

Eastside Regional Public Safety Communication Center Consolidation Initiative Statement of Operating Values and Principles (SOVP) Survey Results Report

July 21, 2005

Summary: 11 of 13 participating jurisdictions responded.¹ Respondents were not uniform in their approach to filling out the survey (see Caveats). There are over 50 issues on which respondents were unanimous or nearly unanimous in their responses, and 7 issues on which there was notable disagreement. There is little consensus as to which issues should be incorporated into the SOVP.

Caveats:

- Medina and Fall City Fire District have not responded as of July 20
- Not all questions were answered by all respondents.
- Some respondents added comments not shown in tally of results (a document incorporating all surveys received is available)
- Some respondents did not use the ranking system (xxx→xx→x), most notably Bellevue and Redmond.
- Some respondents did not complete the “Belongs in SOVP?” column.
- The survey, while lengthy, was not all encompassing of the issues that will need to be addressed in determining the governance, finance or operation of a consolidated dispatch agency

Overview:

- **There are many issues on which there is unanimity.**
- **There are many issues on which there is consensus except for a single respondent—but in some cases that single respondent is strongly opposed to the idea (this is noted in the tally of results).**
- **There are no issues on which cities and fire districts are clearly split into separate groups.**
- **Respondents expressed very little consensus as to which items should be in the SOVP.**

¹ A survey from the Washington State Patrol was received but the results are not incorporated as WSP is not a participating jurisdiction at this time. The survey from WSP is available.

- There is frequently a correlation between strongly supported ideas and a view that such item belongs in the SOVP.
- Generally, there was more support for including concepts around mission and operating philosophy in the SOVP rather than specific points regarding governance, location, or operational details.

Significant agreement exists around a large number of ideas, listed below:

(Note: “**” indicates view not unanimous, i.e., 1 opposing vote; *items with more than 1 opposing vote are not included* in this list; “+” indicates an item on which the opposing respondent was very strongly opposed to this idea; items are in many cases paraphrased from the wording in the survey; some very similar items are condensed into a single bullet.)

Mission:

- **Basic mission scope: take calls for emergency police, fire and medial services; track and manage information flow and resources to assist participating emergency response agencies in emergency events; enhance effectiveness, efficiency, coordination and interoperability of participating emergency response agencies**
- **Customer service focus is top priority: to public, owners, customers**
- **Partnership operation**
- **Voice and vote for all members/owners**
- **Increase service levels available to all participants (*,+)**
- **Importance of standardization of procedures (*)**
- **Understand and address the different needs of police, fire and EMS agencies**
- **Public safety needs and operational management should govern decisions rather than politics**
- **Effectiveness and efficiency are paramount but should be balanced case-by-case**
- **Proceed if there is critical mass to do so, do not wait for unanimity**

Operations:

- **Operate to improve interagency communications, coordination**
- **Operate to reduce cost of shared infrastructure**
- **Maximize price advantages achievable through a large scale operation**
- **Make decisions based on what is efficient so long as service levels aren’t degraded***

- Ensure dispatch levels meet or exceed current and future regional standards
- Provide at least 2 service levels(*, +)
- Exceed customer expectations
- Seek equity between participants – large and small; police and Fire/EMS*
- Market/communicate success to the public and to members*
- Operate to maintain or enhance quality of life for citizens*
- Ensure meaningful input from all customers and owners
- Enhance cooperation between member jurisdictions
- Management should be highly proactive
- Location must support interoperability
- Location must be seismically sound
- Location (place, facility) should minimize risk as a potential target*
- Location should have 20 years capacity for current and foreseeable future members
- Location does not need to be free-standing
- A location owned by a member and operated under lease to the new agency is not necessarily unacceptable
- If location is in a member-owned facility, there must be a lease relationship between member and Agency*
- Cost of a facility should be a deciding factor if all other concerns can be adequately addressed*
- Attract and retain a high quality workforce
- Require dispatchers to have a very high level understanding of their territory served*
- Allow reasonable discretion to make decisions in the field to benefit customers
- Agency management staff should be Agency employees serving at the pleasure of the governing board
- Dispatch staff should be cross-trained (no cross training or utilization of staff is opposed)
- There should be a strong linkage between EOCs and the dispatch agency
- Reduce built in delays between communication centers
- Buy the best technology but allow members to not purchase all services offered (*, +)
- Ensure maximum compatibility with non-merged technologies (*, +)
- Be able to meet peaks in demand and maintain standards at all times
- Employ rigorous quality control and reporting practices

