



**National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (NCSWIC)  
 October 27, 2016, Meeting Summary  
 National Center for Employee Development (NCED), Norman, Oklahoma**

**NCSWIC Action Items**

#	Description	Status	Owner
1	Complete Regional Interoperability Council (RIC) Annual Report Worksheets	In Progress	NCSWIC
2	Complete NCSWIC 2016 Annual Report and Strategic Plan	In Progress	NCSWIC/Office of Emergency Communications (OEC)
3	Establish NCSWIC Charter Update Working Group	In Progress	NCSWIC Executive Committee (EC)/Governance Committee
4	Complete Strategic Priorities Close-Out Slick Sheet	Not Started	Governance Committee/OEC
5	Submit agenda topics for May 2017 in-person meeting	Not Started	NCSWIC

**Opening Remarks**

Bob Symons, NCSWIC Chair and Wyoming Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC), thanked members for their attendance and encouraged all SWICs to speak passionately about the importance of the SWIC position and the great work of the NCSWIC Program. Nikki Cassingham, NCSWIC Vice Chair and Oklahoma SWIC, agreed with Bob’s sentiments and welcomed everyone to Oklahoma. Bob and Nikki briefly discussed outcomes from the previous day’s joint meeting with SAFECOM, thanking the federal partners for their participation and encouraging SWICs to help bridge the gap between the state, local, and Federal partners. Bob mentioned the ceremonial signing of the first Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department of Interior and the State of Wyoming regarding shared use of Federal interoperability channels, adding that OEC will be sending out a copy of the MOU to each state for their review following the meeting.

Chris Essid, OEC Deputy Director, noted the importance of holding in-person meetings, gathering new and seasoned SWICs to share valuable best practices and lessons learned. Chris echoed Bob’s push to continue to market the SWIC position and the value of building strong governance bodies. Importance was also placed on continuing to improve support for the SWIC position, without tying it to specific technologies like land mobile radio (LMR). Additionally, Chris highlighted several themes from the previous day’s joint meeting with SAFECOM, including the need to fund and sustain LMR systems, and future efforts to integrate LMR and broadband. He encouraged members to make their voices heard during the agenda development process for future in-person meetings, noting how coordination between NCSWIC leadership and OEC strives to identify impactful sessions and a variety of relevant topic areas. Lastly, Chris requested states submit their Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP) Snapshots, if they have not already done so.

Following opening remarks from Adrienne Roughgarden, OEC, Bob welcomed the following new members to the NCSWIC:

*Table 1 - New SWICs*

Region	State	Name
II	New York	Michael Sprague
II	US Virgin Islands	Jesus Caban
III	District of Columbia	David Mulholland
III	Virginia	Tom Gagnon
IV	Alabama	Jeb Hargrove
IV	Tennessee	Gerald Risner, Mike Harris
VI	Louisiana	Julio Peck



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**National Governors Association (NGA) Policy Academy on Enhancing Emergency Communications Interoperability**

Chris Essid provided an update on OEC's work with NGA on the recent Policy Academy on Enhancing Emergency Communications Interoperability. Policy Academies have been one of many tools used by the NGA to assist states with addressing nationwide issues and ultimately shape national-level policy. Policy Academies typically focus on challenges of national importance, are stakeholder driven, occur on an as-needed basis, and bring a wide variety of experts, policy advisors, and other officials together to solve identified issues. Chris reminded SWICs of the three previous OEC-sponsored Policy Academies, which resulted in the development of SCIPs, the establishment of statewide governance bodies, and the creation of the SWIC position. Each of the previous Academies, although successful, included challenges, such as a lack of local input, limited funding, and difficulty involving appropriate decision makers. OEC has worked collaboratively with stakeholders to assist states with developing strategies for improving emergency communications interoperability as it evolves.



