

Madison County and Onondaga County, NY Consolidation Study

Combined Assessment, Feasibility, and
Recommendations Report



May 10, 2019



Executive Summary

Introduction

Across the country, Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) consolidations are occurring on a regional, city, county, or multiple-agency basis. These consolidations often result in tangible improvements in service and costs savings by combining 9-1-1 call taking and/or emergency dispatch services, and sharing technology, such as Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD).

Madison County and Onondaga County have tasked Winbourne Consulting with determining the benefits of a potential consolidation of their 9-1-1 Centers, including whether a consolidation would improve service to citizens and increase the safety of First Responders. The Counties' leadership have both clearly stated their commitment to working together in the best interests of the citizens, First Responders, and staff, in the consolidation model that has the most impact. There is already a strong precedent for the two counties working together, as seen with the Central New York Interoperable Communications Consortium (CNYICC) model that includes the shared digital trunked radio system master site, run by Onondaga County and shared with the region, to include Madison.

For the reasons outlined in this report, Winbourne Consulting believes that full consolidation between Madison and Onondaga Counties' 9-1-1 Centers provides significant service level improvements to Madison County citizens and First Responders. We recommend a phased approach with specific steps that will realize immediate benefits as the counties transition to a full consolidation model.

Our Methodology

As part of our analysis for this Consolidation Study, we solicited and received surveys from Madison and Onondaga Counties' 9-1-1 staff and the First Responder communities, conducted stakeholder interviews, and analyzed operations of both Centers. From this information we developed the *Phase 1: Assessment and Gap Analysis Report*, which outlines the similarities and differences between the two centers, and this *Phase 2: Evaluation and Recommendations Report*, which provides significant detail on consolidation options, advantages and considerations of each, and recommendations to meet the goals of each county.

Consolidation Models

There are multiple consolidation models used within the 9-1-1 industry today, with nuanced variations among them. After conducting the Phase 1 Assessment and Gap Analysis Report for Madison and Onondaga Counties, Winbourne Consulting determined that two potential models of consolidation could benefit this environment and the impacts of each have been evaluated.

Shared Services Model

A “shared services model” for Onondaga and Madison Counties is defined as each county maintaining their separate physical locations but sharing technology, mapping, and where appropriate, policies and procedures to implement “best practices.” Winbourne Consulting has determined that this model is:

- Operationally and technically feasible;
- Financially feasible with clear near and long-term benefits; and
- Politically feasible, with broad support from the stakeholder community

Winbourne Consulting has determined that this model has significant benefits to service delivery for citizens and First Responders:

- **Improved First Responder Safety.** In a shared services model, Madison County first responders would have access to Onondaga County’s state-of-the-art Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system to improve situational awareness and officer safety, and ensure accurate communications from the field.
- **Improved Response to Citizens.** In a shared services model, Madison County citizens will benefit from better coordination of mutual aid efforts, especially in the volunteer fire service. Citizens would be better served with shared mapping between the two counties, which could lead to responders finding the 9-1-1 callers quicker. This faster response time can save lives.

Centralized Consolidation Model

A “full consolidation model” would move Madison County’s 9-1-1 services into Onondaga County Department of Emergency Communications’ primary (and backup) facility, with shared management and resources. Winbourne Consulting has determined that this model is:

- Operationally feasible but provides challenges in personnel retention;
- Technically feasible with upfront capital expenses and likely ongoing operational savings;
- Financially feasible especially when implemented after the Shared Services Model; and
- Politically feasible as an end-goal in a phased consolidation approach but would meet with a high level of resistance from stakeholders in the short-term unless there were a concerted program to clear up misperceptions and engage and involve stakeholders, and structure a Governance model to ensure that Madison County’s needs are addressed.

Winbourne Consulting has determined that the full consolidation model has significant benefits to service delivery for citizens and First Responders:

- **Enhanced First Responder Safety.** Madison County First Responders would benefit from all the advantages of the Shared CAD system described in the Shared Services Model above. In addition, Madison County First Responders will be better served by dispatchers who are

not also responsible for answering 9-1-1 calls, in alignment with the Onondaga County model, and dispatched based the “best practices” of Onondaga County.

- **Improved Response to Citizens.** In addition to all the benefits identified in the Shared Services Model, Madison County residents and public safety agencies would benefit from the use of many Onondaga County policies and procedures, which are compliant with industry standards.

