National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators
Governance Charter

Background
Established by the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), formerly the Office of Emergency Communications, in July 2010, the National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (NCSWIC) supports Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (SWICs) from the 56 states and territories, by developing products and services to assist them with leveraging their relationships, professional knowledge, and experience with public safety partners involved in interoperable communications at all levels of government. Central to the NCSWIC purpose is the promotion and coordination of activities designed to ensure the highest level of public safety communications across the nation. This direct approach improves interoperability and advances long-term emergency communications initiatives. SWICs strive to enhance the response capabilities of public safety responders by coordinating and collaborating with federal, state, local, and tribal public safety agencies and non-governmental organizations. As such, the SWIC contributes to the development and maintenance of communications related:

- governance structures across all disciplines and levels of government;
- standard operating procedures;
- voice and data technologies;
- training and exercises;
- outreach and education materials;
- best practices and recommendations;
- funding and grant opportunities; and
- emergency communications policies, plans, and services.

CISA is the lead coordinating office for the NCSWIC and recognizes the critical role the SWICs serve in organizing and executing the interoperability effort in all the states and territories. SWICs serve as the points of contact (POCs) between CISA and each state.

The purpose of this document is to outline the vision, mission, goals, objectives, membership, and operating guidelines for the NCSWIC governance model.

Vision
A Nation where public safety responders can effectively communicate.

Mission
The NCSWIC, through the SWIC, promotes and implements strategies for achieving effective public safety communications by developing professional partnerships and collaborating with public safety agencies and policy makers.

Goals
The goals of the NCSWIC are to:
1. Improve public safety communications interoperability throughout the nation.
2. Educate lawmakers, policymakers, and stakeholders on the importance of the policies supporting public safety communications.
3. Advance the importance of SWIC's as key leaders and advocates for statewide public safety communications.

4. Equip, educate, and support SWICs in their roles as coordinators within each state and region.
5. Assist the SWIC community with outreach, Statewide Communication Interoperability Plans (SCIP) program management, grants coordination, and policy development responsibilities.
6. Implement the goals and objectives outlined in the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP).

Objectives
NCSWIC pursues the following objectives to achieve its goals:
1. 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.
2. Promote the sharing of experiences and expertise among the NCSWIC community.
3. Develop and provide resources and tools to be used by the NCSWIC and public safety communities to further interoperability efforts.
4. Establish and maintain existing ad hoc working groups to address specific issues or tasks.
5. Identify and execute short- and mid-range strategic initiatives detailed within the NCSWIC Strategic Plan.

NCSWIC Strategic Plan
The NCSWIC Strategic Plan is a stakeholder-driven, multi-jurisdictional, and multi-disciplinary strategic plan created to enhance public safety communications. The Strategic Plan is a critical, mid-range (three year) tool that provides focus and direction and helps the NCSWIC and its partners prioritize resources, strengthen governance, identify future investments, and address interoperability gaps. The NCSWIC Executive Committee (EC), in coordination with CISA, reviews the NCSWIC Strategic Plan on an annual basis.

Enhancing Inter- and Intra-State Governance
NCSWIC members work with public safety responders in their respective state, territory, and region to create governance structures that promote and enhance public safety communications. This approach ensures multi-jurisdictional, cross-border, and cross-disciplinary coordination amongst public safety responders and policymakers for the purpose of identifying and implementing solutions to enhance interoperability. NCSWIC members assist with the development or enhancement of state and territory governance structures to provide strategic guidance for public safety responders.

