

AN AUDIT OF THE:

911 Office Department

COUNTY AUDIT DEPARTMENT

REPORT #444

2/9/2026



VICTOR D. CRIST

CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT & COMPTROLLER
HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, FL

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VICTOR D. CRIST

CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT & COMPTROLLER
HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, FL

The Honorable Ken Hagan, Chair
The Honorable Chris Boles
The Honorable Donna Cameron Cepeda
The Honorable Harry Cohen
The Honorable Christine Miller
The Honorable Gwen Myers
The Honorable Joshua Wostal

February 9, 2026

Dear Commissioners:

The Audit Team conducted a department-wide audit of the County's 911 Office (**Audit Report #444, dated February 9, 2026**). Responses to the Audit Team's recommendations were received from County leadership and have been included in the Report after each audit comment and recommendation.

The purpose of this Report is to furnish management with an independent, objective analysis, and information concerning the activities reviewed. It is not an appraisal or rating of management.

Although the Audit Team exercised due professional care in the performance of this audit, this should not be construed to mean that unreported noncompliance or irregularities do not exist. The deterrence of fraud and/or employee abuse is the responsibility of management. Audit procedures alone, even when carried out with professional care, do not guarantee that fraud or abuse will be detected.

I appreciate this opportunity to be of service to the Board of County Commissioners. I am happy to address any questions that you may have or furnish additional information if desired.

Sincerely,

Heidi Pinner

Heidi Pinner, CIA CISA CFE CRMA
Chief Audit Executive, Clerk of Court & Comptroller

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Hillsborough County 911 Office (911 Office) is responsible for overall management, coordination, and oversight of Hillsborough County's 911 emergency communication system. The Department does not directly receive emergency calls or dispatch services, but provides critical administrative, technical, and operational support to each of the nine (9) Hillsborough County dispatch centers known as Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) that perform those functions:



To ensure effective 911 operations throughout the county, the 911 Office:

- Oversees the maintenance and reliability of the County's 911 infrastructure, including call routing systems, network connectivity, and Next Generation 911 (NG911) technology initiatives.
- Acts as a liaison among the County's PSAPs to ensure system interoperability, adherence to operational standards, and compliance with State and Federal 911 requirements.
- Manages funding and expenditures related to 911 system operations, including payments for outsourced services:
 - Call-handling software.
 - Translation and transcription services.
 - Multimedia capabilities.
 - Geographic information system (GIS) management.
- Conducts performance monitoring to support effective and reliable emergency communications throughout the County.

Currently, the Department contracts with seven (7) vendors to provide these specialized services:

- **Motorola Connectivity Solutions** - Provides the VESTA 911 phone software platform.
- **Communications Venture Corporation (a.k.a. IN-Digital)** - Ensures proper routing of 911 calls to the correct PSAP based on the location jurisdiction, also provides backup 911 phones.
- **GEO COMM** - Detailed mapping data for Hillsborough County schools.
- **Michael Baker International** - Provides quality assurance for the Department's GIS data.

- **Carahsoft (a.k.a. Prepared 911)** - Provides 911 calltakers with the functionality of live video, photos, text messages, & experimental Spanish to English text transcriptions.
- **Voiance** - Live language translation services.
- **Corporate Translation Services (a.k.a. Language Link)** - Live language translation services.



OBJECTIVE

The objective of the audit is to perform a general department-wide audit to determine whether or not the Department has effective controls in place for key departmental processes and risks.

SCOPE

The audit was conducted in accordance with the *Global Internal Audit Standards*. These standards require that County Audit plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for the audit comments and conclusions based on the audit objectives. County Audit believes that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for the audit comments and conclusions based on the audit objectives.

The audit scope includes a holistic review and risk assessment of the department's existing controls and testing of any high-risk areas or key controls identified. It should be noted that the 911 Office is a separate department from the PSAPs. Each PSAP hires, trains, and supervises its own 911 operators and dispatchers, often called telecommunicators, based on each individual PSAP's own standard operating procedures. For example, Hillsborough County Fire Rescue, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, and the Tampa Police Department each have their own PSAP which is a separate agency than the County's 911 Office.

OVERALL EVALUATION

PROCESS STRENGTHS AND SUCCESSES

- Regular and effective communications to oversee vendor-provided services.
- Accurate and timely invoice payments.
- An effective solution to continue call-taking operations utilizing backup phone systems in the event of a 911 service interruption.
- Many positive telecommunicator survey results as to the effectiveness and reliability of 911 equipment and technology.

