

# SAFECOM Governance Charter

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## 1. BACKGROUND AND AUTHORITY

In 2001, the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) established SAFECOM as part of a Presidential E-Government Initiative, originally known as the “Wireless Public Safety Interoperable Communications/Project SAFECOM.” The goal of this effort was to improve public safety interoperability, allowing emergency responders to communicate effectively before, during, and after emergencies and disasters. Over the years, SAFECOM has remained a mission-guided, stakeholder-driven public safety communications program. Administered by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) within DHS, SAFECOM continues to develop critical public safety communications guidance for grants and funding, policy, tools, and templates, and provides direct assistance to state, local, tribal, territorial (SLTT), and federal practitioners. In addition to the general program support CISA administers, the DHS Office for Interoperability and Compatibility (OIC) continues to support SAFECOM’s research, development, testing and evaluation, and standards elements.

## 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the *SAFECOM Governance Charter* is to outline SAFECOM’s vision, mission, structure, and membership. SAFECOM conducts its mission in accordance with the *SAFECOM Strategic Plan*, which was developed and is updated, as needed, by the SAFECOM Executive Board. SAFECOM work is also carried out in alignment with the *SAFECOM Governance Operating Processes and Procedures* document, which provides additional information about SAFECOM’s goals and objectives, and how SAFECOM conducts administrative tasks, such as election processes and product approval procedures.

## 3. VISION

Assuring a safer America through effective public safety communications.

## 4. MISSION

SAFECOM, as an advisory body to CISA, improves public safety communications operability, interoperability, and security across local, regional, state, tribal, territorial, and international borders, and with federal government entities.

## 5. MEMBERSHIP COMPOSITION

SAFECOM membership is comprised of association representatives and individuals with specialized skills, knowledge, and experience in public safety communications. Additionally, members of the National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (hereafter referred to as NCSWIC and members as Statewide Interoperability Coordinators [SWICs]) provide subject matter expertise to SAFECOM as non-voting participants, except as noted in Section 5.3 below.<sup>1</sup> SAFECOM members are conduits of information, generating and distributing knowledge to the broader community on public safety communications best practices and lessons learned.

Consistent with SAFECOM Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) exemption<sup>2</sup>, SAFECOM falls within the intergovernmental exemption because its membership is composed of federal government employees and elected officers of State, local, and tribal governments or their designated employees with authority to act on their behalf.

Voting members of SAFECOM consist of two categories: member associations and at-large members. Additional participants may be asked to attend SAFECOM meetings as observers or subject matter experts. However, these individuals do not participate as voting members. CISA or SAFECOM leadership may invite non-voting participants, as needed, depending on SAFECOM's need for expertise not sufficiently represented through membership.

### 5.1 SAFECOM Member Associations

SAFECOM invites associations to participate as members based on their expertise in issues related to public safety communications. Association representatives must be an official designee of a public safety association, appointed by the organization to represent their collective stance on public safety communications-related issues. All SAFECOM associations shall appoint one primary representative and may identify one alternate representative. Alternates must have equal authority to formulate advice and make recommendations in the absence of the primary member. Associations possess one vote each, i.e., primary and alternate representatives must coordinate to submit one single vote. Roles and responsibilities for association primary and alternate representatives are further explained in *Section 8: Member Roles and Responsibilities*. A complete list of SAFECOM associations is available in the *SAFECOM Quick Reference Guide*, available upon request.

### 5.2 SAFECOM At-Large Members

SAFECOM invites individuals to participate as public safety "At-Large" members based on their personal experience and expertise as government employees or members within the public safety communications community. At-Large members must be currently employed (including volunteer status) or designated by an SLTT government organization, academic or regional consortium. SAFECOM member association primary representatives may not concurrently serve on SAFECOM as both an association representative and an at-large member.

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<sup>1</sup> The NCSWIC primary and alternate serve as representatives of NCSWIC and hold one vote; the two SWIC At-Large positions each hold their own vote, for a total of three SWIC votes on matters pertaining to SAFECOM elections and committee/working group/task force business.

<sup>2</sup> As referenced in the General Services Administration's Federal Management Regulation [41 C.F.R Section 102-3.40\(g\)](#).

**5.3 SWICs as Members of SAFECOM**

NCSWIC may appoint up to two representatives (one primary and one alternate) who are invited to participate as voting members of SAFECOM. Up to two additional SWICs may also serve as SAFECOM At-Large members. While there may be up to four SWICs serving on SAFECOM, the NCSWIC primary and alternate serve as representatives of NCSWIC and hold one vote; the two SWIC At-Large positions each hold their own vote, for a total of three SWIC votes on matters pertaining to SAFECOM elections and committee/working group/task force business. Additional SWICs may participate on SAFECOM as subject matter experts.