In support of this approach, NCSWIC has developed a governance structure complimenting the input provided by public safety responders and policymakers.
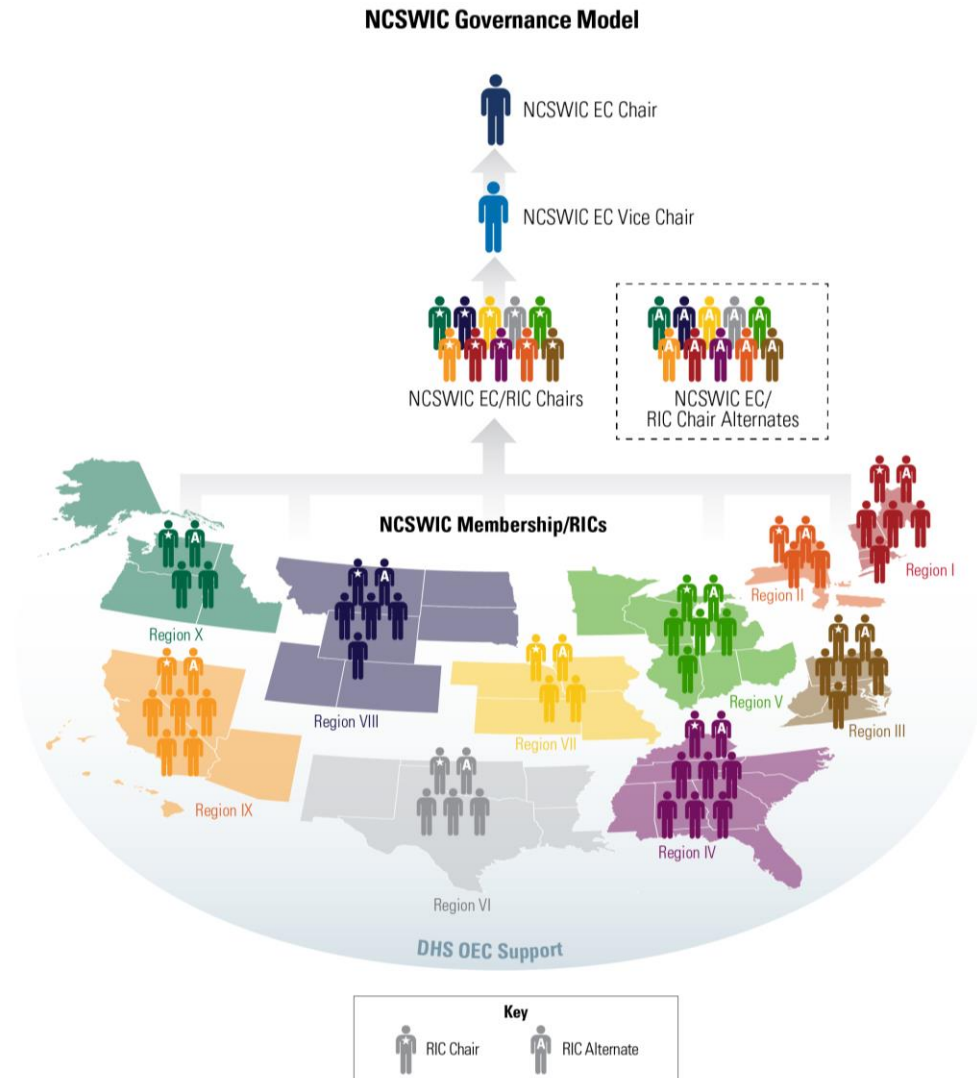
Membership
The NCSWIC is comprised of SWICs and their alternates from the 56 states and territories, and is divided by region into Regional Interoperability Councils (RIC) (*Table 1*). The RICs were developed to promote communication, coordination and collaboration among SWICs for the purpose of advancing interoperable communications with neighboring states, Federal Emergency Management Agency regions, and countries. The RICs shall also be the venue to ensure the actions, recommendations, and guidance to and from the EC are communicated, vetted, and implemented.

Table 1: NCSWIC RICs

Region	States and Territories Represented
Region I	Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont
Region II	New Jersey, New York, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico
Region III	Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia
Region IV	Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee
Region V	Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin
Region VI	Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas
Region VII	Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska
Region VIII	Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming
Region IX	American Samoa, Arizona, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, California, Guam, Hawaii, Nevada
Region X	Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington

Two main groups make up the NCSWIC: 1) EC members are comprised of the RIC Primary and Alternate Representatives from each region) and 2) general NCSWIC members.