Recommendations

Winbourne Consulting recommends Madison and Onondaga Counties gradually work toward a full consolidation of their 9-1-1 Centers. Our research indicates that efficiencies in both operations and cost will be realized, and the safety of First Responders, and the ability to provide excellent emergency response service to citizens, will be improved with a full consolidation.

We also realize that given the political and operational concerns surrounding a full consolidation, it is probable that this recommendation will take between two – four (2-4) years to implement. Therefore, we are recommending a multi-phased process, to be implemented over time, providing near-term benefits with operational improvements and shared technology, and longer-term cost savings and service level standardization among the counties.

Winbourne Consulting believes that this phased approach will benefit all the stakeholders, and will enable the jurisdictions to:

- Become more familiar with one another;
- Develop standardized training and procedures;
- Standardize technology (e.g., computer aided dispatch, mapping);
- Develop standardized mapping updates and dispatching processes; and
- Establish the necessary governance agreements for the longer term consolidation of the two 9-1-1 centers.

We have outlined the multi-phase approach that we recommend for Madison and Onondaga Counties, to be accomplished roughly in this order:

1. Implement immediate Operational changes in Madison County

- a. Develop and Train to a more comprehensive Policy Manual to improve operational best practices in Madison County.
 - i. Update current policies to reflect the best-practices as identified by industry standards organizations.
 - ii. Create additional policies as needed, to address gaps and the current inadequate depth of content for some of Madison County’s Operational policies.

- iii. Comply with all policies with a consistent and improved training process for current and new-hire call center personnel.
 - b. Improve communications between Madison County Dispatchers and First Responders to enhance ongoing interactions with Madison County First Responders and encourage more involvement of First Responders in 911 quality assurance.
 - c. Implement a good Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement (QA/QI) program for Madison County Police and Fire incidents, based on industry standards for QA/QI.
 - d. Increase staffing to add position for Assistant Director – Operations, with responsibility for QA/QI, and training. Consider adding two shift Supervisors to meet National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards. We have estimated the cost of adding the needed three (3) personnel for these roles at approximately \$173K annually.
2. **Establish Governance model for sharing data.** In preparation for Recommendation #3 below, it will be necessary to establish a governance model to address the sharing of CAD data.
 3. **Implement shared Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD).** We recommend that Madison County utilize Onondaga County’s Hexagon/Intergraph CAD solution. A detailed Implementation plan to execute a shared CAD environment should be developed to further define the governance, funding, technical, and operational components necessary to successfully implement a shared CAD system between the two counties.
 4. **Expand Onondaga County’s Backup Operations Center (BOC).** In a full consolidation model, the BOC will become the backup center for all 9-1-1 and non-emergency calls from Madison County. In preparation for the full consolidation recommendation, #6 below, it is recommended that further discussions occur between both Counties on the desired options for expanding the BOC, and begin the process of securing potential grant funding through NYS Department of State’s Municipal Restructuring Fund grant to cover these non-recurring costs.
 5. **Develop Governance model for full consolidation.** One of the most critical aspects of a shared technology or services project is the development of an effective governance model to ensure that stakeholders have input on the amount of control, expectations, and outcome of a consolidation project. We recommend that Madison County establish a County 9-1-1 Board, under Emergency Management, and also provide representation to Onondaga County’s Policy Review and Operations Committee (PROC).
 6. **Implement Full Consolidation.** Winbourne Consulting believes that the stakeholders in Madison County will be best served by a Full Consolidation of Madison and Onondaga

Counties, implemented over a two – four (2-4) year time period during which the preceding steps can be accomplished in preparation.

The exact timing of this consolidation may align with the implementation of Next Generation 9-1-1 in New York State, ensuring the most efficient upgrade of technology in both Counties.

We recommend that salary and benefits be reviewed to make sure that neither County's personnel is harmed in the process of fully consolidating.

We recommend that following the full consolidation, Madison County dispatchers still continue to dispatch Madison County Police, Fire, and EMS calls for a period of time to maintain consistency of service. Lateral movement can occur later in the process, but for the initial period, their knowledge of the local area will benefit citizens and the First Responder community. We further recommend that a complete line by line budget comparison for each center be conducted prior to an agreement to move to full consolidation.

Winbourne Consulting thanks the stakeholders of both Madison County and Onondaga County for their sincere and enthusiastic participation in this Consolidation Study.