*Figure 1: Members of OEC and participants of the Hawaii Policy Academy*

The 2016 Policy Academy hosted workshops from July through September in five competitively-selected states: Alaska, Hawaii, Illinois, Utah, and West Virginia. Tim Blute, NGA, noted the request for applications was published in January 2016, with more than 12 states applying to participate. Each workshop was tailored to the needs and challenges of the individual state, but collectively focused on identifying interoperable communications best practices, strategies for overcoming barriers to statewide implementation of their interoperable plans, and methods for enhancing collaboration between governor's offices and the SWIC. The Academy's three core objectives included developing and strengthening governance structures, sustaining LMR, and clearing up misconceptions about the implementation of broadband. As a next step, OEC plans to incorporate best practices and recommendations from the Academy into OEC's technical assistance offerings and SCIP workshops.

The Policy Academy held a close-out meeting in Minnesota on November 2-3, 2016, and the NGA is now in the process of collecting experiences from each state's workshop and creating a strategic plan of recommendations applicable to all 56 states and territories. Those recommendations will be publicly released by March 2017. Tim Blute, NGA, noted sustainability and governance as themes throughout each of the five workshops. Many states have built robust public safety communications systems but are struggling to sustain them, with a few, he noted, held together by proverbial "duct tape." Tim also reiterated the need for strong governance structures to help with system sustainability. Additional themes included elevating issues to the highest level and messaging challenges related to the technological revolution. Tim noted best practices moving forward should include early involvement of states' legislatures and messaging public safety communications sustainment as a life-saving, public safety issue. NGA will continue to stay engaged with each of the five states and push the need for strong governance, strategic plans, and sustained communications systems.

Victoria Garcia, Hawaii, identified a number of best practices from the Hawaii Policy Academy, including involving Mayors and other elected officials from the beginning to build relationships. Following the workshop, the state proposed implementing an additional surcharge on arrests that would be placed in a trust to be distributed based on proposals. Victoria also noted that due to the expanding SWIC role and diminished resources over the long-term to fund the role, one person rarely has the needed expertise or availability to handle all state emergency communications issues. She advocated



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establishing SWIC Offices with various personnel to tackle all areas of emergency communications. Gordy Coles, Utah, agreed on the benefits of bringing various groups to the table. He mentioned Utah's communications system is near the end of its life cycle; however, user fees were not providing enough revenue to sustain the system. As a result, the state merged various system funding streams and is looking at using a bond to support necessary system updates. Gordy noted the workshop helped to improve relationships across the state and to develop a succession plan.

Illinois has a strong governance structure; however, the workshop provided the state with additional means for improvement. Joe Galvin mentioned the Illinois SWIC, although a member of their Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC), does not have written authority to make decisions about interoperability across the state. Although the SWIC currently does not chair the SIEC, there are now discussions about making the SWIC the chair, further elevating the role. James Joseph, Director of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency, shared that he was pleased with the outcomes of the NGA Policy Academy and efforts to streamline governance structures. G.E. McCabe, West Virginia, noted aspects of his state's governance structure, noting its high level of engagement but lack of representation from the State House and Senate. An additional major outcome of the workshop for West Virginia was the development of a "Transition Document" for use during administration turnover to keep momentum and maintain awareness of emergency communications in the state.

### **Statewide Governance and Planning Integrated Project Team (IPT)**

Chris Essid introduced the IPT effort which was established to collect input from stakeholders on current challenges related to governance and planning at the state and local levels. Nikki Cassingham, who served as one of the stakeholder leads for the IPT, provided an overview of the effort, citing governance as a major factor influencing emergency communications sustainment efforts and the evolution of the emergency communications landscape. During the kick-off meeting held in August, Nikki, along with the other stakeholder leads, Victoria Garcia, Penny Rubow, and Jackie Mines, identified a number of common challenges they are experiencing in their states. These challenges include budget constraints and the declining role of the SWIC and governance body; the difficulty in keeping up with rapidly-evolving technologies; and balancing funding priorities. Over the last two months, members of the IPT participated in weekly sub-group and full-team meetings to address these challenges. During this in-person meeting, OEC aimed to collect additional feedback from the broader NCSWIC audience to establish a long-term strategy to enhance its support related to statewide governance and planning. The following provides a breakdown of the four established sub-groups composed of members from OEC, NCSWIC, and SAFECOM:

#### *Strengthen and Expand Messaging from OEC on Emerging Technology and Interoperability Sub-Group*

- Led by Victoria Garcia, the purpose of this effort was to refine messaging to convey the continued relevance of and need for LMR, interoperability, and the integration of emerging technologies, such as broadband, into current emergency communications capabilities
- The subgroup developed an elevator speech on emergency communications and interoperability to assist with common messaging

#### *Customize Governance Support to Meet States' Unique Needs Sub-Group*

- Led by Penny Rubow, the purpose of this effort was to promote governance and the role of SWICs and governance bodies, thus elevating their importance within state government, optimizing resources, and leveraging strategic relationships to further emergency communications interoperability statewide



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*Strengthen Coordination between Regional Coordinators and SWICs Sub-Group*

- Led by Nikki Cassingham, the purpose of this effort was to understand states' needs as OEC further develops partnerships between Regional Coordinators and SWICs, advancing the state's strategies and optimizing regional support

*Provide Tailored Support to States through Technical Assistance (TA) and SCIPs Sub-Group*

- Led by Jackie Mines, the purpose of this effort was to establish an integrated, holistic approach to state and local support, including TAs and strategic planning
- Since each aspect of the evolving emergency communications environment (Next Generation 9-1-1 [NG 9-1-1], Integrated Public Alerts and Warning Systems, FirstNet, etc.) competes for the same funding resources, it is important to keep them together to move funding forward

Chris Essid and Dick Tenney, OEC, introduced two breakout sessions focused on gaining an understanding of technical assistance priorities for fiscal year 2017 and beyond and feedback on the new proposed SCIP process. Dick mentioned the SCIP would be transitioning to a Statewide Communication Interoperability Process involving support for five segments: governance, implementation strategy, a technology roadmap, sustainability, and progress measurement. He also stated the new process would no longer involve a one-time engagement, but a more in-depth process requiring further engagement from states. The new process would also provide "plans" comprised of the full interoperability process and would aim to better reflect state priorities.

After each of the stakeholder leads for the Statewide Governance and Planning (SGP) Team shared an overview of their sub-group's work and highlighted their quick win products, the session attendees participated in an interactive working session. During this session, participants had the opportunity to provide input in two areas: 1) Challenges in the TA program and 2) the new SCIP Process. There was a station for both topics where participants were able to discuss these resources with members of the SGP Team and provide input and recommendations.

For the TA discussion, SWICs were asked to provide challenges practitioners are experiencing in the field using the lanes of the Interoperability Continuum to guide their conversations and information on how TA could help stakeholders further address these challenges. One of the key takeaways was to leverage more train-the-trainer TAs in order to help build capabilities within states and reduce reliance on external training. At the SCIP Process station, participants provided feedback to the notional planning process developed by OEC and gave input on critical components of each phase. Much of the discussion at this station centered on the need to involve the right people in strategic planning; to develop realistic, attainable goals; and to regularly measure progress toward these goals.

**Working Session: Utilizing NCSWIC Promotional Materials**

Bob Symons highlighted the suite of SWIC promotional materials recently developed by the NCSWIC Governance Committee. Recently, SWICs have requested support promoting the role of the SWIC within their states and regions. The NCSWIC Governance Committee strives to educate stakeholders on the importance of the SWIC role and the need for statewide governance bodies. Over the last two years, the Governance Committee developed and published the following six documents to help SWICs promote themselves and the NCSWIC and to assist states with filling the SWIC role:

- *SWIC Elevator Speech*: a tool to succinctly describe the significant and diverse duties of the SWIC's office within the public safety community
- *SWIC Success Stories*: a document highlighting a variety of SWIC accomplishments
- *NCSWIC 101*: a presentation providing a high-level overview of NCSWIC's purpose and goals and the function and role of the SWIC





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- *SWIC Roles and Responsibilities Document*: originally developed in 2014, this updated version highlights the various key roles of a SWIC and is used to educate new SWICs on potential responsibilities
- *Supporting and Leveraging your Statewide Interoperability Coordinator*: similar to the internal Roles and Responsibilities document, this document was developed to showcase the importance and value of a SWIC to external stakeholders and legislatures
- *SWIC Vacancy Announcement Template and Best Practices for Hiring*: a guide developed as a list of recommended requirements that can be modified to fit each state's specific needs when filling a SWIC vacancy

Most recently, the Governance Committee began developing a document to provide guidelines for SWICS to engage external stakeholders, promote the role of the SWIC and the NCSWIC, and increase awareness of statewide governance bodies. The committee hosted a webinar last month to gain feedback from the group, and updated the document to address concerns that were raised. Following approval garnered during the previous day's committee meeting, the document will move forward to the NCSWIC EC for final approval.