Should a state/territory designate an existing SAFECOM At-Large member as an acting or temporary SWIC, this permissive member of SAFECOM shall be limited to no more than 180 days when also holding the title of Acting or Temporary SWIC. A member of SAFECOM who subsequently becomes a SWIC, upon request, will be granted a Leave and will be reinstated as a SAFECOM member if the SWIC position is vacated, as long as the individual continues to meet membership requirements.

**5.4 Federal Members**

SAFECOM selects federal department and agency representatives to participate as members based on their experience and involvement in issues related to public safety communications. Federal members do not have voting rights and must be currently employed by the United States Government. The following are SAFECOM federal agency members:

- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Homeland Security
- Department of the Interior
- Department of Justice
- Department of Transportation
- Federal Communications Commission
- Department of the Treasury

**5.5 International Observers**

SAFECOM has long-standing relationships with a number of international responder groups and has greatly benefited from cross-border partnerships. As such, from time to time, international observers may be invited to participate in SAFECOM meetings. However, international observers are not considered voting members.

**5.6 Subject Matter Experts**

SAFECOM or CISA leadership may invite additional participants to attend SAFECOM meetings in an observer role. These individuals do not participate as voting members and are invited based on their experience with current, important, and timely issues, as appropriate. Consistent participation by subject matter experts (e.g., provide presentations/briefs; provide expertise to committees for product input) may be used to justify an offer of SAFECOM membership.

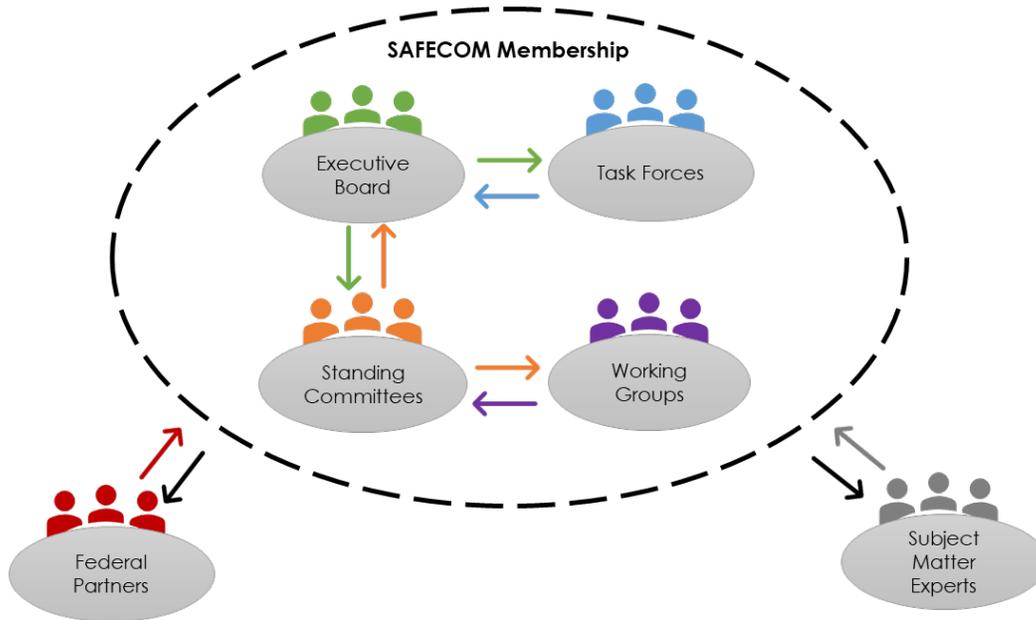
**6. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**

SAFECOM adheres to a bottom-up approach, which means the program relies heavily on SLTT public safety communications stakeholders and policymakers for input and guidance as it works to define and implement interoperability solutions. SAFECOM recognizes successful solutions must be based on the input of public safety communications stakeholders and policymakers across diverse disciplines, jurisdictions, and levels of government.

To support this approach, SAFECOM developed a governance structure that facilitates input of SLTT public safety communications stakeholders and policymakers, including elected and appointed officials. Working with the Nation’s leading public safety associations and SLTT government

organizations, SAFECOM follows a strategic direction developed with diverse input from the public safety communications community.

In 2013, SAFECOM established a committee structure to better facilitate the way work products are developed. This organizational structure is illustrated in *Figure 1*.



**Figure 1: SAFECOM Organizational Structure**

**Standing Committees** are long-term, standing groups with a sustained focus on particular topics, such as governance, funding, and technology. Each committee has a chair who is assisted by a vice chair. The committee chair must be a SAFECOM member and both positions are elected by the committee membership and serve as described in *Section 8: Member Roles and Responsibilities*. The committees develop their own internal organization as they see fit, in coordination with CISA and SAFECOM leadership, to accomplish their work. This may include the formation of working groups within or across the committees. The committees are further defined in Section 2 of the *SAFECOM Governance Operating Processes and Procedures*.