NCSWIC Governance Model

RICs

RIC Membership

Each region has its own RIC. Membership is comprised of the SWIC or representative from each state or territory in the region. SWICs will serve on the RICs as long as they hold the SWIC position for a given state or territory. The time commitment to the RIC will vary, but RIC members (aka SWICs) are expected to participate in the CISA semiannual NCSWIC meetings as well as contribute to NCSWIC Committees or Working Groups. There may be time allocated for the RICs to meet during the semiannual NCSWIC meetings.

Alternate representatives may be designated for each state or territory for attendance at the semiannual NCSWIC meetings. The alternate representative, who is an employee of a state or local unit of government, shall have equal authority to provide input and make recommendations on behalf of their state in the absence of the SWIC. The alternate may still attend meetings and contribute if the SWIC is in attendance, but each state or territory receives only one formal, voting seat. CISA will fund the attendance of only one representative per state. Should additional representatives wish to attend in-person meetings, they must do so on state funds.

RIC Leadership

Each RIC has one elected RIC Primary Representative. The Primary Representative provides leadership for the RIC as well as representing the RIC on the NCSWIC Executive Committee. The Primary Representative will select their alternates by soliciting interest among the SWICs in the regions and appointing a SWIC to serve as the RIC Alternate Representative. Should the Primary Representative step down before his or her term ends, the Alternate Representative will serve as the RIC Primary Representative for the duration of the term. The new Primary Representative will then solicit interest from SWICs in the region and assign a new alternate.

RIC Voting Procedures

The RICs will operate by consensus, when possible. When it is necessary for the RICs to vote on regional issues, each SWIC shall have one vote, with a simple majority of the members present prevailing. Each SWIC's designated alternate may vote only in the absence of the primary member. RIC members can abstain from voting on any issue if they so choose. Members may also give another member permission to serve as a proxy on any vote if the alternate isn't available to represent their region and written authorization is provided in advance to the RIC Primary Representative. When necessary, voting may be conducted via email.

RIC Chair Terms

RIC Chairs will serve a two-year term, with no limit on the number of times a member can be reelected. RIC Chairs from the even-numbered regions will be elected on the even-numbered years, and RIC Chairs from the odd-numbered regions will be elected on the odd-numbered years.

RIC Primary and Alternate Representative Elections

RIC elections will proceed as follows:

1. Prior to August 15, the CISA NCSWIC Program Manager will develop and distribute an election calendar.
2. By the date provided in the election calendar, interested RIC members submit their interest in serving as their region's RIC Primary or Alternate Representative to their RIC, their Regional Coordinator, and the CISA NCSWIC Program Manager. This submission should be in the form of a brief statement of interest.

3. By the date provided in the election calendar, the CISA NCSWIC Program Manager or the Regional Coordinator will distribute the lists of candidates to each RIC with instructions on voting. Each RIC will have two weeks to conduct an election on the date of their choosing, either in person or virtually.
    a. Each RIC member, or proxy, will email their vote to the Regional Coordinator.
    b. The Regional Coordinator will tally all votes and deliver the election results to the CISA NCSWIC Program Manager and the current NCSWIC Chair and Vice Chair.
    c. If the vote is conducted in person, the Regional Coordinator will collect paper votes and email the voting results to the NCSWIC Chair, the NCSWIC Vice Chair, and the CISA NCSWIC Program Manager. (The NCSWIC Chair and Vice Chair will only be included in the determination of voting results if they are not up for reelection.)
4. By the date provided in the election calendar, CISA will communicate the voting results to the newly elected RIC Representatives and the NCSWIC.
    a. If there is a tie vote, candidates will submit a written statement elaborating on their statement of interest, providing additional detail on how they will best fill the role. This statement will be submitted by the date provided in the election calendar.
    b. A final vote will take place the last week in September via the voting process described above.
    c. Should there be another tie after the second vote, a coin toss will determine the winner.
    d. CISA will communicate the voting results of the tie-breaker to the NCSWIC prior to the last business day in September.
5. Elected RIC Representatives will assume their positions as of October 1.