### **Funding Communications Systems Panel**

Ken Bradley, OEC, introduced the panel session, which highlighted funding throughout the system life cycle and provided information on funding methods, challenges, best practices, and lessons learned. Victoria Garcia started the discussion by introducing the Joint SAFECOM-NCSWIC Funding and Sustainment Committee's [Funding and Sustainment Resource Guide](#), and encouraged members to leverage the guide when speaking to project managers, elected officials, and agency heads as a supplemental educational tool on LMR technologies and issues. Penny Rubow, Arkansas SWIC, discussed the Funding Mechanism document and tables, which provide explanations of funding vehicles (e.g., bonds, special taxes), and other examples of methods for funding state and local emergency communication systems.

Penny also provided an update to the funding presentation she delivered at the May 2016 NCSWIC meeting in Jacksonville, Florida. She noted the importance of establishing a plan for future funding at the beginning of the system life cycle. Penny noted how Arkansas secured \$10 million for system upgrades from the Governor's Discretionary Funds, more than \$8 million from other state funds, and \$3.8 million in grant funds from the Department of Commerce for Band 14 relocation. Since the Arkansas Wireless Information Network falls under a "cost-recovery" agency, the office must cover any additional expenses required for the system upgrade. As such, the state is considering user fees as a supplementary strategy for covering additional costs. Although Arkansas is still in the early stages of its system upgrade, Penny provided recommendations to other states thinking about early life cycle funding: (1) establish a plan for inventorying equipment and processing invoices in the planning stages of the project; (2) establish a quarterly payment structure for large expenses and continue to monitor expenses closely; (3) establish strong relationships with legal, procurement, and administrative staff when preparing a funding proposal; (4) recruit personnel with knowledge of the legislative calendar and procurement law; (5) establish agreements on vendor involvement; (6) better manage expectations; and (7) start contracting activities earlier.

Todd Early, Texas, discussed the [Report on Interoperable Communications to the Texas Legislature](#). This report is used to share accomplishments, initiatives, challenges and current level of statewide interoperability by county to the state legislature. Todd stressed how the report is stakeholder-driven, with accomplishments, initiatives, and challenges provided by Regional Focus Groups within the Regional Councils of Government and Planning Commissions. In 2015-2016, Texas added additional technologies into the latest regional focus group report (e.g., social media) for future inclusion in the





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report. The interoperability metrics are based on the SAFECOM interoperability continuum, which help the legislature to know where their counties fall within the continuum. The report breaks down grant funding spent by region, which helps legislators see how their jurisdictions are affected, and discusses capital needs by category as well as ongoing operation and maintenance costs. The report also includes an addendum on long-term evolution (LTE) to educate lawmakers on emerging technologies. Todd recommended developing an annual legislative report on interoperability to keep decision-makers informed of challenges, life cycle funding needs, and projects. In addition, it is important to maintain strong relationships with the Governor's Office, become involved in the homeland security grant process for review of interoperable communications equipment to ensure compliance with the SCIP, and develop a template for regional plans. Lastly, Todd urged stakeholders to develop a strong partnership with OEC to exchange best practices for improving interoperability.

