Public Safety Technology Council

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THE NEED

At present, governments are setting policy regarding technology application for law enforcement. "Unnamed activists", "privacy advocates" and organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) are advocating for restrictive policies such as outright bans on some technology applications which may be used by government.

Bans being adopted or proposed in several US cities prohibiting the use of facial recognition technology, ALPR, public safety use of drone technology and predictive policing are affecting consideration by police agencies in determining the types of tools needed to serve communities. These same communities should be empowered to debate, consider and adopt policies fitting their constituents' values. Being increasingly reliant on agenda based campaigns which perpetuate myths and elevate fears prevents government leaders and policymakers from basing policy and procurement decisions on what something is rather than having decisions being based on what something might be stands in the way of thoughtful and effective public policy which is based on fact, research, actual practice and proven policy.

There is no group, collective or organization **solely** focused on public safety technology public awareness, and policymaker education so that procuring governments and their governing bodies can make informed decisions, based upon facts, about the types of technology they need to adopt for their public safety agencies.

Such an organization can bring immense value in the promotion of truths, dispelling myths while bringing fact-based and narrative-free reason to policy-making and procurement considerations ultimately bringing value to communities and vendors alike.

What Would the Organization Do?

The core functions of the **Public Safety Technology Council**, at least initially, would fall into three primary focus areas: subject matter expertise, communications and government affairs. The **Public Safety Technology Council** would represent the public safety technology industry and public safety agency and end-user practitioners through:

➢ Education of policymakers, the media and the public about trends, application, policies and increasing knowledge and understanding of the facts associated with public safety technology.

➢ It would serve to establish collaborations with public safety professionals and the industry to develop future technologies, promote technical innovation and policy guidance which address needs public safety professionals have in service of their communities when adopting technology.

➢ PSTC would be the independent public awareness and policy voice for public safety technology application and advocates for fact and research based decision making.

Expected Accomplishments

➢ Retains, authors and distributes fact-based research on public safety practices and related technology uses.

➢ Serves to provide a strong communications function coupled with fact-based research.

➢ Serves to be effective in educating and being a respected resource to policymakers at the federal, state and local levels about technology application.

➢ Develops a repository, collects and distributes of technology policies state and local governments may consider when procuring and implementing technology solutions.

➢ It is representative of member technology firms and public safety professionals.

➢ Counters propagandizing and misinformation campaigns regarding public safety technology application, design and policy implications.

Why Now?

According to a 2017 Washington Post Article, $100B is spent on law enforcement technology. Other public safety and first responder agencies are purchasing technology which is beneficial to their mission performance such as advances in communications systems, drones, cloud and systems infrastructure. Increased scrutiny of how government procures technology through appropriated or grant funds is reasonable and expected. Lacking an independent and fact-based resource, that scrutiny is obscured by agenda-based misinformation advocacy efforts resulting in governments not as able to be balanced, reasoned, thoughtful or objective when determining policy. Without intervention, introducing new technologies is going to become more difficult.

Recent policy positions by local governments to unilaterally ban specific technologies underscores the urgency for an organized, collective, consistent and fact-based messaging and advocacy strategy to counter arguments which would prevent consideration of the lawful and ethical application of technologies public safety agencies can use to better serve the public.

Catalytic events can draw groups, businesses and people together around a common set of values or a cause to execute solutions to solve problems. When a problem is resolved, then what? Technology bans for one specific technology, facial recognition systems, are a harbinger for policy to come. As public safety agencies consider seemingly controversial future technologies, governments and advocates will increase rhetoric similar to that found in debates around facial recognition.

The other side of the coin is facilitating the interaction between the vendor and public safety communities. Bringing together these groups can help vendors design technology which is needs-based and timely. Public safety practitioner workgroups can be formed to articulate problems they are or will anticipate experiencing. Through that process, this partnership can create technology concepts. Assembling and creating a repository of this kind of information will ultimately create value for the vendors and end-users.

Who Needs to Be Involved?

No organization operates in a vacuum. Because the Public Safety Technology Council would serve the interests of the public safety community and the technology industry serving that community, the organization should be reflective and inclusive of those it serves: public safety agency representatives, end-user practitioners and vendor representatives. Governance of the organization needs to be representative of those it serves to ensure programs are addressing need and accomplishing expectations.

What are the Next Steps?

1. **Getting Buy-In:** An organization should not exist unless its primary stakeholders want it to exist. In order for the Public Safety Technology Council to be formed and in operation, the organizers need to know stakeholders are supportive and committed to its creation.
2. **Formalizing Process:** This process starts with creation of an efficiently sized founding board, funding formalization expenses, approval of bylaws, completion and submission of the IRS Form 1023 to determine nonprofit tax status and completion and submission of Articles of Incorporation. Once applications are submitted, the founding board can formalize plans for the organization to start work including selection of an executive leader.
3. **Funding:** Not only will the formalizing process require seed money, setting up the organizational operation will require both seed money (hiring, office space, furnishings, website, etc.) and an operating budget which is necessary to perform the mission of the organization.
4. **Election of the Executive Committee and Governing Board:** As a nonprofit, a volunteer governance structure needs to exist. The governing board will set policy and leverage connections across the policymaking, vendor and agency landscape.

To become engaged in the movement and for questions, reach us through the
Government State and Local Partners, LLC website

www.gslptexas.com