



Michigan Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) Consolidation Considerations

Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) are being encouraged to investigate consolidations for a variety of reasons. Economic reasons are making some consolidations necessary while technology may be making some consolidations possible where they weren't before.

In February 2011, a workgroup was created and comprised of representatives from Michigan Chapter of APCO, Michigan Chapter of NENA, and the Michigan Communications Directors Association. The workgroup was tasked with evaluating consolidation considerations for PSAPs operating within the State of Michigan. This document is a result of the workgroup's research and focuses on considerations and legislation specific to PSAPs throughout the State of Michigan. It should be noted that considerations specified in this document may not be suitable for other states as a result of varying statutes and regulations.

The origins of the principal concepts within this document are derived from APCO International's paper titled *Communications Center Consolidation Considerations*. The original APCO International document can be found in their document library on the website at http://www.apcointl.org/new/commcenter911/downloads/CCC_Checklist_FINAL.pdf.

Identify Requirements & Needs

The first step would be to identify the needs, impacts and requirements. The consolidation process can be complex, difficult and costly. It can also be beneficial, improve services and efficiency and be a potential cost saving. Many factors need to be considered when contemplating whether consolidation is right for your agency as well as what type of consolidation is right for your agency.

Consider the following questions when researching if a consolidation is right for your agency or area:

- Does consolidation make sense for your area from a service level, political, technological and financial perspective?
- Are calls frequently being transferred among or between agencies?
 - ✓ Would consolidation reduce or eliminate the transfer of 911 calls between agencies and improve response times and lower liability?

- Will Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) protocols be administered in-house or transferred off-site?
- Do multiple agency responses having to be coordinated between and among multiple dispatch centers?
 - ✓ Would consolidation improve incident coordination and interoperability? How?
- Do critical systems or facilities have to be upgraded or replaced?
 - ✓ Would a consolidation of these services or facilities provide a substantial cost savings?
- Are there performance or service levels below desires or expectations?
 - ✓ Will consolidation improve services?
 - ✓ If so, how?
- Are there concerns about sustainable funding for operations or for communications systems, CAD, radio, NG 9-1-1?
- What makes consolidation a viable alternative?
- What are the perceived benefits?
- What are the perceived deficits?
- What improvements can be expected?
- What obstacles and challenges can be expected?
 - ✓ Technical Considerations:
 - Common radio system with adequate coverage in the geographic area of the PSAP and participating agencies, or ability to network disparate radio systems at the PSAP
 - Common or disparate fire paging system(s) or station alerting system(s) with adequate coverage in the geographic area of the PSAP and participating agencies, or the ability to network over distance to the PSAP location
 - Common GIS platform, or ability of PSAP to utilize disparate GIS platforms.
 - Common CAD and associated records and jail systems fed by CAD
 - Cost savings for partnering agencies?
 - Retention/Conversion of historical data
 - Networking capabilities (telephone, radio, computers, etc.)
- How do proposed costs compare with current expenditures?
 - ✓ Develop a five (5) or ten (10) year pro-forma budget to weigh these costs.
- Upon what research/data are these conclusions based?
- Identify the willing and unwilling participants/partners in your consolidation effort?
- Is there funding available for your consolidation effort?
- Consolidation does not always result in cost savings. High start up and capital costs may delay any cost savings.
 - ✓ Where would you see cost savings?

- ✓ When would you see cost savings?
- Are there willing participants/partners in your consolidation effort?
 - ✓ A lead agency and stakeholders will need to be determined.
- Should a feasibility study be conducted?
 - ✓ What would the cost be?
- Should we consider a consultant to assist?
 - ✓ A consultant can independently review the facts and figures and then keep needs and budgets "realistic".
 - ✓ Some political issues revolving around consolidation may be better served by a neutral third-party consultant.
 - ✓ It is imperative that the selection of a consultant be agreed upon by all major players. This can preemptively address issues.
 - ✓ What would the cost be?
- Are there duties currently performed by dispatch personnel that are not dispatch related that will need to be managed elsewhere? Examples of this would be jail duties, records duties, receptionist, switchboard, walk in complaints and building access and security.
- Will there be a budget for developing the consolidation effort?
 - ✓ How will the capital costs related to the consolidation be funded?
- What will the funding mechanism be?

