of the funding requirements for the proposed interoperability project. To develop the cost plan, project coordinators should estimate the cost of executing the proposed interoperability solution as well as any external or residual costs that may result from the solution.

By providing a comprehensive picture of the total lifecycle cost, a cost plan can help community leaders feel more confident that additional funding for something previously overlooked will not be necessary later down the road. A cost plan will also determine budget needs and allocations for the project, especially large one-time costs and ongoing costs.

Develop a Work Plan

Successful implementation of any interoperability project depends on diligent project planning. Project coordinators should develop high-level work plans for the proposed interoperability solution, including timelines and deliverables, and take into account identified risks and staffing requirements.

Going through the process of developing a work plan can help determine resource requirements for the proposed interoperability project. Work plans can also help establish the project in the context of other competing project priorities and timelines.

Determine Implementation Impacts

To support an interoperability project, community leaders must understand the impact that the project will have on day-to-day work. To assess the impact of implementation, analyze and identify all elements of the Interoperability Continuum¹ that may be affected by the implementation of a new system, technology, or service. The Interoperability Continuum was developed by the Department of Homeland Security's SAFECOM program and local practitioners. Building on their lessons learned, the Continuum guides progress in achieving interoperability across five critical areas - governance, SOPs, technology, training and exercises, and usage.

[School District and/or School Header]

| |
|--|
| School Interoperable Communications Planning and Fundraising Workbook |
| Short Program Description |
| Provide a brief description of your proposed program. |

| |
|---|
| Detailed Program Description <i>(Attach additional sheets.)</i> |
|---|

| |
|--|
| 1. Stakeholders |
| 1a. Identify the stakeholders who have an interest in or will be affected by your proposed program. (Include among your stakeholders school district and school personnel, volunteers, elected officials and community leaders, emergency response agency heads, local and state agencies, disciplines, organizations or committees, and vendors.) |
| 1b. Indicate the support each stakeholder group brings to your program from their agency, discipline, or jurisdiction. |
| 1c. When and how will each stakeholder become involved in your proposed program? |

| |
|---|
| 2. Needs Analysis |
| 2a. What are your community's current communications services and how are they delivered? |
| 2b. What are the gaps and issues of the communication systems and procedures your program will address? |
| 2c. What are the restrictions placed upon existing grant funds that impact the gaps between existing work and remaining work? |

| | |
|-----|--|
| 2d. | What maintenance and repairs are required for your existing communications equipment and infrastructure, and how do you plan covering those costs? |
| 2e. | What existing technologies, infrastructure, and resources can your program leverage? |
| 2f. | What local, state, or Federal statutory requirements mandate your proposed program? |

| 3. Alternatives Analysis | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 3a. | What alternative solutions have you evaluated to address your identified interoperable communications needs? |
| 3b. | How do the alternative solutions address your current interoperability needs or gaps? |
| 3c. | What is the impact of not seeking grant funding for your proposed program? |
| 3d. | Why were the alternatives not chosen? |

| 4. Program Context | |
|---------------------------|---|
| 4a. | What are the interoperability challenges in your school district and county? |
| 4b. | What interoperable communications efforts are currently underway locally, regionally, and within Colorado? |
| 4c. | How are these interoperability efforts working together to solve communications gaps? |
| 4d. | What is the specific interoperability effort you are looking to fund? |
| 4e. | How will your proposed program benefit from existing efforts and go beyond them? |
| 4f. | How does your proposed program fit into the high-level strategic and tactical interoperable communications plans of Colorado and your county? |

| 5. Program Objectives | |
|------------------------------|--|
| 5a. | List the objectives of your proposed interoperability effort in measurable and achievable terms. |
| 5b. | What can Colorado, your school district, and your community expect to gain by investing in your program? |
| 5c. | What are your expected tangible and intangible benefits? |
| 5d. | What will be different after your program is implemented? |
| 5e. | How will your proposed program improve communications interoperability across multiple localities and emergency responder disciplines? |
| 5f. | How will your proposed program respond to regulatory requirements? |
| 5g. | What does your program not address? |

| 6. Lifecycle Costs and Funding Requirements | |
|--|--|
| 6a. | What is the estimated cost of your proposed program? |
| 6b. | List the costs associated with your proposed program indicating which costs are one-time, short-term, long-term, or recurring. What is the lifecycle cost? |
| 6c. | What funding sources have already been secured and what are the remaining gaps? |
| 6d. | If local interoperability funding exists, what funding sources will be used to cover funding gaps? |
| 6e. | What will and will not be part of your program if the total funding amount requested is not approved? |
| 6f. | What is the general spending plan? How will it be adjusted or modified if approved funds do not match or exceed the funds requested? |

| 7. Work Plan | |
|---------------------|--|
| 7a. | What are the major milestones and decision points in your program implementation? |
| 7b. | Who will make the decisions? |
| 7c. | What tasks are included in each phase of the work plan and who will do the work? |
| 7d. | What are the task dependencies? |
| 7e. | What stakeholders are required to participate in each phase of the work plan? |
| 7f. | Who will need to approve their participation, particularly as it relates to overtime? |
| 7g. | What is the timeline for each phase of your program? |
| 7h. | What are your proposed program's risks, and how will they be mitigated? |
| 7i. | How does the work plan for your program fit into the context of other competing program priorities and timelines? |

| 8. Implementation Impacts | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 8a. | How will your progress in achieving interoperability across governance, SOPs, technology, training and exercises, and usage be affected by the implementation of your proposed program? |
| 8b. | Will governance structures need to be expanded or put in place? |
| 8c. | How will your interoperability effort affect existing education and administration processes? Will procedures need to be created or updated? |
| 8d. | How will day-to-day work be affected while program implementation is in progress? |

| | |
|-----|---|
| 8e. | What are the training and exercise needs? |
| 8f. | What is the working life of the technology? When will it need to be replaced? |
| 8g. | What type of maintenance will be needed for the technology? |
| 8h. | What additional resources, such as staff or equipment, will need to be obtained? |
| 8i. | What risks may affect the successful implementation of your proposed interoperability effort? What is the probability of these risks and how can they be mitigated? |
| | |

**Adapted from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security SAFECOM publication,
Interoperability Business Case: An Introduction to Ongoing Local Funding**