



National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators Meeting
May 4, 2017 Meeting Summary
Mariott San Antonio Northwest, San Antonio, Texas

Action Items

#	Description	Status	Owner
1	Send final updated 2017 National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (NCSWIC) Charter for review and vote	Complete	Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Office of Emergency Communications (OEC)
2	Research information needed to proceed with trademark of NCSWIC logo	In Progress	DHS OEC
3	Establish Nationwide Request for Proposal (RFP) Working Group under the Joint Technology Policy Committee	Not Started	Technology Policy Committee
4	Send “job description” for NCSWIC representation on Project 25 (P25) Steering Committee to NCSWIC Membership	Not Started	DHS OEC
5	Submit agenda topics for the next in-person meeting	Not Started	NCSWIC

Opening Remarks and SWIC Networking Exercise

Bob Symons, NCSWIC Chair and Wyoming Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC), and Nikki Cassingham, NCSWIC Vice Chair and Oklahoma SWIC, welcomed members to the meeting before SWICs broke into their Regional Interoperability Council (RIC) meetings. Following the RIC meetings and brief opening remarks, Bob Symons welcomed the following new members to the NCSWIC and asked each to introduce themselves prior to Cary Martin, DHS, OEC, facilitating a structured “speed dating” networking exercise:



Figure 1: Photo of NCSWIC Chair Bob Symons and new Hawaii SWIC Everett Kaneshige

Region	State	SWIC
I	Vermont	Terry LaValley
II	Virgin Islands	Angelo Riddick, Khanisa Figaro
II	New York	Michael Sprague
IV	Georgia	Matt Webb*
V	Louisiana	Julio Peck
IX	Guam	Frank Lujan, Jr.
IX	Hawaii	Everett Kaneshige
X	Washington	Michael Marusich (Alternate)

Business Meeting

Ken Hasenei, NCSWIC Charter Update Working Group Co-Chair, kicked off the NCSWIC Business meeting with an overview of proposed changes to the NCSWIC Charter. Over the last few months, members of the NCSWIC Charter Update Working Group, comprised of ten SWICs, worked section-by-section to review and update the NCSWIC Charter to clarify language. Updates were made to the background section, clarifying the role and purpose of the NCSWIC. Additional edits were made to clarify membership, voting procedures, succession planning, roles and responsibilities of members, and invitational travel. Members also suggested adding the following new Goals and Objectives:



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New Goals:

- Educate lawmakers, policymakers, and stakeholders on the importance of the policies supporting public safety communications
- Advance the importance of SWICs as key leaders and advocates for statewide public safety communications
- Equip, educate, and support SWICs in their roles as coordinators within each state and region

New Objectives:

- Promote and strengthen the role of the SWIC in each state as a key advisor, coordinator, and asset on public safety communications issues, systems, and projects
- Promote the sharing of experiences and expertise among the NCSWIC community

Participants held an open discussion on the need to further clarify voting procedures and member roles, including attendance. Nikki Cassingham suggested the entire NCSWIC should vote to approve charter language, not just the Executive Committee (EC). Members requested additional time to review the updated language. Following the meeting, OEC will incorporate the suggested edits and send the Charter to the group for a final review and email vote. Following the Charter discussion, Bob Symons and Nikki Cassingham facilitated a discussion on the usefulness of summary documents produced by the NCSWIC Governance Committee. Many of the SWICs agreed the NCSWIC Annual Report and NCSWIC Strategic Plan are valuable documents; however, they suggested merging the Summary of Accomplishments Fact Sheet as an executive summary or appendices section of the Annual Report.

To close the business meeting, Bob Symons and Ralph Barnett, III, DHS, OEC, discussed the history behind the effort to trademark the NCSWIC logo, including how the SAFECOM logo has been used by other entities to validate their business. Following brief discussions, David Soloos, Oregon SWIC, made a motion to move forward with the NCSWIC logo trademarking process, and Wynn Brannin, New Mexico SWIC, seconded the motion. The motion was approved, and Ralph will work with NCSWIC Leadership to submit the required information.