G.E. McCabe discussed the West Virginia Statewide Interoperable Radio Network (SIRN) comprised of 132 microwave and 90 RF sites, and includes radio, microwave, and fiber. All 55 counties use the system which has supported response to floods, a recent pipeline explosion, and major events (e.g., Boy Scout Jamboree). G.E. shared a usage chart depicting peak usage during the flood and which jurisdictions used and benefited from the system. G.E. stressed the importance of defining users, and noted emphasizing the local value of the system has helped them gain funding support. West Virginia was fortunate to receive funding and saved money by using its own workforce to build the statewide interoperable radio system in which over \$211 million has been invested to date. G.E. noted life cycle planning is critical to the continued operations and sustainability of the system. A lesson learned from West Virginia's system development was to focus on life cycle planning and funding, as well as meeting build-out schedules and grant deadlines. As a result, the state needs approximately \$31 million to keep the system operational. To address this need, West Virginia leveraged the NGA Policy Academy workshops to focus on how it could obtain sustained funding for the SIRN. Through the Policy Academy, West Virginia developed a Transition Document to educate newly-elected Governors and their staff, as well as legislators about the SIRN, its needs, and possible funding sources. Additional recommendations urged for the codification of funding for the SIRN. Lastly, G.E. provided the following suggestions to states on the system life cycle planning process: (1) include funding specifics (where the money is going and who it is helping); (2) develop agreements among counties to share costs (e.g., fueling for generators, road maintenance); (3) develop an inventory list to designate ownership and costs; and (4) develop a list of upcoming costs.

### **NCSWIC EC Meeting**

Following a one-hour, SWIC-only, executive session, the NCSWIC EC held an in-person meeting to discuss outcomes from the previous two days of meetings and 2017 strategic planning. Bob Symons opened the meeting by discussing the planning process involved in developing agendas for each of the various meetings. Members applauded the agendas, but suggested including a variety of other topics in the future, including more issues affecting the territories and border states. EC members also appreciated the small group break-out sessions and requested additional time on future agendas to meet with their committees.

Members reviewed Charter language, approved by the NCSWIC Governance Committee, which covered updates to election cycles and new language on succession planning guidelines. After a brief discussion, Mark Grubb, Delaware, motioned to have a working group established under the Governance Committee to review the Charter in its entirety and approve recommendations to streamline the document. Bob Symons will discuss the newly-established working group with the Governance Committee during their next conference call, December 8, 2016. Victoria Garcia and Ken Hasenei, Maryland, volunteered to serve as the Working Group Chair and Vice Chair, respectively.



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NCSWIC Committee Chairs discussed 2017 strategic priorities, providing outcomes from the previous day’s committee meetings, and highlighting proposed work products for the coming year. Key focus areas for 2017 included:

- Technology Policy: Encryption and NG 9-1-1
- Funding and Sustainment: funding system maintenance and life-cycle planning
- Governance: conducting a NCSWIC Intellectual Capital Assessment and assisting states with broadband integration
- Planning, Training, and Exercises: improving planning and implementation and streamlining online training

NCSWIC EC members were provided the opportunity to highlight issues affecting their states or regions. Steve Staffier, Massachusetts, noted continued concerns in the state regarding the T-Band issue. Brad Stoddard, Michigan SWIC and the NCSWIC representative to the National Public Safety Telecommunications Council (NPSTC), mentioned NPSTC recently sent a letter to the Federal Communications Commission advocating for preserving 700 MHz narrowband from broadband use. Members also discussed the unavoidability of FirstNet and how the SWIC position may change with broadband integration.

Jessica Stolz, Vermont, discussed a recent request for proposal (RFP) Vermont is developing to update the State Public Safety Answering Point consoles. Mark Grubb mentioned he would provide a recent procurement RFP developed in Delaware for awareness. Mark referred to the presence of Director Joseph from the Illinois Emergency Management Agency at the NCSWIC meeting, and discussed the benefit of having more legislatures present at future meetings. Ron Hewitt, OEC Director, noted the potential benefits of holding regional in-person meetings and inviting additional state representation to boost awareness and messaging.

To close out the meeting, Adrienne Roughgarden reviewed recent action items and the proposed 2017 calendar. Members approved the following in-person meeting and EC conference call dates:

Date	Meeting Type
January 10, 2017	NCSWIC EC Conference Call
March 7, 2017	NCSWIC EC Conference Call
May 1-5, 2017	Joint In-Person Meeting (San Antonio, Texas)
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