CONTROL IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES/RISKS

- Survey results indicated some opportunities exist to improve equipment and technology.

Full testing results are included on page 6 of this Report.

OPINION

Control Maturity Levels



The overall control environment relative to 911 Office Department operations is at a managed maturity level. This means that there is a strong emphasis on compliance and defined responsibilities. There are overall effective governance, risk management, and control processes in place to manage the County's contracts for 911-related services. Opportunities may exist to strengthen communication and collaboration with the PSAPs to help ensure that reports of some technological challenges are identified and resolved.

The exit conference was held with County leadership on January 6, 2026.

Other minor concerns not included in this Report were communicated to management and/or corrected during fieldwork.

AUDITED BY

Heidi Pinner, CIA, CISA, CFE, CRMA, Chief Audit Executive

Ben Everett, CPA, CIA, CFE, CISA, Audit Manager

Tierra Cook, Internal Auditor

AUDIT COMMENT 1: INVOICE TESTING

**10 INVOICES
TESTED**

**NO EXCEPTIONS
FOUND**

Effective controls are in place to review invoices for accuracy and ensure they are in compliance with contractual agreements.

The objective was to determine whether or not the invoices are adequately managed and comply with the County's vendor agreements.

Background

Funds managed by the 911 Office are received from the State of Florida. Under Florida Statute 365.172(10), these funds are restricted to activities and expenses that directly support the provision, maintenance, and enhancement of emergency 911 services. This includes, but is not limited to, expenditures on equipment, software, technology, and vendor-provided services.

Invoices for these services are submitted by the seven contracted vendors at various intervals, such as monthly or annually, depending on the nature of the services or goods provided. Overall, there were relatively small numbers of invoices submitted. Upon receipt, each invoice is reviewed by the 911 Office and County Finance to verify the accuracy, ensure compliance with contractual terms, and confirm that charges align with the corresponding Purchase Order (PO). Invoices must be approved prior to payment for services or goods rendered.

Among these expenditures, translation services represent a critical component of 911 operations, ensuring effective communication between dispatchers and callers when language barriers are present. The 911 Office contracts with two vendors, Voiance and Language Link, to provide these services. Charges are based on the frequency and duration of translation sessions, whereby invoices are billed by the minute.

TEST PROCEDURE

Invoice Review

The Audit Team obtained a listing of payments made from January 1, 2024 to August 7, 2025, to each of the seven (7) vendors and reviewed a sample of ten (10) invoices for accuracy,

compliance with state law to ensure relevancy to 911 Office operations, and payment timeliness based on the Florida Prompt Payment Act. The Audit Team verified that the pay rates and services on the invoices comply with the related Purchase Order (PO) and agreements. Inquiries were made with the 911 Office to clarify what the payments were for.

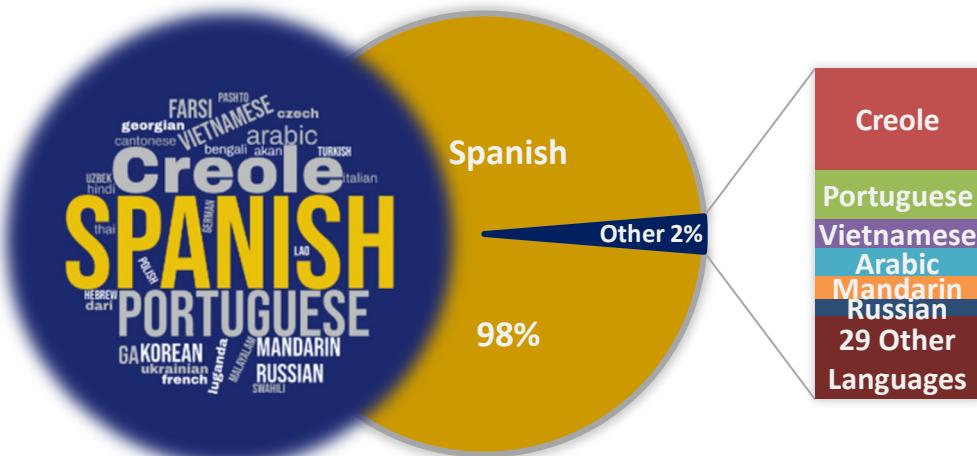
Translation Services Analysis

The Audit Team also reviewed six (6) invoices from January through June 2025 for Voiance and Language Link (a total of 12 invoices) and performed an analysis of the quantity and duration of the calls for each language. If a 911 caller speaks a foreign language, the 911 telecommunicator can initiate a live 3-way call with either Voiance or Language Link to get a translator on the line. The Audit Team assessed which language(s) were the most common and the cost-effectiveness of translation services versus multi-lingual 911 telecommunicators employed by the PSAPs.

