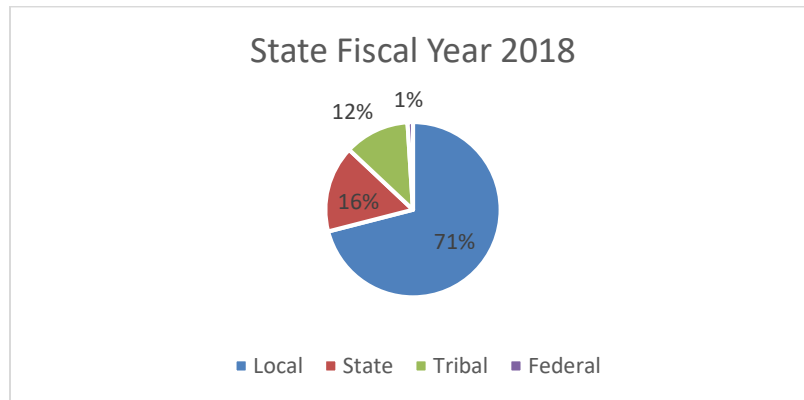


## Statewide Radio System Upgrade

South Dakota turned up a digital public safety radio network in 2003 to address serious shortcomings with previous emergency communications during disasters and other multi-agency response events. That system today is utilized on a primary or secondary basis by nearly every first responder agency in the state. During the last state fiscal year the primary user of the system was local (71%), with state (16%) and tribal (12%) being the minority users of the system.



This statewide system, not unlike any technology today, is reaching a point of obsolescence. Beyond 2023 the system manufacturer will no longer support the network operating system and the remaining hardware that has not already been upgraded. This upgrade will affect not only the system, but each of the approximately 20,000 radios operating on the network. An upgrade to a new standard operating system, known as P-25, is possible without needing to replace every component, only because of diligent preparations made in previous years leading up to today. The final upgrade is needed to ensure a public safety communications system will be available and accessible for the foreseeable future.

The Bureau of Information and Telecommunications (BIT) who is assigned the operation and maintenance of the network, and the Public Safety Communications Council (SDPSCC) assigned as an advisory and oversight role for public safety communications in the state have been actively engaged in the process of determining a path ahead for the upgrade and communications into the future. An initial plan for a single appropriation for upgrades and site additions was not approved in 2016 and in the interim the SDPSCC has completed a thorough review of funding options, and believe the following two are the most practical:

- (1) A single ask of \$10M in 2023 + an additional \$1M operating budget, or:
- (2) A sustainable funding mechanism that would provide more stability and the ability to improve the system in areas underserved today.

We are proposing a \$.42 surcharge per telephone line and cellular device to support the upgrade, and then operational aspects of the system thereafter. We believe that this is the best path ahead to ensure that our first responders continue to have at their disposal a reliable and affordable communications system.