



## Audit of FirstNet Authority's Oversight of User Eligibility for the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network

Audit Report OIG-26-016-A

April 14, 2026

► **What We Audited** | Our objective was to assess the First Responder Network Authority's oversight for ensuring that only eligible users have access to the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN).

► **Why This Matters** | The NPSBN, or FirstNet, was established in 2017 to give first responders a dedicated network for communicating during emergency response operations. Connection of devices to the NPSBN is intended only for verified, eligible users who provide a public safety service.

FirstNet Authority, an independent authority within the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), manages and oversees the FirstNet program. In March 2017, FirstNet Authority awarded AT&T a \$6.5 billion, 25-year contract with a \$100 billion ceiling to deploy the network; FirstNet Authority manages and administers the contract.

Without adequate oversight and verification, FirstNet Authority cannot ensure that only eligible users have access to the NPSBN and that AT&T's performance meets contract requirements. Inadequate oversight and verification could lead to inflation of the number of device connections on the network, which could in turn cause the government to make unjustified payments to AT&T for meeting connection targets, or to incorrectly reduce or eliminate the disincentive payments AT&T must make for not meeting these targets.

► **What We Found** | We found that FirstNet Authority did not ensure that only eligible users have access to the network. Specifically, FirstNet Authority does not adequately oversee the user eligibility process and does not regularly verify user eligibility once it has been determined.

As a result, we are questioning as unsupported the costs that FirstNet Authority most recently paid AT&T for meeting device connection targets. We also identified potential cost savings for remaining connection target payments to AT&T as well as potential revenue risk from losing disincentive payments.

► **What We Recommend** | We made 11 recommendations to NTIA to improve FirstNet Authority's oversight of the user eligibility process, recover the costs we questioned if they cannot be verified, and independently verify the eligibility of users before issuing remaining payments to AT&T. NTIA concurred with our recommendations and is working to implement them.