Oakland, CA

Tactical Interoperable Communications Scorecard

Summary

Governance: *Intermediate Implementation*
Standard Operating Procedures: *Advanced Implementation*
Usage: *Advanced Implementation*

The Oakland Urban Area (UA) includes the City of Oakland, Alameda County, and Contra Costa County.

Governance: *Intermediate Implementation*

The Interoperable Communications Project Group (ICPG) began meeting in 2003 and oversaw the Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP) development. As identified in the documentation, it does not appear that the group is formalized, and as noted by TICP peer reviewers, the UA should further "explain governing responsibilities and relation to the Urban Area Working Group (UAWG)" to clarify how the organizations work together. The Oakland area has completed strategic planning efforts; however, a formal plan has not yet been adopted by the included agencies. This strategy, as it gets adopted, can also support the prioritization of goals so that funding can be planned accordingly. With most project funding supported through annual federal grants, long-term funding was indicated by the UA as a concern. With respect to the federal grants, it does appear that the agencies give consideration to regional interoperable communications while procuring equipment. Although the local leadership is strong (demonstrated by involvement from local mayors and other executives), there are regional leadership differences (across the multiple jurisdictions) that may slow progress toward interoperability across the UA as a whole.

Recommendations:

- Identify and document the roles, responsibilities, and relationships within the decision-making group (e.g., ICPG membership, relationship to UAWG)
- Continue to develop, document, and formalize agreements (e.g., signed memoranda of understanding [MOU] with defined roles and responsibilities) among all participating agencies to support partnerships on regional interoperability
- Reference all applicable agreements (e.g., MOUs, intergovernmental agreements) in the TICP and store them in an accessible format
- Continue to establish a regular review process to ensure that agreements remain current and relevant
- Adopt and implement the regional strategic plan
- Continue to align regional and state strategic planning efforts to ensure that regional interoperability needs are met
- Continue to develop and implement a regional approach to budgeting and procuring regional communications interoperability assets
- Continue to develop and implement a regional approach to long-term (e.g., 3 to 5 years) sustainable funding that is consistent with the strategic plan
- Encourage broader involvement by senior government leadership on interoperability funding and procurement plans

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP): *Advanced Implementation*

The Oakland TICP is based on existing policies and procedures. Since these SOPs were already well established and used frequently, the public safety agencies in the UA were well positioned to adopt the TICP.

The UA has taken a number of steps to disseminate and train on the SOPs among the participating organizations. According to the Exercise Evaluation Guide, despite a minor issue with naming conventions on shared channels, the UA was largely successful in the use of its documented procedures. National Incident Management System (NIMS)/Incident Command System (ICS) has been used throughout the UA for more than a year, with countywide training ongoing. This is consistent with a state mandate for NIMS compliance. The exercise evaluation indicated that "members of the Unified Command staff worked together very effectively." The Communications Unit Leader was likewise praised for decisions in allocating communications resources during the exercise.

Recommendations:

- Consider scheduling a regular review and update process of developed policies and procedures
- Continue basic and advanced training and exercises on SOPs (include communications unit implementation consistent with the TICP) to ensure that all participating first responder agencies attain and maintain NIMS/ICS compliance

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Usage: *Advanced Implementation* ●

The UA frequently uses its available means of interoperable communications (e.g., radio cache, gateways, shared channels, and shared systems). Additionally, officials in the area report proficiency during real-world events (e.g., football games) where radio caches and gateways are used to provide communications to local, state, and federal agencies. During the TICP validation exercise, the participants were able to establish interoperable communications despite some minimal technical difficulty (e.g., no roll call taken for gateways and shared systems). The exercise was noteworthy for its complexity and the test it provided among local, state, and federal agencies in the area.

Recommendation:

- Consider adding interoperable communications as an evaluation component for all future exercises and day-to-day activities

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Below is a summary of the area's existing technology used to provide communications interoperability:

Technology Overview

The City of Oakland has two ACU-1000 gateways, and the County of Alameda has four deployable Infinimux G4 gateway devices. Currently, interoperability is achieved by using the gateways, shared proprietary radio systems, and National Public Safety Planning Advisory Committee (NPSPAC) channels for mutual aid. The surrounding County of Alameda has a Motorola, 800 megahertz, trunked, communications system. The adjacent County of Contra Costa and several other adjacent localities field conventional very high frequency and ultra high frequency communications systems.

The UA is planning for a new communications system that will be a shared, Project 25 (P25) standard radio system and encompass the two-county area to create a regional communications system. Regional agencies will become part of the shared P25 radio system and will be given subscriber units to use NPSPAC frequencies for mutual aid. In addition, a networked gateway system will be installed to assure operable communications during the migration of the new P25 system; allowing a gateway to outside agencies that are not P25 capable.