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## National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators Governance Charter

### **Background**

Established in July 2010, the National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (NCSWIC) assists State and territory interoperability coordinators with promoting the critical importance of interoperable communications and the sharing of best practices to ensure the highest level of interoperable communications across the nation. NCSWIC members are composed of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (SWICs) from the 56 States and territories. In this key role, SWICs leverage their relationship with partners involved in responding to disasters at all levels of government to advance long-term emergency communications initiatives. NCSWIC members strive to enhance the response capabilities of public safety responders by coordinating and collaborating with Federal, State, local, Tribal and non-governmental public safety responder agencies. As such, the SWIC contributes to the development and maintenance of:

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

The Department of Homeland Security's Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) is the lead coordination 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, OEC, and other Federal partners attend semiannual in-person meetings where they have the rare opportunity to convene in one location to establish and nurture partnerships, share best practices and lessons learned, and ultimately make considerable strides in identifying and addressing interoperability gaps across the country.

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**

By developing professional partnerships and collaborating with public safety responders and policy makers, the NCSWIC promotes awareness of the critical importance of public safety communications. NCSWIC enhances public safety by assisting States and territories through the SWIC with implementing the core elements of operable communications and ensuring interoperable communications.



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## Goals

The goals of the NCSWIC are to:

1. Improve public safety communications interoperability throughout the nation
2. Assist the SWIC community with their outreach, Statewide Communication Interoperability Plans (SCIP) program management, grants coordination, and policy development responsibilities
3. Work with emergency response leaders across all levels of government to implement the SCIPs
4. Implement the goals and objectives outlined in the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP)

## Objectives

NCSWIC pursues the following objectives to achieve its goals:

1. Attend regularly scheduled meetings to promote the exchange of SWIC knowledge and resources
2. Develop resources and tools to be used by the NCSWIC community and beyond to further interoperability efforts
3. Establish and maintain existing ad hoc working groups to address specific issues
4. Identify and execute short- and mid-range strategic initiatives detailed within the NCSWIC Strategic Plan and in alignment with the NECP

## NCSWIC Strategic Plan

The NCSWIC Strategic Plan is a stakeholder-driven, multi-jurisdictional, and multi-disciplinary strategic plan created to enhance interoperable and emergency communications. The plan is a critical, mid-range (three years) tool that aims to help NCSWIC and its partners prioritize resources, strengthen governance, identify future investments, and address interoperability gaps. The NCSWIC EC, in coordination with DHS OEC, 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 region and State or territory to create governance structures that promote and enhance interoperable communications. This approach ensures multi-jurisdictional and cross-disciplinary coordination occurs amongst public safety responders and policymakers for the purpose of identifying and implementing solutions that enhance interoperability.

In support of this approach, NCSWIC has developed a governance structure that compliments the input provided by public safety responders and policymakers.

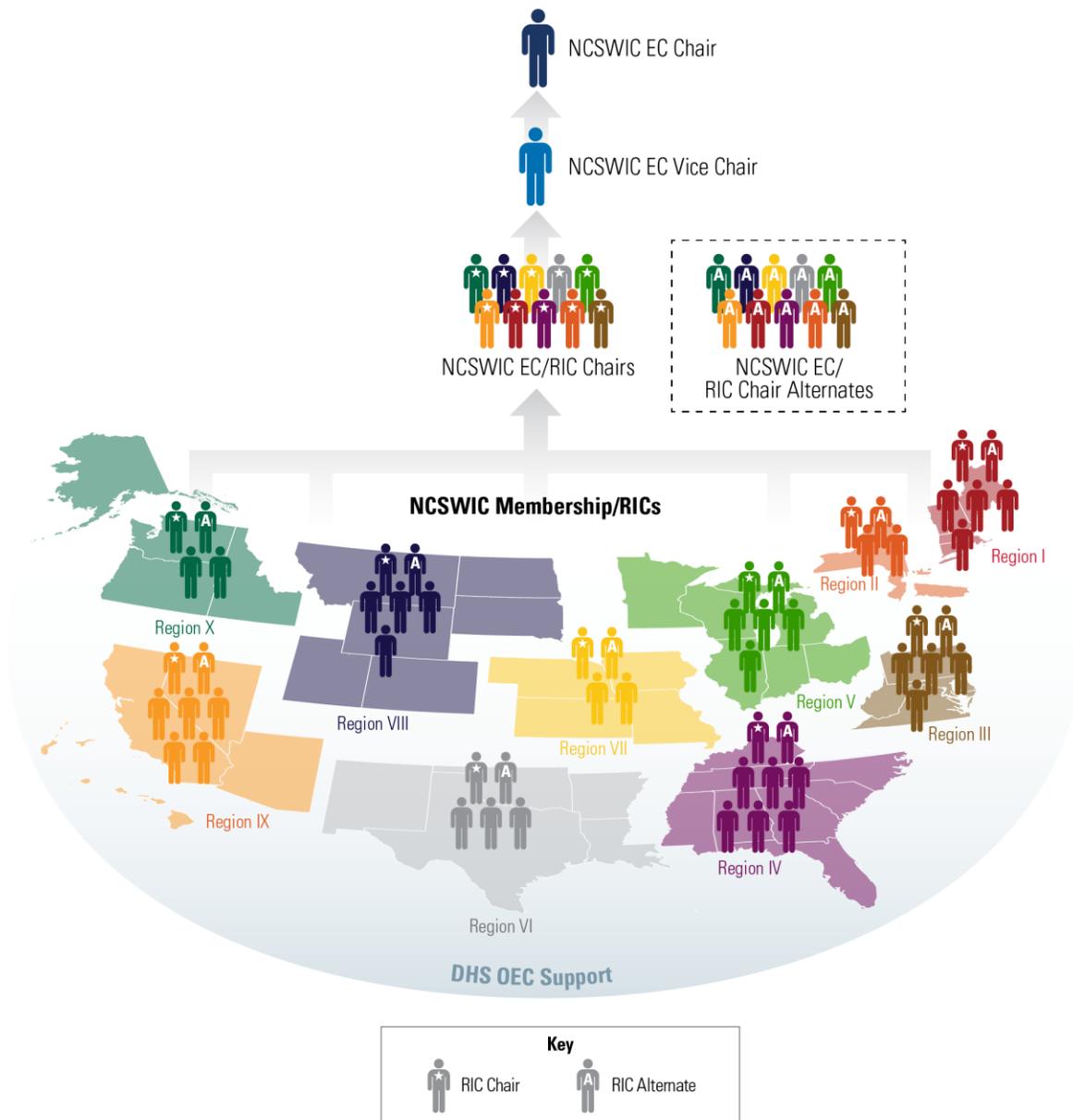
NCSWIC members develop or enhance State and territory governance structures to provide strategic guidance from first responders that can be shared at interstate Regional Interoperability Council (RIC) meetings and at the NCSWIC Executive Committee (EC) meetings.