(cont'd)

Governance and Finance:

- Certain issues should require unanimity (*)
- No one member should have veto authority or the power to control decisions(*)
- Make decisions by consensus whenever possible
- Clarity of mission and purpose is critical
- Checks and balances are needed to ensure minority voices are heard
- Dispute resolution should be included in governance model
- Governance should accommodate additional members in future
- Governance should address departure of members – i.e., process, consequences
- Agency should be managed by a joint board of owners
- Executive board should consist of CEOs (i.e., strong mayor or city manager or fire chief) (*,+)
- Operational boards should address most operational details
- There should be separate advisory boards for Police and Fire/EMS(*,+)
- Cost control over time is very important; sudden large cost changes should be avoided.

Disagreement exists around some issues:

(Note: Disagreement items identified are those for which a significant array of views was expressed, that is, 4 or more respondents opposed these ideas to some degree. Disagreement items are paraphrased below from the survey wording. Some items are a consolidation of several related ideas in the survey).

- **Whether records management should be integrated into the agency, and how**
- **Whether the new agency should assume EPSCA responsibilities if it requires a lot more time to accomplish**
- **Whether the new agency should have both owners and customers or only owners**
- **How to treat current dispatch employees in terms of future employment with a new agency**
- **Whether dispatchers should be assigned to specific jurisdictions, and the degree of integration between police and fire/EMS dispatch**
- **The implementation timeline and its relationship to current technology lifespan**
- **Timing of start-up and how members should be compensated for sunk technology costs**

TALLY OF SURVEY RESPONSES

KEY:

- **Bold Face Items:** all respondents answering this question support this idea to some degree.
- “*Belongs in SOVP?*” column: “#-----” indicates majority of respondents think this item should be in SOVP.

Part 1: MISSION

Concept / Principle / Value <i>The regional dispatch agency should...</i>	SUPPT XXX	SUPPT XX	SUPPT X	OPPOSE XXX	OPPOSE XX	OPPOSE X	Belongs in SOVP?
<i>Ideas about scope of mission</i>							
Take calls for emergency police, fire and medical services (SNOPAC)	8		3				5
Track and manage the information flow and resources in assistance to the agencies performing duties at the scene of the emergency (SNOPAC)	7		3				3
Enhance effectiveness, efficiency, coordination and interoperability of emergency communications across police, fire and EMS among and between participating jurisdictions/agencies.	8		3				8 ----
<i>Ideas about operating philosophy / approach</i>							
Have a priority focus on customer service to the public and to members and customer jurisdictions/agencies	7	1	3				6 -----
Operate as a true partnership ensuring a voice and a vote for all members/owners in decision-making	8		3				7 -----
Increase in the level of dispatch services available across the board to member agencies.	4	2	3	1			2
Place a high priority on standardizing SOPs in order to achieve potential efficiencies	5	1	4			1	1
Recognize the unique communications needs of Fire, EMS and Police agencies and be prepared to address them independently	6		5				6 -----
As a fundamental public safety operation, the new agency should be guided by public safety needs and operational issues. Agency decision-making should not be politicized.	6	2	3				4
<i>Ideas about effectiveness and efficiency</i>							
The agency should be guided in its decisions by the paramount, but equal, goals of achieving both greater effectiveness in service delivery and greater efficiency in service delivery.	2	1	2	3		11	1

