

Best Practices for Governance Structure Membership Analysis

Ensuring Greater Inclusivity in Emergency Communications Governance Structures

ENHANCING GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

Robust and inclusive governance structures are key to effective interoperable emergency communications. Effective governance includes multi-disciplinary federal, state, tribal, regional, jurisdictional, and local entities working together to promote interoperability efforts that are supported by policies, processes, and agreements developed to support all partnering communities. The [SAFECOM Nationwide Survey](#), a public safety data collection effort conducted from January through March 2018, pointed out broadening governance body membership as a key governance challenge. Emergency communications governance is significantly more successful when decisions are made by both traditional and non-traditional emergency communications stakeholders. However, non-traditional stakeholders are often underrepresented or missing within governance structures. This document provides best practices to consider when assessing governance structure membership to better align with the evolving emergency communications ecosystem.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

To better inform agencies on how to establish, assess, and update governance structures that support interoperable emergency communications, SAFECOM, in collaboration with the National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (NCSWIC), developed the [2018 Emergency Communications Governance Guide for State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Officials](#). Among the key attributes for effective governance structures, the guide outlines the following activities to gather an active, balanced, and accountable membership:

- Determine membership size and representation to maintain inclusiveness while permitting quorum to be met regularly
- Align needs and priorities across various members who have a role in, or are impacted by, communications-related initiatives
- Document roles, responsibilities, and membership requirements and routinely assess whether stated roles, responsibilities, and membership requirements are met
- Determine how member attrition will be managed
- Manage internal, jurisdictional, and regional differences (e.g., working cooperatively toward common, universally beneficial goals)
- Ensure member participation is sanctioned and supported by the agency or entity they represent
- Formalize governance bodies through state law or, at a minimum, a Governor’s Executive Order for maximum effectiveness

INCLUSION OF TRADITIONAL AND NON-TRADITIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

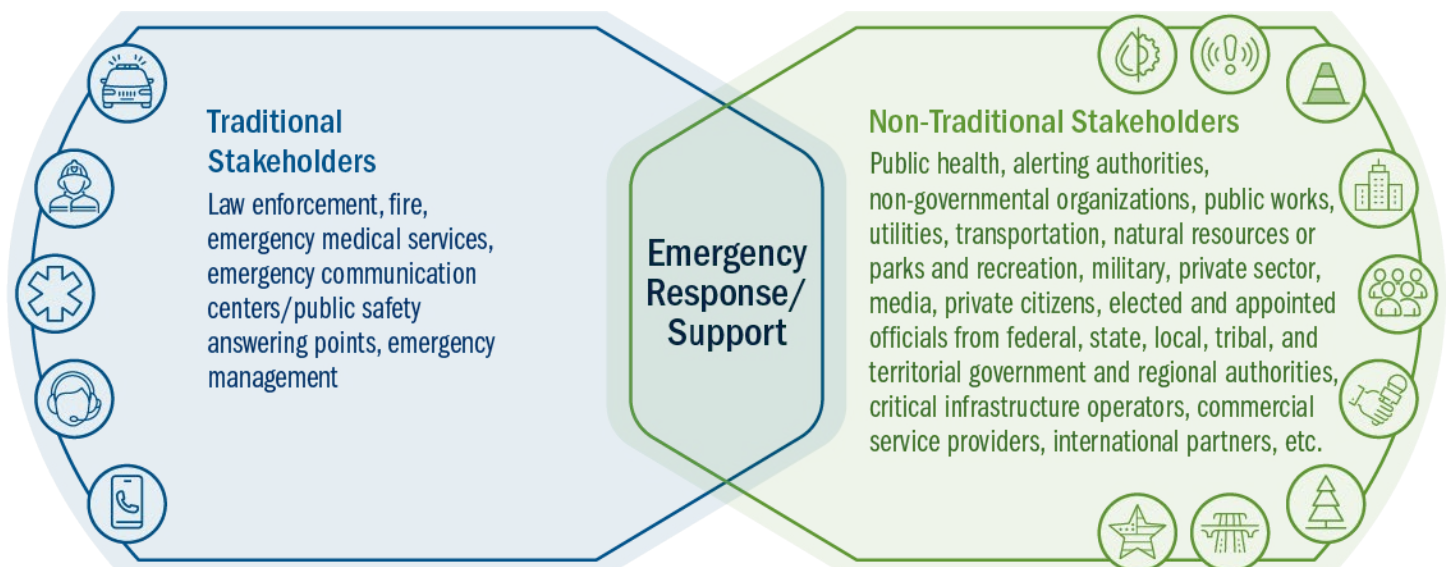


Figure 1: Traditional and Non-Traditional Stakeholders in Governance Structures

Expanding governance body membership beyond the traditional emergency response of law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services, and emergency communication centers further enhances governance structures that support interoperable emergency communications (*Figure 1*). Soliciting input from a variety of whole community members, including tribal, local, non-profit, and private-sector representatives, allows decision makers to tailor governance structures to their jurisdiction's specific needs. A variety of partners enables governance bodies to identify the capabilities and capability gaps unique to each ecosystem.

CONDUCTING MEMBERSHIP ANALYSIS

Inclusion of both traditional and non-traditional stakeholders in governance structures is a step in the right direction. However, to stay abreast of the ever-evolving ecosystem and ensure emergency communications efforts address the needs of all stakeholders, it is paramount for governance structures to regularly analyze and fill gaps in their membership. Some ways to achieve this include:

- Establish a group focused on assessing and addressing governance body membership composition
- Determine membership characteristics needed to adequately represent the emergency communications ecosystem (e.g., disciplines, levels of government, emergency communications experience, geographic locations)
- Assess current membership to determine gaps in the required membership characteristics
- Develop process for including missing or underrepresented stakeholders in the governance structure (e.g., engaging with the statewide interoperability coordinator, state offices for tribal affairs, or regional tribal organizations)
- Sustain membership through flexible stakeholder participation options such as virtual engagement (e.g., webinar, video teleconference, electronic voting)
- Conduct periodic assessments to gauge whether stakeholder views are adequately expressed and considered within the governance structure, and ensure remedial actions are transparent

KEY GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE TAKEAWAYS

Inclusive governance structures that are active, transparent, and multi-disciplinary improve emergency communications planning, coordination, and decision-making. Collaboration and participation from necessary emergency response entities are essential for any jurisdiction to improve and ensure future interoperable communications. Efforts of the emergency communications community are no longer constrained within the limits of traditional emergency response stakeholders. To adequately identify emergency communications capabilities and capability gaps, both traditional and non-traditional stakeholders need to be involved. Governance structures need to remain adaptive to the ever-evolving ecosystem.

RESOURCES FOR ENSURING GREATER INCLUSIVITY IN GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

For more information on building effective governance structures:

- [2018 Emergency Communications Governance Guide for State, Local, Tribal and Territorial Officials](#)
- [SAFECOM Nationwide Survey](#)
- [National Emergency Communications Plan](#)
- [Emergency Communications by the Numbers – Inclusive Governance](#)

Additional governance resources are available on the [SAFECOM](#) and [NCSWIC](#) websites. For more information on SAFECOM, contact us at SAFECOMGovernance@cisa.dhs.gov.