

# Statewide Radio Communications Interoperability

Office of the Governor

JANUARY 2009

08P-03

REPORT SUMMARY

The development of the estimated \$100 million statewide interoperable radio communication system in Montana would be aided by establishing the system in statute, developing a resource coordination plan, and promoting best practices for the system.

## Context

In Montana, the current effort to develop a statewide interoperable radio communication system is known as Interoperability Montana (IM). Analysis of statewide interoperable radio communication systems in other states indicates the development of the IM project is unique. In contrast to the IM project, most other states have assigned the development and oversight of a statewide interoperable radio communication system to a state agency. The Montana project was initially developed through a partnership of local governments, including representation from all 56 counties. However, participation in the project is voluntary. Presently, there are several stakeholders with radio communication infrastructure at the local and state level which have chosen not to participate. Establishing a statewide communication system in statute and defining the participation of local, state, and federal stakeholders would aid in the ongoing success of a statewide interoperable radio communication system. In addition, developing formal state agency migration plans would coordinate state resources relative to the system.

Approximately \$60 million has been leveraged for the IM project from local, state, and federal sources. Current estimates place the overall costs to build the system between \$100- and \$150 million within the next decade. Project emphasis has been primarily focused on infrastructure construction. However, there are also several operational issues which have received little attention and could promote the success of a statewide interoperable radio communication system. Issues include: a business planning process for long-term financial viability, asset inventory and management, and organizational staffing.

## Results

Audit recommendations address the need to establish a statewide interoperable radio communication system in statute and also define the participation of local, state, and federal partners. Recommendations also address several operational issues to promote the long-term success of a statewide interoperable radio communication system. Audit recommendations are directed to the Department of Administration, the Governor's Office, and the Statewide Interoperability Executive Advisory Council. Audit recommendations include:

- Establishing a statewide interoperable radio communication system in statute.
- Developing a formal migration plan to coordinate the resources of state agencies relative to a statewide interoperable radio communication system.

**IM Funding**  
As of November 2008

Source	Amount	Percentage
Local and Tribal	\$849,500	1%
State	15,177,484	27%
Federal	41,554,328	72%
Total Funding	\$57,581,312	100%

Source: Compiled by the Legislative Audit Division from Interoperability Montana records.

- Adopting a formal business planning process, operational best practices for asset management, and a long-term staffing plan for a statewide interoperable radio communication system.

Recommendation Concurrence	
Concur	1
Partially Concur	0
Do Not Concur	4

Source: Agency audit response included in final report.

For a complete copy of the report or for further information, contact the  
Legislative Audit Division at 406-444-3122; e-mail to [lad@mt.gov](mailto:lad@mt.gov); or check the website at <http://leg.mt.gov/audit>.  
Report Fraud, Waste, and Abuse to the Legislative Auditor's FRAUD HOTLINE  
Call toll-free 1-800-222-4446, or e-mail [lad@mt.gov](mailto:lad@mt.gov).