Public Safety Border Communications Panel

Ted Lawson, DHS, OEC, introduced the panel session, which highlighted various communications challenges faced on the northern and southern borders of the United States (U.S). He provided a brief overview of OEC's two border working groups: the Southwest Border Communications Working Group (SWBCWG) and the Canada-U.S. Communications Interoperability Working Group (CANUS-CIWG). The SWBCWG serves as a forum for U.S. federal, state, local, and tribal agencies on the southern border to share information on common communications issues, and CANUS-CIWG coordinates with U.S. northern border states to address cross-border communications challenges, including regulatory requirements and bi-national coordination. Ted Lawson also discussed the Border Interoperability Demonstration Project (BIDP), authorized in 2007 to identify innovative solutions to interoperability along the northern and southern borders.



Steve Mallory, Maine SWIC, opened the panel by noting the importance of a strong partnership with Canada for ensuring interoperable communications on and across the northern border. Maine's border with Canada is 611 miles long and split into four zones. The state interacts daily with Canadian Mutual Aid partners; however, they face challenges due to rough terrain and limited cell phone coverage in numerous areas. The state also faces language barriers with Quebec. Steve noted additional challenges including identifying and engaging key cross-border stakeholders, securing appropriate infrastructure sites, coordinating with volunteer agencies, and coordinating frequency.

Canada is trying to establish air-to-ground coordination by securing the necessary channels. The [1952 Treaty](#) between the U.S. and Canada established the coordination of spectrum with the intention of limiting signal interference from

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users in either country trying to use a common frequency. The Treaty mainly impacts states and localities that fall within 75 miles of the U.S. and Canada border, known as “Line A.” Although established with good intentions, states affected by Line A continue to face difficulty securing frequency licenses requiring approval by both countries. Often times, license requests submitted to Canada by American agencies are rejected with no reason, forcing the agency to repeatedly re-submit modified applications, which prove costly and time consuming. Some agencies are attempting to use grant monies before they expire; however, because the process can take a long time, many are forced to forfeit large sums of money. For example, it took one agency 12 applications and \$3,000 to secure an Emergency Management frequency. Steve Mallory emphasized the need for frequency coordinators to research available frequencies and the benefits of a person manually reviewing the application instead of an automated system. He noted amendments to the Treaty have helped with certain interoperability barriers, but suggested more needs to be done. Maine conducts joint exercises with Canadian partners and provides support during emergencies, i.e. sending cache radios to support the Lac Megantic train crash in Quebec. Maine also uses the Maine-Canada Border Interoperability Guide (BIG) as a field operations guide for the border. Lastly, Steve Mallory appreciated the BIDP grant for helping develop VCALL 10, a U.S.-Canada Interoperability Channel to aid with cross-border communications that is programed into all of the state’s cache radios.

The State of Minnesota shares 527 border miles with Manitoba and Ontario, Canada. Jim Stromberg, Minnesota SWIC, noted most of the border area is unpopulated and, in the case of Ontario, consists of national parks. Most cross-border coordination involves search and rescue operations. Minnesota’s 800 MHz trunked system includes 335 state towers providing coverage to 95% of the state, including border counties. In order to improve interoperable communications between Ontario and Canada, Minnesota developed a plan to patch Ontario’s FleetNet system and Minnesota’s Allied Radio Matrix for Emergency Response (ARMER) system. The Minnesota Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee and a Provincial Commander from the Ontario Police Department signed a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU used the term “police communications” creating a dilemma for non-law enforcement communications. Minnesota addressed that in Standard by stating that all interoperable communications with Ontario are deemed to be police communications. To patch the two systems, a FleetNet radio was physically connected to a Minnesota tower and directly tied to the ARMER backbone. Ontario assigned a dedicated Talkgroup to the patch, which is tested regularly. One part of Lake of the Woods County, Minnesota, known as Angle Inlet, does not share a land border with the U.S. and is not covered by the ARMER system. To help, an 8TAC93 repeater was installed on a telephone company’s tower in the area and was tied by RF back to the ARMER network. As the only land border with Angle Inlet was through Manitoba, this solution afforded interoperable public safety communications to the isolated area. Wrapping up his presentation with an interesting fact about the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) point of entry (POE) in the Angle Inlet, Jim noted the POE is an unmanned phone booth where travelers are expected to stop to sign in with CBP (Figure 2).