Concept / Principle / Value	SUPPT XXX	SUPPT XX	SUPPT X	OPPOSE XXX	OPPOSE XX	OPPOSE X	Belongs in SOVP?
<i>The regional dispatch agency should...</i>							
The agency should be guided by the paramount goals of effectiveness and efficiency (but these may be of unequal importance depending on the particular decision)	4	2	5			X	2
<i>Ideas about records management</i>							
Initiate incident records reports and transmit them to jurisdictions for their ultimate completion and maintenance (<i>i.e., minimal records function equivalent to that provided now by Bellevue or ValleyCom for customers</i>).	4	2	1	1		2	
Manage and maintain fire and EMS records for all participating fire agencies , maintaining a centrally-accessible database, with each jurisdiction responsible for the completion and uploading of files to that central database— <i>But only if police records are also regionalized in a similar manner</i>	1		2	2		5	
Manage and maintain fire and EMS records for all participating fire agencies , maintaining a centrally -accessible database, with each jurisdiction responsible for the completion and uploading of files to that central database— <i>Regardless of whether police records are also regionalized.</i>	2	2	3	1		1	
<i>Ideas about 800 MHz / EPSCA role</i>							
Assume 800MHz platform ownership and maintenance responsibility for all participants, even if this requires taking more time to iron out the details	2	2	3			4	2
Not assume 800 MHz ownership and maintenance responsibilities if it proves to be a serious problem holding back the other aspects of the project	1	2	5	1		2	1
<i>Ideas about owners versus customers</i>							
All jurisdictions receiving service from the regional dispatch agency should be owners – there should not be customers.	1		1	3	2	4	2
The regional dispatch agency should have owners and customers / subscribers who are not owners.	4	1	4	1		1	5
<i>Ideas about conditions for implementation</i>							
The project should proceed if a critical mass of participants (in terms of being able to achieve gains in efficiency and effectiveness) is willing as opposed to waiting for unanimity of participants.	4	3	4				2

Concept / Principle / Value	SUPPT XXX	SUPPT XX	SUPPT X	OPPOSE XXX	OPPOSE XX	OPPOSE X	Belongs in SOVP?
<i>The regional dispatch agency should...</i>							
To move forward, the agency must be able to demonstrate that there is a service improvement for members to participate: a cost increase for the same service is not acceptable.	6	3	3		2	X	3
Other:							

Part 2: OPERATIONS

Concept / Principle / Value	SUPPT XXX	SUPPT XX	SUPPT X	OPPOSE XXX	OPPOSE XX	OPPOSE X	Belongs in SOVP?
<i>Ideas about efficiency and effectiveness:</i>							
The agency must improve interagency communications and coordination in situations involving multiple agencies (Sno)							
The agency shall provide an improved and standardized service to the citizens of the county (Sno)	5	1	5				2
To reduce cost by sharing core infrastructure such as physical facility, telephone and radio systems; and computerize dispatch and record keeping services (Sno)							
The agency shall provide an improved and standardized service to the citizens of the county (Sno)	5	2	4			1	4
Agency actions shall be planned, procured and implemented in a manner that maximizes the price advantages gained in large-scale and long-term purchasing agreements. (EPSCA)							
Effectiveness of operation is generally <u>equally</u> as important as efficiency	4	1	5				1
Effectiveness of operation is more important than efficiency	3		2	1		3	2
Effectiveness of operations is more important than efficiency	1	2	3		1	2	1
So long as effectiveness is not degraded, efficiency should be a primary decision making criteria	3	2	2			1	
Dispatch service levels—in terms of response time, dispatch time, accuracy, should meet and exceed current and future regional standards							
Dispatch service levels—in terms of response time, dispatch time, accuracy, should meet and exceed current and future regional standards	6	1	4				5
A single service level should be available to all participants, regardless of size or need, to simplify operational challenges, maximize efficiencies	1		1		1	7	
At least two different service levels should be available to participants, with associated cost differential		3	6	1			3
Other:							

Concept / Principle / Value	SUPPT XXX	SUPPT XX	SUPPT X	OPPOSE XXX	OPPOSE XX	OPPOSE X	Belongs in SOVP?
<i>Ideas about customer service, operating philosophy</i>							
Owners and client agencies are all treated like valued customers.	7	1	3				7----
The first priority is delivering quality service to the general public	7	2	2				8----
Customer service – broadly including the public, member agencies, and contract agencies – is the most important priority	4		6				4
Provide what the customers want	5	1	2				2
Exceed customer expectations	4		4			1	1
Seek equity between participants—large and small, police and Fire/EMS							
Market / Communicate the successes of the agency to the public, to members and clients	3	1	2			1	2
Changes in practice should be thoroughly studied and vetted with users in advance and there should be serious up front consideration given to customer wishes.	4	2	3			1	1
Changes in practice are the responsibility of the operating management and users will be informed of changes, but not consulted prior to.			2	5	2	3	
Management policies should ensure meaningful opportunities for input on decisions from all customers and owners	7	2	1				5
Operations will maintain or enhance the quality of life for citizens in the participating jurisdictions	4		3			1	2
The agency should be structured and managed to enhance cooperation between member jurisdictions	5	3	2				1
The management philosophy / approach should be highly proactive: anticipate and resolve issues before they become significant problems.	7	1	3				4
Other:							
<i>Ideas about location of the dispatch center:²</i>							
Location choice and set-up must support interoperability among agencies.	6	1	3				2
The facility must be seismically sound.	8		2				1
The facility should be located in a place and in a facility that minimizes its risk as a potential target	5	1	1			1	1