Determine the TYPE of Consolidation Desired

Advancements in technology now allow us to consider a multitude of different consolidation types. Below are some of the more common models of consolidation. Agencies need to review options and models to determine what will best fit their operational, economic, political, local and physical needs.

Different TYPES of Consolidation:

Co-Location

A co-location of PSAP's is the sharing of physical space by more than one PSAP and/or agency. In addition to sharing space, this may also include shared technology such as CAD, telephone systems, radios and recorders while remaining completely separate entities. An example would be a communications center that houses a city police dispatch and a city fire dispatch where the employees are employed by their respective agency and governance remains with that agency. This model can provide cost efficiencies by sharing physical space and technology while allowing agencies to keep administrative control.

Some examples of this consolidation model in Michigan are:

- Otsego County Central Dispatch and Gaylord MSP Regional Dispatch
- Marquette County Central Dispatch and Superior Regional Communications Center (Negaunee)

Regional).

Full Consolidation

This is the consolidation of 911 call answering and dispatch function for all public safety agencies within a defined geographical area into one agency. This type of consolidation usually provides services for all public safety call intake and dispatching within the assigned area. This consolidation is one agency with a single point of governance. These agencies can be their own entity or a separate department within another agency such as a sheriff's office. These agencies can operate out of a single or multiple physical locations. A full consolidation may also be a contractual relationship between neighboring public agencies and the PSAP agency.

Some examples of this consolidation model in Michigan are:

- Ottawa County Central Dispatch and Calhoun County Consolidated Dispatch (single county PSAP that has its own governing body; separate Authority).
- CCE 9-1-1 Central Dispatch, Meceola Central Dispatch, and Mason-Oceana 9-1-1 (multiple county PSAP that has its own governing body; separate Authority).
- Eaton County Central Dispatch and Bay County Central Dispatch (single county PSAP that is a department within the county structure with the Board of Commissioners being the governing body).
- Gladwin County Central Dispatch, Lake County Central Dispatch, and Missaukee County Central Dispatch (single county PSAP that is a department within the sheriff's office and falls under the county structure).

Virtual Consolidation

Virtual consolidation can include variations of what is listed above wherein a PSAP maintains separate physical locations but share common phone equipment, radio equipment, CAD and other public safety dispatching equipment over a secure managed network.

Some examples of this model are:

- Eaton County Central Dispatch, Clinton County Central Dispatch, Livingston County Central Dispatch and Lansing-Ingham Central Dispatch have an intergovernmental agreement that allows them to share the costs of new telephone technologies and virtual backup capability for their 911 call intake and dispatch operations.
- Upper Peninsula Authority – All PSAPs in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (except for Superior Regional Communications Center) are currently implementing a secure managed network to provide common CAD and telephone technologies across the Upper Peninsula.
- Oakland County PSAPs – All PSAPs operating in Oakland County are connected by a secure managed network and they share one CAD system.

Partial Consolidation

A partial consolidation would be the consolidation of call intake and/or dispatch functions for multiple public safety agencies within a geographical area. This type of consolidation usually provides services for all public safety call intake and dispatching within the assigned area.