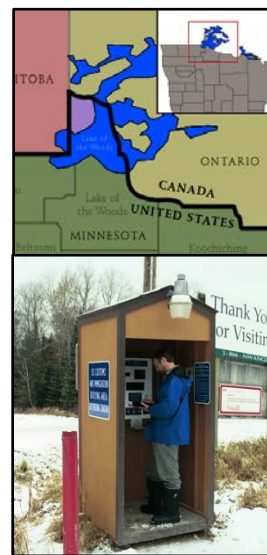


Figure 2: Photo of CBP Phone Booth in the Angle Inlet, Minnesota

Wynn Brannin, New Mexico SWIC, discussed public safety communications on the southern border. Due to proximity with the Mexican Border, New Mexico cannot use digital 800 MHz frequencies and are limited to utilizing analog VHF and UHF frequencies. Wynn noted although the state has been dealing with the same issues for more than 20 years, power has recently become a much more significant issue, adding that Mexico pushes close to 50,000 watts of power onto the U.S. system for broadcast radio, bogging down the network. New Mexico recently began to test broadband reliability with FirstNet along Interstate 10. The New Mexico National Guard and the U.S. Air Force Special Operations Wing works closely with Texas aviation for tactical missions along the border. An average of 20,000 border crossings occur on a regular basis, with that number increasing to 50,000-100,000 laborers crossing the border daily during crop season. Wynn

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mentioned issues related to increased border crossings for medical issues, with Mexicans receiving automatic transport to New Mexican hospitals. To close, Wynn noted that Mexican Cartels are extremely active and creative when it comes to communications. They use encrypted radios and have partnered with U.S. citizens to erect a tower in the U.S. to supplement the cartel's communications needs on this side of the border.



Captain Jim Rohrman, Texas Department of Public Safety Aviation Unit, opened his presentation with two videos showing clips from incidents along the border. The Texas border stretches over 1,200 miles, with approximately 100,000 undocumented immigrants attempting to cross within a 60-mile stretch. The first video showed an attempted kidnapping across the Rio Grande River, and demonstrated the speed at which events can unfold along the border and how quickly crimes can go unsolved due to lack of communication across border. Texas Rangers and the U.S. Border Patrol International Liaison Unit were involved in the rescue, which acted as a catalyst to solving communications issues on the border. It took four hours for the Mexican Government to be notified of the kidnapping due to messages having to be relayed through numerous channels. The

second video showed the chase and capture of a suspect during a narcotics transport. U.S. law enforcement surveilled a transport of narcotics inside the Mexican border and notified the Mexican military through a relayed chain of messages. The capture was eventually made using satellite phones; however, there was a two-minute delay over the phones. The second video showed the successful use of Texas' Regional Radio System that until recently failed to provide full coverage over the 108-mile section of the border. To boost coverage, Texas added another repeater, increasing border coverage to 97%. Most issues with the system occur at the user level, as some users do not want to, nor do they know how to, switch channels on their radios. Texas also experiences issues with over-the-air-rekeying (OTAR). Eight of the Aviation Unit's helicopters and airplanes have Public Address systems to communicate to units on the ground; however, it is not uncommon for U.S. law enforcement to use hand and arm signals to communicate with Mexican law enforcement on the ground.