² Redmond did not respond to questions regarding location.

Concept / Principle / Value	SUPPT XXX	SUPPT XX	SUPPT X	OPPOSE XXX	OPPOSE XX	OPPOSE X	Belongs in SOVP?
The facility should be centrally located with relatively easy accessibility by all members	5	1	1			1	1
The facility should have the physical capacity to serve needs of current and reasonably foreseeable additional members for at least 20 years.	3	3	3				2
If the facility is located in a building owned by anyone other than the new regional dispatch agency, then the relationship between the agency and the owner must be that of lessee and lessor.	3	1	3			1	1
The facility must be in a free-standing location.	1			1	1	6	
The facility must not be owned by any member. A lease arrangement is insufficient to overcome this barrier.	1			1	2	6	
Cost of a facility should be a deciding factor, if all other concerns can be adequately addressed.	2	3	4			1	1
Other:							
<i>Ideas about employees</i>							
The agency must be able to attract and retain a high quality workforce	6	1	4				4
Dispatchers must have a very high level of understanding of the territory they serve	5	1	4			1	1
Employees of existing dispatch centers must be assured a position in the new agency, with no loss of seniority or benefits	3		1	1		5	2
Employees of existing dispatch centers should be kept well informed of transition plans but should be required to re-apply in order to be hired	2	1	4	1		3	1
No one will lose their job or take a pay cut as a result of this move to regionalized dispatch	2			2		6	1
Allow reasonable discretion and authority to make decisions in the field to benefit customers	4	2	4				1
ALL employees of the regional dispatch agency must be employees of the new agency and should not be the employees of any member jurisdiction	5	1	3			2	2
The management staff of the new regional dispatch agency should be employees of the agency, not of any member jurisdiction, and shall be selected by and serve at the pleasure of the board of the new agency.	7		3				2

Concept / Principle / Value	SUPPT XXX	SUPPT XX	SUPPT X	OPPOSE XXX	OPPOSE XX	OPPOSE X	Belongs in SOVP?
Other:							
<i>Ideas about linkage between police and fire/EMS dispatch³</i>							
Dispatch of police and fire should be operationally separate but <u>staff should be cross-trained</u> , cross-utilized if necessary.	4	1	4			X	3
Dispatch of police and fire should be completely separate with <u>no</u> cross-utilization of staff	1			2	2	5	1
Dispatchers should be assigned to specific jurisdictions on an ongoing basis to ensure highest level of familiarity with their territory—even if this requires a higher staffing level and costs overall.	2		3	1	1	3	
Dispatch of police and fire should be completely integrated	1		3	2	1	3	1
<i>Other ideas about dispatch operations—technical</i>							
<i>Agency actions shall be implemented in a manner that allows new technology to be phased in to spread financial burdens and allow full utilization of life-span of existing participants' dispatch systems.</i> (EPSCA)	3	1	3			4	1
A strong linkage between the regional dispatch and local EOCs must be ensured		1	1				
Eliminate the built-in delays in communicating between communications centers	6	1	3				3
The very best of technology choices should be available to members—but not all members should be required to purchase all services.	4	3	3				1
Start-up of the new agency should be based at least in part on a consideration of the current life-span of members' dispatch technologies	1	1	7	1			2
Start-up of the new agency should be phased to allow members' dispatch technologies to naturally age and reach the end of useful life							
Member agencies should be compensated in a specified manner for their sunk costs in dispatch technology that are lost as a result of the transition to a regional center—and the timing of the transition should be such as to minimize this cost overall.	2	1	4		2	2	
Technology choices should be compatible to the extent possible with user technologies that are not merged as a result of the creation of the new entity.	1		4	2		4	