Some examples of this model are:

- Macomb County Sheriff Department Dispatch

Check Local and State Legal Requirements

There are many statutes, local plans and ordinances, and a multitude of other legal requirements impacting the process of consolidation and intergovernmental transfers of work. The following should be considered in all consolidation discussions:

- What is and what is not required to achieve consolidation?
- How does state law speak to this issue?
 - ✓ Current statutes (PA 32 of 1986 – Emergency Telephone Service Enabling Act, PA 7 of 1967 – Urban Cooperation Act, PA 8 of 1967 – Intergovernmental Transfer of Functions and Responsibilities Act, PA 57 of 1988 – Emergency Services Authority Act)
 - ✓ Upcoming statutes
- Are there mandates requiring consolidation?
- Are there any fiscal incentives to consolidate?
 - ✓ State Revenue Sharing?
 - ✓ Grant Opportunities?
- Are there any legislative obstacles?
 - ✓ PA 7 of 1967 – Urban Cooperation Act
 - ✓ PA 8 of 1967 – Intergovernmental Transfer of Functions and Responsibilities Act
 - ✓ PA 57 of 1988 – Emergency Services Authority Act
 - ✓ PA 179 of 1991 – Michigan Telecommunications Act
 - ✓ PA 368 of 1978 – Public Health Code Act
- Will simple contract, memoranda of understanding or intergovernmental agreement suffice, or is a referendum required?
 - ✓ What are the contractual obligations for current employer
 - ✓ If there will be a NEW employer, what are the contractual obligations (if any)?
- Are there restrictions as to what unit of government can operate or manage a PSAP?
 - ✓ PA 32 of 1986 refers to PSAP Governance
 - ✓ County's Emergency Telephone Service District Plan
- Do external requirements such as LEIN/NCIC have a bearing?

Identify Interested Agencies

A group or individual will need to be placed in charge of the consolidation project and effort. This group or individual will be responsible for keeping focus, motivation and movement with the project and parties involved.

- Who will spearhead the consolidation project and effort?
- Who are the stakeholders in the project?
 - ✓ Need to identify all of the organizations that will be impacted by the project, not just those interested in joining the consolidation.
- What agencies are likely to participate?
- What services do they require and expect?
- What are the perceived consolidation obstacles?
- What agencies are against the consolidation proposal (if one exists)?
 - ✓ What are the agency's specific objections?
 - Local distrust
 - Trying to please and do all for all agencies
 - Political commitments/climate
 - Overcoming loss of "local" control
 - Overcoming concern of decreased level of services
 - Job losses
 - Closing of a Police Department (safe harbor) during non-business hours
 - Other work performed by current dispatch staff
- Can the objections be overcome?
 - ✓ If so, how?
- Do you have buy-in and participation not only from the PSAP and communication managers but from public officials of participating agencies and municipalities?
- When and if appropriate, should we seek public support?

Identify the Best Governance for Your Consolidation

There are different governance models that are allowed under the Emergency Telephone Service Enabling Act (PA 32 of 1986). Selecting a governance structure that suits your geographical and political area is a critical component to a successful consolidation.

- Does legislation address governance for consolidated centers?
- Will the center be governed by:
 - ✓ One participating agency?
 - ✓ A board created by a joint powers agreement?

- Will there be separate operations (Law, Fire, and EMS) and governance boards or a single body?
- Governance model examples:
 - ✓ Separate Department within an existing department's governmental structure. This model has a civilian director that reports within the department's organizational structure with other department heads.

Examples of this model are:

- St. Joseph County Central Dispatch
- Van Buren County Central Dispatch

- ✓ A Department that is part of a participating/existing agency. Sworn personnel manage the PSAP and fall under the management of that department.

Examples of this model are:

- Macomb County Sheriff Department Dispatch
- Lake County Central Dispatch
- Missaukee County Central Dispatch
- Gladwin County Central Dispatch

- ✓ Independent Authority. A civilian director typically manages these agencies and reports to a board of representatives from participating members.

Examples of this model are:

- Southeast Regional Emergency Services Authority (SERESA)
- Midland County Central Dispatch
- Calhoun County Consolidated Dispatch Authority
- Montcalm County Consolidated Dispatch Authority

- ✓ Contractual. Governmental units can enter into contractual agreements with one another in order to provide PSAP and/or dispatch service.

Examples of this model are:

- Oakland County Sheriff PSAP
- Troy Police Department PSAP
- Novi Regional Dispatch
- Chippewa, Luce and Mackinac Consolidation

- Will the structure be civilian versus uniform or some hybrid thereof?