Following the presentations, Ted facilitated a brief question and answer session. Tom Lawless, DHS, OEC, noted Mexican Law Enforcement do not spend as much time worrying about interoperability as U.S. Law Enforcement considering the high casualty rates of Mexican officers along the border. Tom and Wynn both added Mexican departments use retired U.S. systems and radios, reminding members to clear the frequency bands from their radios before auctioning. Mike Marusich, Alternate Washington SWIC, asked Steve if Maine coordinated with the U.S. State Department during the amendments to the 1952 Treaty, to which Steve noted they had and continue to work closely.

Nationwide RFP: A Strategic Proposal

Craig Allen, Iowa SWIC and NCSWIC Co-Chair of the Joint Technology Policy Committee, facilitated a group discussion alongside Wyoming SWIC Bob Symons, and Jim Downes, DHS, OEC, Project 25 (P25) Steering Committee Chair and Federal Partnership for Interoperable Communications (FPIC) Convener exploring SWICs' interest in participating in a broader SAFECOM/FPIC/P25 Steering Committee (including User Needs Subcommittee) effort to develop a national boiler-plate RFP for land mobile radio (LMR) that would be available for all users. This combined effort would break down a model RFP process initially focusing on LMR subscriber units. This model RFP would aim to enhance interoperability by incorporating important language from the P25 Users Statement of Requirements (SOR). In theory, most states have available resources to develop and enforce procurement requirements; however, the volume of materials is daunting, leaving county and local agencies finding it difficult to filter through and make informed purchases or provide guidance to vendors supporting interoperability. The RFP template would include user-based specifications to ensure vendors follow recommended guidelines from the SOR and increasingly offer public-safety grade equipment.



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Panelists recognized two potential issues that threaten progress of NCSWIC participating and adding their voice in developing the RFP: 1) the need to identify a champion program or organization to lead the effort, and 2) the need to develop content that allows local areas to purchase cost-effective solutions that prioritize operability first and interoperability second. Despite support from public safety communications advisory groups and committees who recognize value added in creating the template—such as the FPIC, the P25 User Needs Subcommittee, the SAFECOM-NCSWIC Technology Policy Committee, etc.—a lead has yet to volunteer. Craig suggested NCSWIC take on the task of champion in an effort to elevate their role in the communications community as an expert group driving nationwide interoperability. SWICs and OEC Regional Coordinators (RC) bring the level of technical expertise and stakeholder knowledge necessary to write and or edit a multi-page, subscriber-unit RFP with the needs of users in mind. Jim Stromberg Minnesota SWIC, and Everett Kaneshige, Hawaii SWIC, volunteered to assist with writing and editing the document. It was pointed out that the SWIC could identify knowledgeable personnel within their state to participate. Other SWICs were encouraged to volunteer or think of pre-existing best practice sample RFPs, language, or templates that support SOR and evaluation criteria, but to avoid misleading or proprietary manufacturer-led requirements. NCSWIC will continue to consider establishing an RFP-development working group under the Joint Technology Policy Committee.

Memorandum of Understanding

Bob Symons and Jim Downes provided an update on the Federal – SWIC MOU for access to the Federal Interoperability Channels, noting the latest revision of the template has been finalized and has been distributed to the RCs for distribution to the SWICs. The MOU provides easier access for state, local, tribal, and territorial public safety agencies to utilize federal Law Enforcement and Incident Response channels for incident response, improve emergency communications interoperability with a federal agency. This version clarifies and corrects text coordinated with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration and the Federal Communications Commission. Finally, Appendix A of the Draft MOU will include applicable provisions addressing limitations or restrictions for frequency use reflected in the Department of Justice 25 Cities MOUs and Canadian Coordination Zone for states on Line A. The current CANCOR limitations or restrictions are being reviewed and data will be provided for each affected MOU. To date, Texas and Wyoming have completed MOUs. Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and West Virginia are in the final review process. The SWICs are encouraged to work with your OEC RC and [Chris Lewis](#), Department of the Interior, regarding this initiative. For more information, please contact Jim Downes at james.downes@hq.dhs.gov.