³ Redmond did not respond to questions about police and fire/EMS dispatch linkage

Concept / Principle / Value	SUPPT XXX	SUPPT XX	SUPPT X	OPPOSE XXX	OPPOSE XX	OPPOSE X	Belongs in SOVP?
The agency must have capacity to meet peaks in demand and maintain standards at all times	2		8	1		X	
The agency must employ rigorous quality control and reporting practices	8		3				3
Other:							

Part 3: GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE

Concept / Principle / Value	SUPPT XXX	SUPPT XX	SUPPT X	OPPOSE XXX	OPPOSE XX	OPPOSE X	Belongs in SOVP?
<i>Ideas about a voice and a vote</i>							
Governance model must provide everyone a voice and a vote.	4	1	3				4
It is more important that each jurisdiction truly have a voice in decision-making, than it is to have a vote in all decisions.	4	1	3	2			3
<i>Ideas about veto power, supermajority votes</i>							
Certain issues should require unanimity.	3	1	4	1			
No one member should have veto authority or the power to control decisions	6	3	1				3
Some important types of decisions should require a super-majority of votes of the Executive Board, for example, incurring debt.	6	1	2			1	3
<i>Ideas about governance, generally</i>							
Decisions should be made by consensus whenever possible.	7	1	3				4
Clarity about mission and purpose is critical	6	2	3				2
There need to be checks and balances to ensure minority voices can be heard	4	4	3				2
Dispute resolution process should be built into the governance model.	5	2	4				2
<i>Ideas about adding, subtracting of members</i>							
Governance structure must accommodate the addition of more agencies in the future	6	2	3				3
Governance / Finance model should address the means and consequences of departure by any member.	6	2	3				2
Initial participants should be significantly rewarded in the finance and governance structure	2	1	5	1			2

Concept / Principle / Value	SUPPT XXX	SUPPT XX	SUPPT X	OPPOSE XXX	OPPOSE XX	OPPOSE X	Belongs in SOVP?
Latecomers should not be penalized in terms of governance and finance	1	1	4			4	
<i>Ideas about the governing board</i>							
The agency should be managed by a joint board consisting of owners.	6	1	4				2
The size of the executive board should be limited to ensure it is manageable, even if this means that some jurisdictions are required to be customers / subscribers rather than owners.	1	2	3	1		4	1
Non-owner customers should be represented by a seat or seats on the executive board.	2	1	4	1	2	1	1
The Executive Board should consist of the chief operating / administrative officer (or his / her designee) of each member, i.e., a strong-mayor or city manager or fire chief.	5	1	4	1			2
Votes on the governing board should be equally weighted, regardless of the size of the agency or its call load	3		4	1		3	2
Votes on the governing board should be weighted in some manner based on population, call load or other factors related to volume	1		5	2	1	2	1
<i>Ideas about advisory / operational boards</i>							
Operational board(s) should be used to work through most operational details	6	2	3				3
In addition to an executive board, there should also be a single police / fire / EMS operational board to manage the operational details and inform the decisions of the executive board.	4			3	1	3	2
There should be separate police and Fire / EMS operational boards to provide input to an executive board.	7		3	1			3
Both customers and owners should be represented on operational board(s)	4	2	3	2			2
<i>Ideas about financing</i>							
The finance structure must be able to withstand the inability of individual members to meet financial obligations in any given year, without requiring the member to leave the agency.	4	1	3			2	2
Funding ideally would be centralized and billed back without the need to wait for members to individually commit funding	3	1	4			2	1
The agency should be able to issue its own debt, rather than rely on the debt of its members to fund major expenses.	3		5	2		1	2

Concept / Principle / Value	SUPPT XXX	SUPPT XX	SUPPT X	OPPOSE XXX	OPPOSE XX	OPPOSE X	Belongs in SOVP?
The agency should be created as a new, separate taxing district that could impose a property tax.	2		2	2	2	3	
Cost control over time (budget cycles) is very important: there should be extreme care taken not to impose sudden, large budget burdens on member agencies.	6	2	3				1
Other:							