- ✓ Create an organizational structure chart

Develop Participation Projections

It is important to gather as much information as possible regarding the logistics of the geographic region and local units of government in which consolidation is being considered (9-1-1 calls, non-9-1-1 calls to dispatch centers, law enforcement statistics, fire department statistics, EMS statistics, number of public safety personnel, etc).

- How many agencies will participate?
- What is the call volume for each agency?
- What services are required and expected by each agency?
- How many telecommunicators will be needed/required?
 - ✓ Staffing requirement tools – Project RETAINS, Erlang formulae, etc.
- How many support staff/personnel will be needed?
- What will the personnel costs be?
- Are there a minimum number of agencies required to make the project work?
- Is there a particular agency critical to the success of the project?

Determine Facility Projections

There are many things to be considered regarding a facility capable of housing a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). In any type of consolidation, an agency is going to see an increased need for space. Sometimes this may be simply for additional equipment and in other cases it may be for additional staff.

- What are the political, technical, and operational concerns associated with the PSAP location?
 - ✓ Define and address each concern.
- What facility features are desired?
- What are the public safety industry standards for design, construction and equipping a PSAP?
- How will the facility be furnished?
- What are the security needs of the facility?
 - ✓ Limited Access
 - ✓ Camera monitoring
 - ✓ Window specifications
 - ✓ Man made threats
 - ✓ Weather threats
 - Are there any special levels of protection needed, such as seismic or wind?
 - Electrical (single point of ground)
 - ✓ Cyber Security
- Can an existing PSAP fill the facility needs or is construction required?
 - ✓ Can a current PSAP be expanded or does this construction require a new location?
- If new construction, what are the site procurement concerns?
 - ✓ Is there government land available if a new facility is necessary?
 - ✓ If no government land exists, is any other suitable property available?
 - If so, at what cost?

- ✓ Location (Consider where critical infrastructures are located in relation to your site choice to eliminate challenges during events, i.e. chemical plant releases, train derailments, airplane crashes, etc. Also consider weather and geographical concerns such as flood zones.)
- ✓ Permit costs.
- ✓ Does the site need to be located near the EOC?
- Will a backup center be required?
 - ✓ If virtual consolidation, will established means of communication facilitate backup?
- Can an existing PSAP easily become a backup Center?
- What is the estimated 9-1-1 call volume?
- What is the estimated non-9-1-1 call volume?
- Does each PSAP handle non-emergency calls the same way?
- Consider the need for generator and UPS power.
- Consider HVAC needs and requirements.
- Consider lighting needs in a PSAP environment.
- Consider acoustic needs in a PSAP environment.
- Consider parking needs for PSAP personnel, events and training.
- Consider ADA requirements.

Investigate Technology Needs

Regardless of the type of consolidation, it is always necessary to investigate the technical needs of the PSAP. A good way to start this process is by conducting an inventory of the primary technologies operating in the existing PSAPs. This provides an accurate assessment of what the PSAPs currently have operating and help all parties to better answer the following questions:

- What are the NG911 considerations and requirements that need addressed?
- Can CAD, phone, radio, RMS, recording and other systems in place be used?
 - ✓ Upgraded?
 - ✓ Replaced?
- What mapping system will be used?
- What are the CPE requirements and needs?
- What are the radio requirements and needs?
 - ✓ Does radio interoperability exist?
 - ✓ At what level?
 - ✓ How can this be improved, if needed?
- What are the radio console requirement and needs?

- What are the hardware and software needs?
- Will there be an IT administrator hired for the project? What are the future IT personnel needs?
- What are the connectivity concerns?
- Is new technology required to support consolidation?
 - ✓ What technologies?
- Are there ways of phasing in new technology?
 - ✓ If so, how, and over what time period?
- Do any agencies have major technology upgrades (such as narrow banding or the addition of AVL or MDTs) in their future?
 - ✓ How will this be managed?

