HIGH PERFORM

APCO standards help maintain smooth operations for public safety telecommunications.

By Stacy Banker

How can standards assist you with governing your emergency communications center (ECC)? Governance is defined as the "establishment of policies and continuous monitoring of their proper implementation by the members of the governing body of an organization. It includes the mechanisms required to balance the powers of the members (with the associated accountability), and their primary duty of enhancing the effectiveness and viability of the organization."[1] When looking at governance, it is important to take a holistic approach that considers the overall performance, effectiveness, efficiency and wellness of the entire organization. Where do you begin?

Try APCO's national standards. APCO International is a standards setting body accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). APCO has produced national operational, training and technical standards for public safety communications. These national standards can be applied throughout the organization to enhance ECC governance.

According to the standards, "Good governance is participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive, and follows the rule of law."[2] Using these eight major characteristics of good governance, this article will highlight how to enhance good governance by leveraging national public safety communications standards.

ACCOUNTABILITY

There may be no characteristic more vital to an organization's successful governance than accountability. Everyone in the organization and the organization itself is accountable, and we are accountable to each other. More importantly, we are accountable to the public because we are trusted stewards of public funds and public safety. That takes accountability to another level. In the ECC accountability is required for:

- Safety and security
- Rules
- Finances
- Policies, procedures and programs
- Facilities and technology
- Discipline
- Organizational and individual performance
- Training
- Quality assurance
- Leadership
- Management and supervision

Many of the requirements and recommendations included in our national standards support accountability in the ECC.

Agencies can use national standards to develop policies, procedures and programs that not only hold employees accountable for certain actions and inactions but also hold the leadership and supervisory staff accountable for ensuring policies are properly implemented and enforced. An example of a standard that can be integrated into an ECC's policies, procedures, and programs in order to ensure accountability is APCO's Cybersecurity Training for Public Safety Communications Personnel. This standard establishes recommendations and requirements aimed at preventing, mitigating and recovering from cybersecurity attacks on the ECC. The standard could easily translate into policies and procedures in addition to creating a cybersecurity training program.

PARTICIPATORY

Informed and organized participation at all levels of the organization is a critical component of any healthy organization. The organization and its participants can use standards as a guide when developing policies, procedures and programs that promote participation. Many of APCO's standards outline agency and individual responsibilities that include participation at various levels of the organization. Take a closer look at the APCO/NENA Establishment of a Quality Assurance (QA)/Quality Improvement (QI) Program for Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP). The QA/QI standard is centered on developing a quality assurance program that supports and promotes participation.

The standard requires the ECC to develop a communication plan that ensures timely, accurate and objective feedback to each telecommunicator. The standard also requires that agencies allow for and solicit input into the process and review from all parties involved in the QA/QI process. The feedback process and the related communication plan identified in the QA/QI standard create an

open process that supports participation and input from multiple levels in the ECC.

RESPONSIVENESS

Responsiveness in governance "requires that organizations and their processes are designed to serve the best interests of stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe."[3] There are many standards that can assist an ECC with their responsiveness if properly integrated into the organization. A model example of a standard that may assist agencies with their responsiveness to stakeholders (e.g., the public, law enforcement agencies and local governments) is the APCO standard for Public Safety Telecommunicators When Responding to Calls for Missing, Abducted, and Sexually Exploited Children. The standard highlights the need for ECCs to provide their members with the tools and training necessary to enable them to act quickly and decisively when confronted with reports of missing, abducted and sexually exploited children.

This comprehensive standard provides agencies with policy samples, pre-incident planning guidelines, effective call handling information, protocols and incident response goals. This standard emphasizes the importance of a timely, coordinated, pre-planned response by the ECC, law enforcement and any other agencies that may be involved in these challenging incidents.

EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

ECCs will improve their effectiveness and efficiencies through the application of national standards. But how do you measure the true level of effectiveness and efficiency of the organization? Key Performance Indicators (KPI) are a set of qualitative performance measurements used by the ECC to gauge progress toward meeting strategic and operational goals. APCO's Public Safety Communications Center Key Performance Indicators (KPI) identifies KPI sets applicable to all ECC environments; describes how to conduct a root-cause analysis; and identifies data elements necessary to complete KPI sets relevant to an ECC. For example, the standard provides guidelines for an ECC to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of their call handling process.

TRANSPARENCY

Transparency ensures that information is freely available and directly accessible by those impacted by policies, procedures and certain outcomes. ECCs are required to be more transparent than they have ever been before. From audio recording devices to computer aided dispatch (CAD) to employment and training documentation requirements, most of what we do in the ECC is documented, recorded and discoverable. There are many topics in APCO's standards that relate to transparency. Creating and maintaining certain records in the ECC is a common topic in APCO's national occupational standards. The occupational standards identify minimum training requirements and core competencies of positions commonly found in the ECC along with agency and individual requirements related to documentation and records retention.

EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE

One of the primary stakeholders in public safety communications is the public. Yes, we serve the first responders but first and foremost, we serve the public and they are by far the most important stakeholder with the most to gain or lose during an emergency incident. ECCs will find many standards that may assist stakeholders with maintaining, enhancing and improving their

overall wellbeing. APCO's national standard Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators is one of the most commonly used standards in public safety communications. Other national standards model and reference this national standard. The APCO Agency Training Certification Program is built on the standard. Many course curriculums and training programs are developed from this standard, and states often use the standard to produce legislation for statewide minimum training requirements. ECCs use the standard to ensure that the single most important position that is staffed in the ECC, the public safety telecommunicator, meets the national standard requirements and recommendations.

RULE OF LAW

Ensuring that policies, procedures and practices are in alignment with local, state and federal laws is a high priority for the ECC. Like accountability, this is another common thread throughout APCO's national standards. Many of the standards include agency and individual responsibilities to ensure local, state and federal laws are followed. Some of our national standards are the

> *Agencies can use national standards to develop policies, procedures and programs that not only hold employees accountable for certain actions and inactions but also hold the leadership and supervisory staff accountable for ensuring the policies, etc. are properly implemented and enforced.*

result of a law. APCO's Minimum Operational Standards for the Use of TTY/TDD or Similar Device in Public Safety Communications was derived from the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), which requires that 9-1-1 and other telephone emergency service providers provide TTY/TDD users with direct access and an equal opportunity to benefit from the emergency services. This standard includes agency responsibilities, operations and training requirements and recommendations, and public outreach recommendations.

The standard can be integrated into standard operating procedures, policies and training programs to ensure the ECC is compliant with the ADA.

CONSENSUS ORIENTED

To make a connection between standards and consensus, it is important to highlight that consensus is one of the cardinal principals of the American National Standards Institute: due process, balance, consensus and openness. Consensus means substantial agreement has been reached by directly and materially affected interested parties. This is more than a vote and requires that all views and objections be considered and that an effort be made toward resolution. We take steps throughout the standards development process to ensure that there is consensus from start to finish. National standards can be a powerful resource for building consensus in the ECC because of the process they have gone through to be produced and because ECCs across the country have adopted them.

How can you get involved with standards development? The standards development process is very open and we rely heavily on volunteers to help develop our nationally

accredited standards. It is one thing to apply nationally recognized standards to enhance the governance of your ECC, but it is quite another to be on the team that developed the standard. For more information, please visit the APCO standards webpage at apcointl.org. For more questions and information, please email apcostandards@apcointl.org. ●

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REFERENCES

1 www.businessdictionary.com/definition/governance.html
2 www.governancepro.com/news/
3 www.governancepro.com/news/

CDE EXAM #54565

1. Which of the following characteristics are considered good governance?
   a. Participatory
   b. Consensus oriented
   c. Effectiveness and efficiency
   d. Accountability
   e. All of the Above
2. What standard is based on the Americans with Disabilities Act?
   a. Public Safety Communications Center Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
   b. Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators
   c. Minimum Operational Standards for the Use of TTY/TDD or Similar Device in Public Safety Communications
   d. Cybersecurity Training for Public Safety Communications Personnel
   e. All of the Above
3. What are the cardinal principals of the American National Standards Institute?
   a. Due process, efficiency, Transparency and openness
   b. Efficiency, balance, consensus and creativity
   c. Due process, balance, consensus and openness
   d. Inclusive, responsive, open and participatory

4. What standard may be used to gauge progress toward meeting strategic and operational goals?
   a. Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety Telecommunicators
   b. Public Safety Communications Center Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
   c. Establishment of a Quality Assurance (QA)/Quality Improvement (QI) Program for Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP)
   d. Public Safety Telecommunicators When Responding to Calls for Missing, Abducted, and Sexually Exploited Children
5. How can your ECC use standards to increase accountability in the organization?
   a. Integrate standards into standard operating procedures.
   b. Use standards to frame out job descriptions.
   c. Base performance appraisal measurements on standards.
   d. All of the above.
6. Ensuring that information is freely available and directly accessible to those impacted by policies, procedures, and certain outcomes is a definition of inclusiveness.
   a. True
   b. False

7. The Cybersecurity Training for Public Safety Communications Personnel standard establishes recommendations and requirements aimed at preventing, mitigating, and recovering from cybersecurity attacks on the ECC.
   a. True
   b. False
8. The standard for Public Safety Telecommunicators When Responding to Calls for Missing, Abducted, and Sexually Exploited Children requires the ECC to develop a communication plan that ensures timely, accurate, and objective feedback to each telecommunicator.
   a. True
   b. False
9. ANI is the acronym for the American National Standards Institute
   a. True
   b. False
10. A model example of a standard that may assist agencies with their responsiveness to stakeholders (e.g., the public, law enforcement agencies and local governments) can be found in the APCO national standard for Public Safety Telecommunicators When Responding to Calls for Missing, Abducted, and Sexually Exploited Children.
    a. True
    b. False

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