NCSWIC EC
The NCSWIC EC is the leadership group and governing body of the NCSWIC and is comprised of the RIC Primary and Alternate Representatives from each of the ten regions. CISA will ensure the group is constituted in accordance with governmental regulations and practices.

EC Leadership Elections
The NCSWIC elects the NCSWIC Chair and Vice Chair from the elected EC Members on a two year rotational basis at the last in-person meeting of the year. The NCSWIC Chair positions will be elected on odd-numbered years and the Vice Chair position will be elected on even-numbered years. Between October 1 and two weeks prior to the last in-person meeting of the year, NCSWIC EC members need to submit their interest in serving as either the NCSWIC Chair or Vice Chair to all NCSWIC EC members and the CISA NCSWIC Program Manager via email. Prior to the last in-person meeting of the year, the CISA NCSWIC Program Manager will announce the list of candidates and provide instructions on voting to the entire NCSWIC membership. Voting will occur during the last in-person meeting of the year. CISA will communicate the results to the NCSWIC during the in-person meeting, and the newly-elected/reelected NCSWIC Chair or Vice Chair will assume their positions immediately. There is no limit to the number of terms the Chair or Vice Chair can serve.

Chair/Vice Chair Succession Planning
In the event a chair/vice chair must step down from the position, the following may occur:

1. Special Election: If the general election (held during the fall/winter meeting) is more than 90 days away from the date the seat was vacated, a special election may be held by members of the EC to elect a succeeding chair/vice chair.

2. Vice Chair Assumes Responsibility: If the general election is less than 90 days away from the date the seat was vacated, the vice chair will temporarily assume responsibility for the roles of the chair (see Appendix A).

EC Voting Procedures
Attendance of 50 percent plus one member is necessary to obtain a quorum and official actions of the NCSWIC EC cannot be made without establishment of a quorum. When it is necessary for the NCSWIC EC to vote on NCSWIC-related issues, each region shall have one vote that is representative of the entire region. Each region's designated Alternate Representative may vote only in the absence of the Primary Representative. NCSWIC EC members can abstain from voting on any issue, if they so choose. Members may also give another member permission to serve as a proxy on any vote if the alternate is not available to represent their region and written authorization is provided in advance to CISA and the NCSWIC Chair. A proxy vote does not count toward the establishment of a quorum. The NCSWIC EC will operate by consensus when possible. When it is necessary to cast a formal roll-call vote, a simple majority of the members present after the establishment of a quorum shall prevail. When necessary, voting may be conducted via email.

Plenary Voting Procedures
Attendance of 50 percent plus one member is necessary to obtain a quorum and official actions of the NCSWIC cannot be made without establishment of a quorum. When it is necessary for the NCSWIC to vote on NCSWIC-related issues, each state shall have one vote. Each state's designated Alternate SWIC may vote only in the absence of the Primary SWIC. States can abstain from voting on any issue, if they so choose. SWICs may also give another SWIC permission to serve as a proxy on any vote if the alternate is not available to represent their state and written authorization is provided in advance to CISA and the NCSWIC Chair. A proxy vote does not count toward the establishment of a quorum. The NCSWIC will operate by consensus when possible. When it is necessary to cast a formal roll-call vote, a simple majority of the members present after the establishment of a quorum shall prevail. When necessary, voting may be conducted via email.