Resolve Staffing Issues

It is much more productive to discuss staffing issues early on and openly when considering consolidation. Continually updating current employees on the progress is key.

- Will all current employees keep their jobs?
 - ✓ If not, how will selections be made?
 - ✓ Will current employees need to re-apply?
- How will new vacancies be filled?
- Are any personnel unionized?
 - ✓ If so, are they all represented by the same bargaining agent?
 - ✓ How is this addressed?
- How will past accrued time be honored?
- Will seniority matter?
- How will supervisors be chosen?
- Are all potential participants at or near the same pay scale?
 - ✓ If not, what are the acceptable options for handling this?
- How will salary and benefits be determined (Health, Vacation, etc)?
- What about retirement?
- Will employees lose retirement benefits/vesting?
 - ✓ Will employees lose retiree health care?
- Will uniforms be worn?
 - ✓ If so, will uniforms be provided?
- In multi-discipline centers will all employees be expected to handle all agencies, or will “specialized”

dispatchers (fire only, law only, etc.) be used?

- ✓ How does this impact salary?
- Will employees be expected to perform all functions or will specific duties be delegated to specific positions/titles such as call-takers, dispatchers, etc?
- What schedule will be used?
- Are there enough existing employees to handle this or are there too many?
- Will new job descriptions need to be created?

Operational Management Issues

Operational management considerations should be addressed promptly regarding the newly consolidated PSAP. This may require significant meetings with public officials and department officials.

- How will SOPs be generated?
- Can pieces of existing SOPs be used or will a new document be required?
- Will one user agency be responsible for management of personnel and budgetary processes; or will the center adopt its own best practices?
 - ✓ If so, does this require the filing of additional documents with any governing agency?
- Will legal counsel for the center be required, or can it be provided by a user agency?
- Will liability insurance be required, or can it be provided by one of the participating agencies?
- Will accounting, payroll, and other financial services be required; or can these services be provided by one of the participating agencies?
- What accreditations are mandated – if any?
- Will voluntary accreditations such as CALEA be sought?
 - ✓ If so, when, by whom, and at what cost?
- Does the State have basic requirements for PSAPs or personnel?
- Look into legacy issues such as agencies relying on their PSAP to provide non-traditional services, or serving as a “pick up point” for hard-copy information. How will this change?

Develop Cost Estimates

Meetings should occur between the consolidation team, PSAP management, and public officials in order to accurately assess the cost of the consolidation. The cost assessment should include projected operational costs for a minimum of the first five year period after the consolidation.

- What are the start-up costs?

- ✓ Is there a funding source for the start-up (capital) costs?
- ✓ If no, where will the money come from for the start-up costs?
- Annual cost of operation?
 - ✓ PSAP operations
 - ✓ Infrastructure for communications systems
 - ✓ Maintenance and service contracts
- Recurring capital expenses (what are system life-cycles?)
- Make sure that ALL expenditures are carefully identified and documented. For example, personnel will require at least some training regarding the new organization and/or facility. Determine if this will be part of the consolidated budget, or if future users will be responsible for supporting these costs directly prior to the official start-up.

Create a Funding Model

Investigate what types of funding options are available for PSAPs under P.A. 32 of 1986.

- Determine how first year costs will be funded.
 - ✓ Will this be different for future fiscal years?
 - ✓ If so, how?
- If the plan calls for work to begin in the middle of a fiscal year, how will this be addressed?
- Are all participants on the same fiscal cycle?
 - ✓ If not, identify how the consolidated budget can best interface with these.
- Are other sources of funding available such as state 9-1-1 surcharge funds or federal or state grants?
 - ✓ If so, how much can be guaranteed?
- What type of auditing procedure is required by law and how will this be accomplished?
- Determine if agency/user fees will be necessary.
 - ✓ If so, what will be the basis/factors for establishing an equitable fee structure?
 - ✓ Involve the CFOs of participants in this process.

