# New Talkgroup Justification Standard

## Required Outcome(s):

The Arkansas Interoperable Communication Executive Committee will be given common criteria to judge the need for new talkgroups.  This will ensure that the system is not overloaded with rarely used talkgroups.  The applicant agency will have the means to determine their talkgroup needs when completing this document's requirements.

## Definitions:

- **Talkgroup**:  A uniquely named group of radios that can share calls and messages.  A talkgroup's normal communications do not require interfacing with other talkgroups.  Typically, the majority of the radio user's communications are within a select few talkgroups.  Talkgroups do not enhance interoperability, they create silos of communication.

- **Public Safety**:  Those individuals who in the early stages of an incident are responsible for the protection and preservation of life, property, evidence and the environment, including emergency response providers as defined in section 2 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101), as well as emergency support personnel (such as equipment operators) that can provide immediate support services during prevention, response and recovery operations.

- **Emergency Responders**: As defined in section 2 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101).  The term 'emergency response providers' includes Federal, State and local emergency public safety, law enforcement, emergency response, emergency medical (including hospital emergency facilities) and related personnel, agencies and authorities.

- **Daily Use**: Use of AWIN as the organization's primary communication system.  Assignment of a new talkgroup to an entity will be considered a request for full time, daily use.

## Talkgroup Costs:

AWIN is a reliable statewide communication system.  Currently, there are no user fees associated with AWIN and there is no plan to implement user fees.  However, AWIN funding is limited and does not cover enhancements to sites. The users are asked to help with system costs and in some cases supply additional infrastructure to ensure that the system remains reliable and the grade of service is not degraded. Talkgroups create the biggest burden on the system so it's logical that those users who wish to add talkgroups should add infrastructure or provide equipment of some sort.

The infrastructure requirement may be justified to the local authorities by cost and reliability comparison with their local communication system.   To expand a local communication system by adding a repeater would involve the cost of the new repeater, installation of the repeater, licensing and programming

radios.  Annual costs for repeater maintenance, electricity and tower rental costs must also be considered.  These annual costs should be compared to the investment in AWIN.

Joining AWIN eliminates the annual costs; the agency has access to a statewide communication system. And then there's the interoperability that comes with AWIN.  Using the local communication system, you probably can't talk to the next town or county. When considering the 'big picture', the benefits far outweigh the costs of adding infrastructure to AWIN when a new talkgroup is requested.

Coverage is regularly improving through new site expansions and other agencies that add infrastructure. Each time infrastructure is added to AWIN, all AWIN users benefit.

## Standard:

Each application must meet the following standards when requesting a talkgroup.

- The applicant agency will utilize the talkgroup on a daily basis
- The talkgroup will be used for essential communication between the radio users that cannot be accomplished through an interoperability talkgroup
- The organization must meet the definition of a public safety entity as defined above.

## Supporting Documents and Information:

An AWIN application that includes a request for a talkgroup will be considered by AWIN to be a daily use application.
- The number of channels or talkgroups currently in use either on AWIN or another communication system
- The number of entities that will use the channel or talkgroup
- Justification for the new talkgroup(s) should include an explanation of its intended use.  The following are examples and are not intended to be a complete list of justifications
    - Dispatching
    - Essential Communication
    - Removing traffic from a dispatching talkgroup for other communications
    - Removing traffic from a dispatching talkgroup during events
    - Ability to conduct more than one conversation during an event
    - Use as a common channel within a group of talkgroups
    - Use as an interoperability channel for users outside the main group
        - For this justification to hold true, the entity must already have (use) multiple talkgroups
    - Backup communication is not considered a valid justification
    - Other – please define