Closing Remarks

Nikki Cassingham thanked Bob Symons for his years of service to OEC, the NCSWIC, and public safety communications. She emphasized the importance of in-person meetings. She noted her appreciation for the SWICs that took the time out of their busy schedules to travel to San Antonio, especially the new SWICs.

For the last time as NCSWIC Chair, Bob Symons provided farewell remarks to the group. He noted that his time with the NCSWIC was an unbelievable journey and that the group accomplished a lot since 2010. He enjoyed all of his fun careers, including the fire service and his time as the Wyoming SWIC. Bob also mentioned how, still today, the hardest aspect of public safety communications is the human factor, highlighting people's unwillingness to change. He implored his fellow SWICs to carry on NCSWIC's mission, adding that it takes a village to progress forward. Bob remains available to assist SWICs following his retirement in September. Before signing off, Bob left SWICs with the following parting phrase, "I'm not saying, 'goodbye'; I'm saying, 'I'll see you later'".



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To close out the meeting, Cary Martin reviewed the 2017 calendar:

Date	Meeting Type
July 11, 2017	NCSWIC EC Conference Call
September 12, 2017	NCSWIC EC Conference Call
November 6-10, 2017	Joint In-Person Meeting (Norman, Oklahoma)
December 12, 2017	NCSWIC EC Conference Call

NCSWIC EC Meeting

Following the plenary NCSWIC meeting, the NCSWIC EC held an in-person meeting to discuss outcomes from the previous two days of meetings and discuss strategic initiatives to strengthen the future of the NCSWIC. Bob Symons facilitated a discussion on the agendas of the week's various meetings. Members liked the schedule of events with the joint session split into two days. SWICs also liked the structure of the RIC meetings, including the agenda and support questions. At the next meeting, SWICs would like to hold their meeting prior to the joint sessions. In the afternoon following the next in-person NCSWIC meeting, EC members suggested holding an interactive Homeland Security Information Network Session along with the speed-dating exercise. Members enjoyed the speed-dating session, requesting additional time in the future, SAFECOM members participation, and the ability for participants to move from table to table instead of rotating in a line. EC members also appreciated the length of time devoted to committee meetings. At future meetings, SWICs would like to receive copies of the SAFECOM contact list, adding member pictures to both the SAFECOM and NCSWIC lists.

Nikki Cassingham requested EC members utilize their networks to assist SAFECOM with filling vacancies. Members also discussed assigning NCSWIC representation to various external committees and working groups, including the P25 Steering Committee. Following the meeting, OEC will send out a description of the duties for representing NCSWIC on the P25 Steering Committee to membership to solicit volunteers.

With Bob Symons stepping down as NCSWIC Chair, Nikki Cassingham will fill the role of Chair until the fall 2017 elections, leaving a vacancy in the Vice Chair position. The NCSWIC EC conducted a special election for NCSWIC Vice Chair, selecting Joe Galvin, Illinois SWIC, to fill the role.

NCSWIC EC members then discussed and voted to approve the following Joint Technology Policy Committee and Joint Funding and Sustainment Committee work products:

- Identity, Credentials, and Access Management (ICAM) Trustmark Framework Position Paper
- ICAM Trustmark Framework Tri-fold Brochure
- ICAM 101 Executive Summary
- P25 Frequently Asked Questions

Craig Allen acknowledged the work Todd Early, Texas SWIC, accomplished with the ICAM Working Group, thanking him for his effort on the Trustmark Framework products. Additionally, Bob Symons thanked OEC for their continued support of the NCSWIC and SAFECOM programs. To close out the meeting, members participated in a discussion on the need for a NCSWIC social media presence. Discussions included establishing a NCSWIC LinkedIn page for current and former SWICs to stay connected. Members also wanted to establish a presence on Twitter and Facebook. Ralph Barnett, III, noted OEC is conducting research on establishing various social media accounts for OEC.