TESTING RESULTS

All ten (10) invoices had proper payments for appropriate 911-related services that matched the POs, aligned with the vendor agreements, and were made timely in compliance with the Florida Prompt Payment Act. Each invoice had accurate mathematical calculations and was approved prior to payment. No exceptions were found.

The most common language requiring translation was Spanish. For the twelve (12) invoices reviewed, a total of 14,759 calls for translation assistance were utilized, with a total of 14,380 of those requiring Spanish (97.4%).



The translation services contract is an expense of the 911 Office, however, the hiring and training of 911 telecommunicators is handled by each individual PSAP. With Spanish language services being such a large portion of the translation services provided, the Audit Team considered whether it would be cost-effective for PSAPs to incentivize Spanish-speaking dispatchers in place of utilizing external translation services.

The Audit Team's analysis took into consideration:

- The fact that 9 dispatch centers work simultaneously and independently.
- The 24-hour operations of the 911 dispatch centers and the need for multiple shifts.
- Historical challenges maintaining staffing levels for 911 operators.
- The unpredictable need for language services.
- The time-sensitive nature of all 911 interactions.
- The overall expense for translation services for all nine (9) PSAP locations.

Incentivizing bilingual call takers could reduce the need for translation services but cannot eliminate the need all together. Based on the Audit Team's analysis, it appears that the translation services remain a cost-effective solution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Audit Team did not identify any material concerns during invoice testing that required management's corrective actions.

AUDIT COMMENT 2: VENDOR OVERSIGHT AND VENDOR ENGAGEMENT TESTING**VENDOR
COMMUNICATION
IS SATISFACTORY****SURVEY RESULTS
INDICATE SOME
TECHNOLOGY
CONCERNS****BACKUP 911
PHONES ARE
TESTED
MONTHLY**

An opportunity exists to address some technology and training concerns raised by the 911 telecommunicators surveyed.

The objective was to determine whether or not the 911 Office has efficient communication with vendors and oversees their work to ensure satisfactory services are provided.

Background

The 911 Office outsources technical and operational services that are critical in nature for the operation of 911 services in the County. For example, 911 calltakers at the PSAPs use call-handling software provided by the 911 Office to answer incoming 911 calls and to make other outgoing calls. The vendor also installs and services some of the hardware equipment at the PSAPs. The routing of 911 calls to the proper PSAP based on the jurisdiction is contracted out to another vendor, which also supplies a backup call answering system utilizing portable devices. These devices incorporate cellular and satellite access in the rare event of a 911 interruption and the vendor performs monthly test calls with the PSAPs.