Attendance
The time commitment will vary monthly, but NCSWIC EC members, both primary and alternate, are expected to participate in bi-monthly NCSWIC EC conference calls, NCSWIC EC in-person meetings, and semiannual SWIC meetings. CISA organizes and facilitates each of these meetings. Members' attendance at the bi-monthly or semiannual meetings will be reviewed annually. Should a NCSWIC EC member have three consecutive absences from the bimonthly or semiannual meetings, their participation on the NCSWIC EC will be re-evaluated. In such an event, CISA shall:

- Inform the EC of the situation
- Alert the RIC the designated Primary or Alternate Representative has not attended three consecutive meetings, and facilitate a special election, if requested

NCSWIC Organizational Structure

In 2014, the NCSWIC reorganized its structure to better facilitate the way work products are developed.
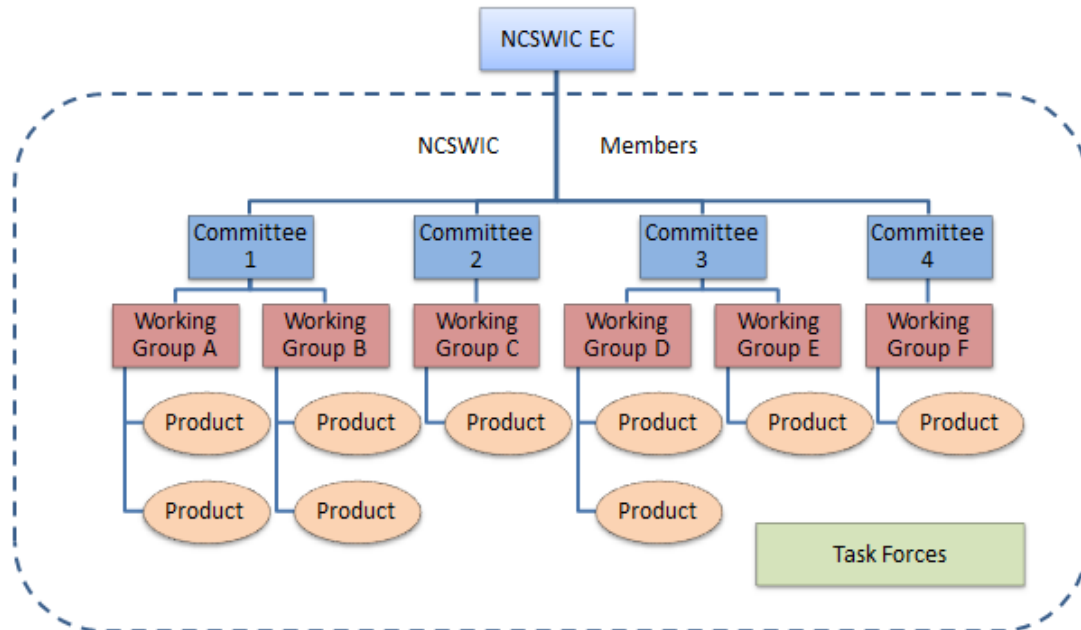
The NCSWIC structure consists of the following components:

- *NCSWIC EC:* The NCSWIC EC is the leadership group and governing body of the NCSWIC.
- *General NCSWIC Body:* The NCSWIC is comprised of SWICs and their alternate from the 56 states and territories
- *Committee*: Committees are long-term, standing groups with a sustained focus on particular committee topics, such as governance or the sustainment of emergency communications funding. Each committee must have the participation of at least one EC member. Committee leadership shall consist of a Chair and Vice Chair. Committee Chair and Vice Chair positions can be filled by an EC member or a designee sponsored by an EC member. All designees require approval from the NCSWIC Chair and Vice Chair.
- *Working Group:* Committee members organize working groups as subsets of that committee in an effort to lead and execute particular projects or activities requiring subject matter expertise and significant stakeholder input over an extended period. Membership on the working groups is open to participants outside of the NCSWIC membership, with subject matter experts encouraged to participate.
- *Task Force:* Task forces are ad hoc and established at the direction of the CISA, the EC, or the NCSWIC Chair, and may include NCSWIC members from multiple committees charged with creating a defined product over a short period.

CISA's Relationship to the NCSWIC and RICs

Subject to the availability of funding, CISA engages with the SWICs on a daily basis through SCIP implementation workshops, the CISA ECD Regional Coordinators, the facilitation of various committees, and development and dissemination of SWIC-focused information, tools, templates, and assistance on issues related to grants and technical assistance. For a complete list of CISA responsibilities, see Appendix A.

