2006 SIEC Listening Sessions Summary

1. General Funding/Resource Issues
   a. P25 radios are very expensive and using money to purchase them limits basic operational capabilities, which are still weak in many areas
      i. This results in buying fewer radios in preparation only for the possibility of a major mutual aid disaster
   b. Look into accessible, unused resources and utilize existing technology and radios to enhance systems already in place to avoid 'reinventing the wheel'
   c. Part time and volunteer departments and other agencies will need to be considered with regards to funding, training, etc.
   d. Costs for sustainment of interoperable equipment will need to be carried by counties and localities
   e. An MOU is needed for counties and localities to pool resources and enhance efficiency
   f. If the option exists for purchasing equipment off of a procurement plan and statewide contract, it would aid in the cost burden for rural areas which are unable to place large orders
2. Time Issues
   a. The sooner the better. Waiting around while the interoperability problem continues to grow is not good. It is important to move deliberately but remain proactive and move quickly
   b. There are time limits for spending interoperability money that are too difficult to meet (90 days) and many county boards, for example, only meet once every few months
   c. SIEC needs to define interoperability, develop a strategic plan/vision, and enact a process as soon as possible to get the ball rolling
   d. The money from the Federal Government will be decreasing in the years ahead, so it is necessary to make decisions that impact us now
3. Long Term Vs. Short Term Solutions
   a. 'Band-aid' approaches are the worst route to take
      i. Purchasing cheap, non upgradeable radios will only impede the process
   b. A gap analysis is necessary to determine priorities
   c. Designating mutual aid channels are a cost effective short term solutions for the meantime
   d. Look to other states to find their mistakes in dealing with the interoperability issue and how it has affected them both in the short and long term
4. Scope of Interoperability
   a. Ultimately is the goal regional? Statewide? National? Goals need to be set to develop a statewide strategy and prioritization method for handling local needs

        i.   SIEC should develop a long term strategic plan starting locally and building outwards to form a 'Lego approach' to integrate systems

    b. Local operational needs of many communities are not currently being met and basic interoperability capabilities need to be achieved before expanding to a regional level

        i.   There should be a balance of statewide uniformity/compatibility with the needs and capabilities of locals.

    c. It is important to reach out to volunteers and agencies including Department of Corrections, EMS, power plants, etc.

    d. There is no need to communicate (statewide) routinely only because it is possible. Rather, interoperability should be developed and implemented on a 'need to' basis

    e. SIEC should look to establish minimum standards for operating fields and agency coordination

    f. What will be the role of SIEC and the state? Will we be guided? Mandated?

        i.   There should be a mix of guidance and direction while still allowing localities to make decisions autonomously

5. Cooperation

    a. Money should be used as an incentive for those most willing to commit to the development of interoperability

    b. Turf wars mean training and resource conflicts. The issue is largely political

    c. Ten codes should be examined and either standardized or eliminated

    d. Building local support and commitments to cover some costs associated with interoperability is essential

        i.   Education and awareness is needed for County Elected Officials and County Board members

    e. Border counties and coordinating with other states to extend interoperability and enhance mutual aid is a concern both politically and financially

    f. There are too many varying plans/findings/studies to examine and coordinate (we are being shoved in too many different directions)

    g. SIEC should not be afraid to use 'teeth' to force cooperation if absolutely necessary

6. Technical Issues

    a. Different systems are best suited for different areas so rather than creating one uniform system, it would be better to use available technologies to coordinate them

        i.   Geography, population, and other factors affects what systems may work best

    b. What about bridging? Trunking? Narrow banding? Using Crossband Repeaters?

    c. Equipment, in many cases, should be standardized

d. What will be the future role of dispatch centers? 911 routing? Consolidation?
e. Vendors should be made to guarantee compatibility of open architecture components even with other vendors
    i. The state could employ engineers and technical consultants to work on its behalf to make vendors' systems compatible
    ii. Get rid of proprietary control!
    iii. Look at a developing a procurement plan, state contracts, etc to make uniform costs and competitive bidding
f. Frequency is like real estate. Who will own it?
    i. There is a shortage of channels and frequencies. It would be beneficial for the state to help with the reallocation of them
    ii. If owned by the state, frequency may be licensed out and used as a 'string' to encourage statewide cooperation
    iii. Look into establishing a tactical frequency
g. Hands-on and uniform/standardized training is essential for everyone
    i. Crash courses are needed at the most basic levels for those involved with radio interoperability and usage