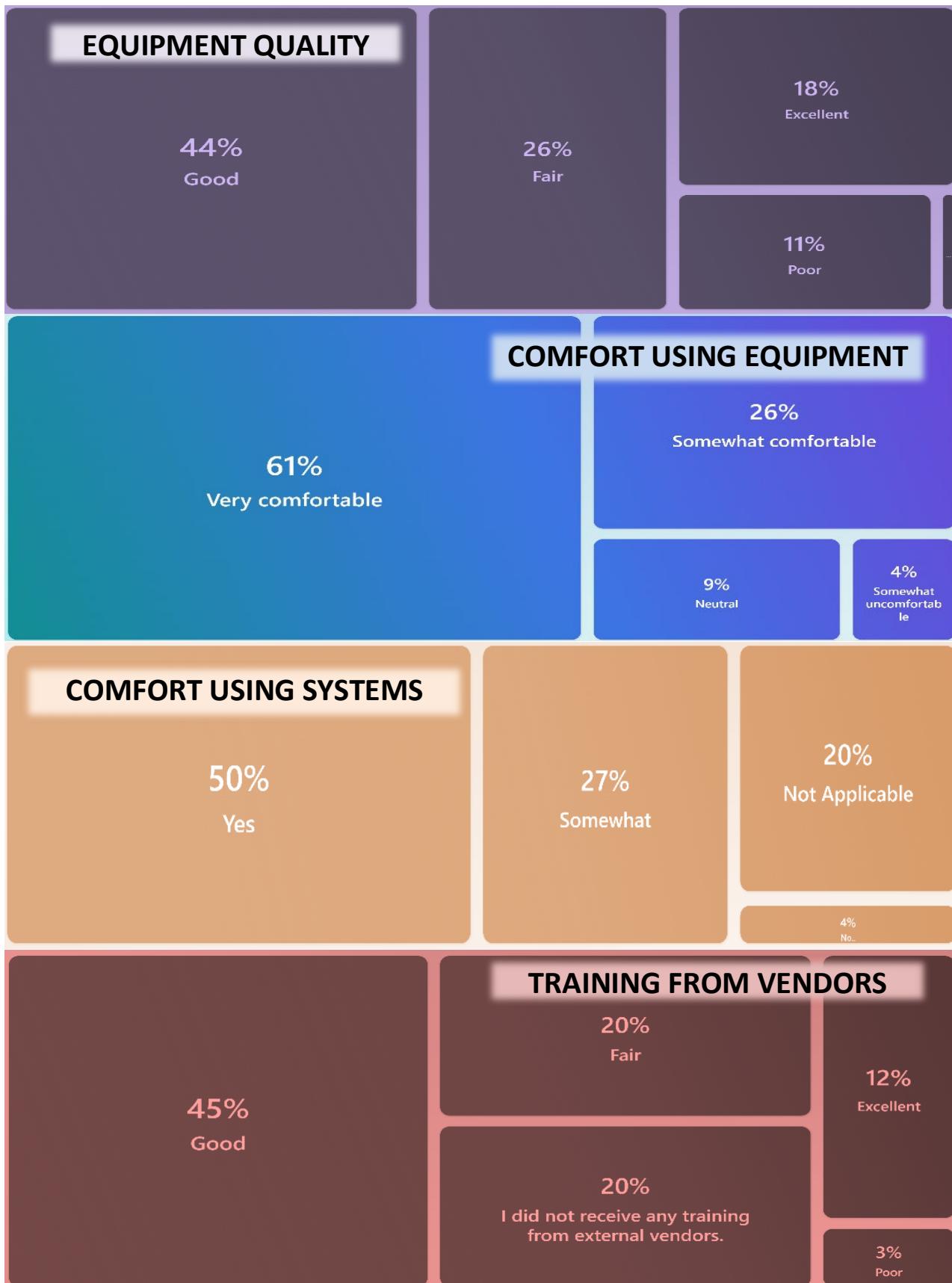
To ensure satisfactory services are provided by vendors, the 911 Office has a point of contact with each of the seven vendors. They host meetings with each vendor at various times (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or as-needed.) Contracts do not specify a specific timeframe for meetings, but the department maintains regular communication with their established point of contact for each vendor. The department also hosts meetings with the managers of the PSAPs. The frequency of these meetings fluctuates depending on the current needs and current developments in enhancements of the 911 system.

TEST PROCEDURE

- The Audit Team visited the 911 Office and requested examples of recent communications with each of the vendors, such as e-mails, meeting dates, calendar appointments, and any handwritten notes. Those communications were reviewed to ensure the 911 Office had regular communications with the vendors to oversee the contracts and services provided.
- In addition, the Audit Team performed a review of the monthly test calls performed on the backup phones by interviewing leadership at each PSAP to assess the effectiveness of the test call process.
- The Audit Team also prepared an online survey questionnaire and coordinated with all nine (9) PSAPs to distribute the survey to their telecommunicators. The survey was anonymous and focused on determining telecommunicators' overall satisfaction with equipment and technology provided by the vendors. Although the PSAPs and their staff are separate agencies from the 911 Office, the survey was intended to help assess vendor performance based on actual end users who work at the dispatch centers.