Additional Travel Policies

NCSWIC and EC Observers: Additional participants may be asked to attend NCSWIC or NCSWIC EC meetings in an observer role. These individuals do not participate as voting members, and are invited by CISA or the NCSWIC Chair based on current, important, and timely issues as appropriate.

- *Costs:* State, local, tribal, and territorial stakeholders and associations: CISA will fund the support and travel of these representatives, subject to the availability of funding

This governance charter may be reviewed and edited as needed upon consensus of CISA, the NCSWIC Governance Committee, and the NCSWIC EC.

APPENDIX A: NCSWIC Roles and Responsibilities

Group	Roles and Responsibilities
NCSWIC EC	Members • Provide strategic leadership and guidance to SWICs on emerging interoperability issues and guidance on best practices for enhancing interoperable communications • Communicate trends and guidance to NCSWIC members, relevant constituencies, public safety responders and policymakers • Educate NCSWIC members, relevant constituencies, public safety responders and policymakers on interoperable communication issues • When a vote is required, EC members must communicate the product or issue to their region in order to gain consensus prior to casting a vote during an EC meeting • Participate in in-person meetings, bi-monthly teleconferences, and on at least one committee each year to provide more in-depth input into NCSWIC activities • Build relationships with relevant constituencies, public safety responders and policymakers on interoperable communication issues • Provide direction and guidance to the RICs • Identify appropriate EC members or alternates to represent the NCSWIC on various external organizations (i.e. SAFECOM, NPTSC, PSAC, etc.), as needed Chair • Preside over EC meetings • Oversee the coordination of the EC meetings, including the setting, time, and location of such meetings in coordination with CISA • Work with CISA to create and distribute agendas, relevant read-ahead materials, and reports for all EC meetings and teleconferences • Assist CISA with the coordination of the semiannual NCSWIC meetings Vice Chair • Take on the responsibilities of the Chair when not present or available and support the Chair in the performance of all of their duties
NCSWIC RIC	**Members** • Provide general guidance and recommendations on interoperable communications to the NCSWIC EC • Communicate trends and guidance to relevant constituencies, public safety responders and policymakers • Build relationships with relevant constituencies, public safety responders and policymakers on interoperable communication issues • Participate in bi-annual in-person meetings and on at least one committee each year to provide more in-depth input into NCSWIC activities • Determine the appointees to the EC

Group	Roles and Responsibilities
NCSWIC RIC (cont.)	**Primary Representative** • Preside over RIC meetings, as needed • Oversee the coordination of the RIC meetings, including the setting, time, and location of such meetings in conjunction with the Regional Coordinator • Work with Regional Coordinator to create and distribute agendas, and relevant read-ahead materials for all RIC meetings and teleconferences • Serve as the official spokesperson of the RIC to CISA • Encourage members from the states and territories to attend the RIC meetings **Alternative Representative** • Attend all EC conference calls and in-person meetings • Take on the responsibilities of the Primary Representative when he or she is not present or available and shall support the Primary Representative in the performance of all of their duties.
CISA (Subject to availability of funding)	**With NCSWIC:** • Work with the NCSWIC EC on meeting design for semiannual SWIC meetings • Work with the NCSWIC EC Chair to develop EC meeting schedules and agendas for the semiannual SWIC meeting and bimonthly conference calls • Provide administrative support and meeting design for the semiannual SWIC meetings, bimonthly conference calls, and committee calls, to include setting up a conference bridge, knowledge capture, and meeting report development • Coordinate programs within DHS and with other federal agencies as appropriate regarding public safety communications and communications interoperability • Notify NCSWIC members of interoperability issues put forth to the United States Congress • Leverage the NCSWIC members' expertise to help formulate policies or guidance documents related to the core elements of interoperability **With RICs** • Organize and facilitate the quarterly RIC meetings. Two meetings will take place at the semiannual SWIC meetings, and two will take place via conference call. • Fund the support and travel of quarterly RIC meetings for at least the SWIC or one alternate as designated by the SWIC from each state or territory