**Working Groups** exist for a pre-determined period of time (e.g., 12 months) as a subset of a committee.

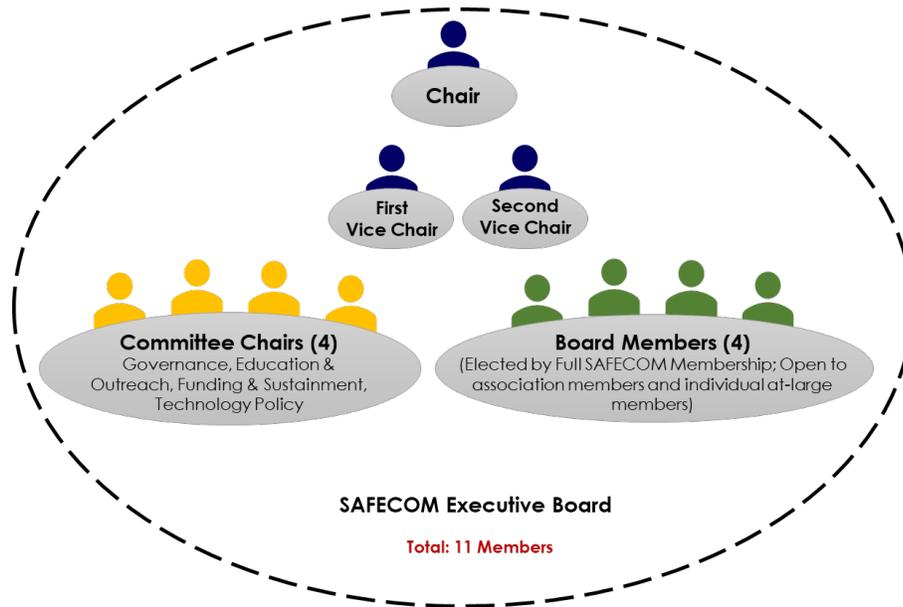
**Task Forces** may be created to work for a short period of time, creating one defined product or executing one specific activity. Task forces are ad hoc and established at the direction of CISA and SAFECOM leadership and have a chair who is responsible for leading the coordination of product development.

SAFECOM and NCSWIC may operate joint efforts, including joint committees, working groups, and task forces, and conduct joint bi-annual meetings. SWICs (other than the designated representatives) may participate in joint initiatives; however, they are not considered SAFECOM members. SWICs who are designated by NCSWIC to be members of a joint committee may serve as a co-chair or vice chair of such committee; however, because SAFECOM committee chairs hold a position on the SAFECOM Executive Board, a SWIC may not serve as the sole chair of a joint committee. Decisions made by the joint efforts will be vetted by the SAFECOM Executive Board and the NCSWIC Executive Committee for approval.

## 7. LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

The SAFECOM Executive Board provides strategic leadership and guidance to the SAFECOM Program. The Board is comprised of the following 11 positions, as elected by the entire SAFECOM membership:

- SAFECOM Chair
- Two SAFECOM Vice Chairs
- Chair of each of the four Standing Committees
- Four Elected Board Members<sup>3</sup>



**Figure 2: SAFECOM Executive Board Structure**

Members of the Executive Board may only hold one leadership position on the Board and represent the collective best interest of SAFECOM, rather than their membership association or represented organization. Executive Board members share responsibility for fulfilling major administrative functions that allow SAFECOM to operate effectively: agenda setting, strategic planning, external relations, and communications. Roles, responsibilities, and criteria for the Executive Board are further described in Section 8.2 of the *SAFECOM Governance Charter*.

<sup>3</sup> The four Board Member positions are open to the full SAFECOM membership (association representatives and individual at-large members) and are elected by the full SAFECOM membership. Members of NCSWIC are not eligible to hold these positions.

## 8. MEMBER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Each of the various roles within SAFECOM consist of different responsibilities. All SAFECOM members shall actively<sup>4</sup> participate to maintain their membership on SAFECOM.

### 8.1 *All SAFECOM Members*

- Provide general guidance and recommendations on public safety and emergency communications
- Communicate decisions, plans, and results to relevant constituencies and stakeholders, including the associations represented
- Actively participate in at least one committee each year to develop work products and user needs requirements, including scheduled virtual meetings<sup>5</sup>
  - Actively participate in at least one committee in-person meeting and at least 50 percent of virtual committee meetings, scheduled throughout the year, or notify CISA when unable to attend
  - The role of association alternate representatives is to serve as backup to the primary representative, in the event they are unable to fulfill their responsibilities (i.e., attend meetings, cast votes); in this capacity, alternate representatives are expected to participate on the same committee as the primary, and may participate on additional committees at the representative’s discretion
- Actively participate in bi-annual in-person meetings (i.e., twice per year) or notify CISA when unable to attend