Review “Best Practices” Documentation on Consolidation

Remember – you are not the first person to undertake a consolidation. Utilize your professional networks of other municipalities, public officials, and PSAP managers who already experienced a similar consolidation.

- Check with Michigan APCO, Michigan NENA, the Michigan Communications Directors Association, and the State 9-1-1 Administrative Office for resources and timely information.

- Identify other similar sized centers that have successfully consolidated and make a few calls, perhaps even visit.
- Get one-on-one advice from people who have “been there and done that.”
- Incorporate these suggestions into your plan

Create a Transition Plan

Make a “to do” list of everything that must be done to get from where you are now to where you want to be. Don’t expect to get it perfect the first time as it will become a living document. Consider using project management software to track your timeline and resources. The timelines are also a critical ‘selling’ point early on.

- Identify dependencies.
- What has to be done first?
- What can’t be done until other actions are accomplished?
- Make sure communications are frequent and remain open. Briefings need to occur more often closer to cutover, and need to continue for some time thereafter. Leave sufficient time to adequately complete the tasks at hand.
- Develop a realistic transition budget with contingency.
- Identify any “deal breakers” or “drop dead dates” that may exist.
- Create a committee to oversee the transition (and even individual critical components) with key players assigned to manage key tasks.

Training

In most consolidations there will always be training necessary for the employees. Whether the training is technological or operational (procedures, policies, etc) the training needs of the employees must be a priority.

- Is training necessary as a result of the consolidation (new systems, new policies and procedures, etc)?
- Identify and analyze all existing training including any specialty training (such as EMD, EMT, teletype, etc.).
- Conduct a needs assessment as part of the process to assist in determining training standards.
- What is the duration of training of existing employees in the new environment?
- What is the duration of training of new hires?
- Will employees have a probation period?

Quality Assurance

PSAPs attempt to maintain the highest level of end-user satisfaction through continuous improvements in quality, delivery, and service. These services are determined by the participating municipalities and measured by a standard quality system.

- Does each current PSAP have a QA program?
- Will a new QA program be adopted?
- How will QA results affect personnel?
- Will the QA results/information be shared with the participating entities?

Create a Business Plan

A business plan for your PSAP, in its simplest form, should define where you want to be within a certain period of time (usually five years) and how you plan on getting there. The plan also outlines important starting points and provides a blueprint for improving services within your PSAP.

- Using input from all of the above, generate the first draft of a business plan.
- In addition to normal operational concerns, attention should be given to the need for potential consulting services as well as the identification of alternate sources of funding.
- Examine not only the start-up of the center, but its long-term management.
- Address continuity of operations.
- Identify the perceived challenges during the first five years and address them.
- Use available data to chart projected demands and community growth.
- Address technology life-cycles and personnel needs starting at day one and moving toward the future.

Effect the Consolidation

It is now time for you to effect the consolidation. Your transition plan specified earlier will greatly assist you in this process.

- Set a firm but flexible time line or schedule for the milestones of implementation.
- Conduct all needed tests (more than once!).
- Verify that all systems are in place and working and that all employees have been trained.
- Implement the final stages of the transition plan.
- Identify participants.
 - ✓ Will all agencies participate from hour one, day one, or will there be a gradual ramping up?
- Ensure sufficient staffing and vendor technical support is on-site before and after the cut-over.
- Verify and confirm that all necessary service/maintenance contract vendors are involved and available

(or even on-site) for the transition.

- Consider a press release to the media regarding the event.
- Consider updating the media on a regular basis to maintain public and user interest.
 - ✓ Consider having an “Open House” ahead of cut-over.
- Publicize any seven digit numbers that may have changed.
 - ✓ Setup call forwarding for a time.
- Decommission those facilities no longer needed.
- Address major issues immediately.
- Consider “pooling” minor issues to deal with when the dust settles as they may not be issues at all.
- Hold debriefing sessions to identify the good, bad, and ugly of the experience.