TESTING RESULTS

- During the Audit Team's visit to the 911 Office, a satisfactory level of communication between the 911 Office and all seven (7) vendors was observed. The 911 Office provided examples of e-mails, tracking spreadsheets, technical support requests, contract modification discussions, and the scheduling of conference calls with the vendors, which included specific names of the vendors' points of contact. The communications observed appear to be satisfactory for the purpose of managing the contracts and ensuring proper services are being provided.
- All PSAPs were also found to have satisfactory monthly test call procedures in place to verify that the backup phones are functioning properly. The vendor initiates the process by e-mailing each PSAP in advance and then performs the actual test calls to each PSAP. Call takers answer the call to ensure the phones are functioning properly. PSAPs have multiple workstations and each has a backup phone. One single call taker answers the test call while all others observe whether or not the additional phones are ringing. Some PSAPs maintain a log of their test call results, while others do not. The vendor concludes the process by sending a follow-up e-mail to each PSAP with the results of the monthly test call.
- At the time the survey was coordinated with PSAP leadership, the Audit Team determined there was a combined total of 377 telecommunicators across the nine (9) PSAPs. The overall results show a generally positive view of reliability, usability, and quality of 911 call-taking systems and equipment among the dispatchers. Most respondents appear to be comfortable and confident in using the tools and the related training appears to be mostly effective. The data did also highlight a few key areas for improvement such as issues with systems or equipment and enhancement of equipment quality at workstations. In total, 245 responses (65%) were received for the survey across all PSAPs. The specific results follow.





ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

Survey respondents could also provide additional comments and feedback. In total, 70 comments were received for a variety of topics, some of which were outside the purview of the 911 Office. For the survey result about training provided by vendors, it should be noted that some telecommunicators may not receive training directly from vendors, depending on their agency's policies and procedures. In some cases, vendors may only provide training to management at each PSAP. The Audit Team shared the overall survey results with the 911 Office and the leadership for each PSAP. The following feedback was the most common or relevant to the audit objectives:

MOST COMMON COMMENTS:

- Computers running slow or freezing up while in the middle of processing 911 calls or handling radio traffic. (*Audit Note: this is outside the purview of the 911 Office.*)
- Live video and photo technology for use during 911 calls is unreliable.

OTHER RELEVANT COMMENTS:

- Problems with automated mapping functionality, such as slowness or maps not being updated.
- Insufficient staffing levels to handle the workload.
- Equipment that is not functioning or physically broken, such as USB plugs, headsets, and headset jacks.
- An optional conversation transcription service that translates and transcribes Spanish into English text is unreliable.
- Some positive feedback was received for certain systems and technology working well or for training that was helpful.
- Other respondents indicated a need for better training on backup phones.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The 911 Office should work with its vendors and the PSAPs to address any concerns expressed by survey respondents that are related to the 911 Office's responsibilities, such as the reliability of live video and photos. 911 Office staff may wish to consider conducting site visits and monitoring sessions with telecommunicators to directly observe vendor-provided services in need of improvement. Other improvement opportunities that fall outside of the 911 Office's purview are outside the scope of the audit. However, all PSAPs were provided the feedback and are encouraged to work with their staff in addressing the other concerns identified based on the survey.

CLIENT RESPONSE:

Concur

CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN:

The 911 Office accepts the findings of this report and thanks the County Audit Department for its thorough review of our operations. We are committed to maintaining a high standard of service for Hillsborough County and will begin implementing the recommendations immediately.

To ensure a productive path forward, it is necessary to clarify the distinct jurisdictional and operational boundaries between the 911 Office and the individual Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs). While the 911 Office oversees the management and maintenance of the County's core 911 infrastructure and vendor contracts, it is a separate department from the PSAPs. Each PSAP is responsible for hiring, supervising, and providing daily training for its telecommunicators and dispatchers.

Our current training model involves providing comprehensive instruction to the managers of each PSAP, who then train their staff. Consequently, survey results regarding "vendor training" received by dispatchers may not be relevant to the 911 Office's performance, as those staff members receive training directly from their respective organizations rather than from external vendors. We will continue to work directly with PSAP management to provide additional training opportunities for their staff.

Furthermore, several technical issues reported by telecommunicators, such as "slow computers," often involve hardware or software environments managed locally by the PSAPs and their parent agencies rather than the centralized systems managed by the 911 Office. Because dispatchers may not always be aware of which entity manages the various software and hardware components at their workstations, much of the survey feedback describes issues that are not under the 911 Office's purview to manage or the Audit Department's jurisdiction to audit in this specific report. We will continue to work with the PSAP management to ensure our equipment is properly functioning.

The 911 Office will continue to work closely with our vendors and PSAP leadership to address relevant technological challenges, such as the reliability of live video and photo capabilities, while ensuring that agency-specific responsibilities remain with the appropriate PSAP management.

TARGET COMPLETION DATE:

August 5, 2026