### 8.2 *Executive Board Members*

- Provide strategic leadership and guidance to the SAFECOM Program
- Define and articulate the needs of the public safety communications community in order to inform the development of materials and activities targeted to that community
- Participate in regularly scheduled virtual Board conferences
- Identify additional need for and participation by disciplines or organizations as formal members or subject matter experts, as needed

### 8.3 *SAFECOM Chair*

- Serve as the official spokesperson of SAFECOM and the Executive Board
- Oversee the coordination of, and preside over, SAFECOM and Executive Board meetings
- Authority to invite NCSWIC observer(s) to attend Executive Board meetings in a non-voting role
- Provide input on strategic planning and priorities for the program
- Work with CISA to create and distribute agendas, relevant read-ahead materials, and reports for all SAFECOM meetings and virtual meetings
- Engage members who lack the required participation to determine membership status

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<sup>4</sup> All SAFECOM members must actively participate, including attending in-person meetings (both bi-annual and committee meetings), virtual committee meetings, and product development participation. Members will be considered “at-risk” if they miss more than two consecutive in-person meetings, attend less than 50% of virtual meetings, and do not participate in product development activities without prior justification. SAFECOM Senior Leadership (i.e., Chair and Vice Chairs) can be leveraged to engage with members who seem to be lacking in participation.

<sup>5</sup> Members can choose to participate on a second committee, for which they may not be eligible to receive funded travel to in-person committee meetings.

- Assign new primary SAFECOM members to a committee fitting their experience and areas of expertise to ensure equitable participation across committees, with recommendations provided by the Governance Committee; any conflict shall be addressed by the SAFECOM Chair
- Authority to reduce committee participation in the event that a committee should become too large and assign members where gaps exist, considering member seniority if moves need to be taken

#### **8.4 SAFECOM First and Second Vice Chair<sup>6</sup>**

- Assume the responsibilities of the Chair when he or she is absent<sup>7</sup>
- *Ex officio* members of all committees, working groups, and task forces
- Accept any other duties the Chair requests, as appropriate

#### **8.5 Committee Chairs**

- Serve as the official spokesperson of the committee
- Oversee the coordination of, and preside over, committee meetings
- Provide input on strategic planning and priorities for the program
- Work with CISA to create and distribute agendas, relevant read-ahead materials, and reports for all committee meetings and virtual meetings

#### **8.6 Committee Vice Chairs<sup>8</sup>**

- Assume the responsibilities of the committee chair when he or she is absent
- Accept any other duties the committee chair requests, as appropriate

### **9. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

#### **9.1 General SAFECOM Membership Requirements**

Interested parties must meet the following criteria to be a member of SAFECOM:

- Possess practical experience with communications and interoperability and the desire to learn
- Serve as an official designee of a SAFECOM association  
*or*
- Currently employed (including volunteer status) or designated by a local, regional, state, tribal, or territorial government

Interested parties must also meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Represent a relevant discipline within the public safety community
- Currently serve on a statewide and/or regional interoperability governing body
- Represent a public safety communications association, or an association with public safety communications equities
- Possess expertise in an area relevant to the public safety community that provides a specific contribution to the SAFECOM program

Further definition of SAFECOM’s membership selection process is included in Section 7 of the *SAFECOM Governance Operating Processes and Procedures*.

<sup>6</sup> “First” and “Second” Vice Chair refer to the senior and junior Vice Chair, based on tenure.

<sup>7</sup> To include absence due to conflicting schedules or unplanned circumstances resulting in the Chair’s inability to fulfill the position.

<sup>8</sup> If the committee vice chair is a SWIC, the committee chair may appoint a SAFECOM member of the committee to report to the SAFECOM Executive Board in the committee chair’s absence.

## **9.2 Leadership Requirements**

Members elected to leadership positions, to include the SAFECOM Chair, SAFECOM Vice Chairs, committee chairs, committee vice chairs, or Executive Board members must be voting SAFECOM members and meet all the requirements listed in *Section 9.1: General SAFECOM Membership Requirements*. NCSWIC leadership from joint committees, working groups, and task forces may provide input or updates to the SAFECOM Executive Board, but they shall not vote on Board matters. Section 8.6 herein states that committee vice chairs can “assume the responsibilities of the committee chair when he or she is absent.” Even under such circumstances, NCSWIC leadership from joint committees, working groups, and task forces cannot vote on SAFECOM Executive Board matters.

## **10. AMENDMENT OF CHARTER**

CISA and the SAFECOM Executive Board may review and revise this *Charter* on an as needed basis. Amendments to the *SAFECOM Governance Charter* may be made by a 2/3 majority vote of the Executive Board. Proposals to amend the *Charter* shall be submitted to the SAFECOM Governance Committee for review and recommendation to the Executive Board.