### Membership

The NCSWIC is comprised of SWICs and their alternate from the 56 States and territories. There are two main groups that make up the NCSWIC: 1) EC members (also referred to as RIC Chairs) and 2) general NCSWIC members. Both groups are members of their respective RIC.

### NCSWIC Governance Model





### ***RICs***

The interstate RICs were developed to promote communication and collaboration among SWICs for the purpose of establishing interoperable communications solutions with neighboring states, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regions, and countries. The RICs shall also be the venue to ensure the actions and guidance sought by the EC are communicated, vetted, and implemented.

### ***Interstate RIC Membership***

Each FEMA region has its own interstate RIC. Membership is comprised of the SWIC (or acting SWIC representative) from each State or territory in the FEMA region.

<b>FEMA</b>	<b>States and Territories Represented</b>
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

SWICs will serve on the RICs as long as they hold the SWIC position for a given State or territory. The time commitment will vary monthly, but RIC members (aka SWICs) are expected to participate in the OEC semiannual NCSWIC meetings, and two additional meetings in person or via conference call each year. There will be time dedicated 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.

### ***RIC Leadership***

Each RIC has one elected RIC Chair member. The RIC Chairs will select their alternates by soliciting interest among the SWICs in the regions and appointing a SWIC to serve as the RIC Chair alternate. Should the RIC Chair step down before his or her term ends, the RIC Chair alternate will serve as the RIC Chair for the duration of the term. The NCSWIC Chair will 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 RIC related issues, the SWIC shall have one vote, with a simple majority of the members present prevailing. Each region's designated alternate may vote only in the absence of the primary RIC 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



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written authorization is provided in advance to the RIC Chair. When necessary, voting may be conducted via email.

#### *RIC Chair/EC Member Elections*

RIC Chair/EC member elections will occur every two years. Prior to the second Monday in September, RIC members need to submit their interest in serving as their region's RIC Chair to their RIC, their OEC Coordinator, and the OEC NCSWIC Program Manager. This submission should be in the form of a brief statement of interest. On the second Monday in September, the OEC NCSWIC Program Manager or the OEC 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. Each RIC member will email their vote to the OEC Coordinator. The OEC Coordinator will then tally all votes and deliver the election results to the OEC NCSWIC Program Manager and the current NCSWIC Chair and Vice Chair. If the vote is conducted in person, the OEC Coordinator will collect paper votes and email the voting results to the NCSWIC Chair, the NCSWIC Vice Chair, and the OEC 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.

On the third Monday in September, OEC will communicate the voting results to the NCSWIC. Elected RIC Chairs will assume their positions as of October 1. 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 third Monday in September. A final vote will take place the last week in September via the voting process described above. Should there be another tie after this second vote, a coin toss will determine the winner. OEC will communicate the voting results of the tie-breaker to the NCSWIC prior to the last business day in September.

#### *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 FEMA regions will be elected on the even-numbered years, and RIC Chairs from the odd-numbered FEMA regions will be elected on the odd-numbered years. New RIC Chairs terms always begin on October 1.

#### **NCSWIC EC**

The NCSWIC EC is the leadership group and governing body of the NCSWIC and is comprised of the RIC Chairs from each of the ten FEMA regions. OEC will ensure the group is constituted in accordance with governmental regulations and practices.

#### *EC Leadership Elections*

The NCSWIC EC elects the NCSWIC Chair and Vice Chair biennially from the elected EC Members at the last in-person meeting of the year. 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 NCSWIC Chair or Vice Chair to all NCSWIC EC members and the OEC NCSWIC Program Manager via email. During the last in-person meeting of the year, the OEC NCSWIC Program Manager will announce the list of candidates and provide instructions on voting to the NCSWIC EC members. OEC will communicate the results to the NCSWIC EC during the in-person meeting, and the newly-elected/reelected NCSWIC Chair and Vice Chair will assume their positions immediately. There is no limit to the number of terms the Chair or Vice Chair can serve.



### *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 EC member shall have one vote. Each of the FEMA region’s designated alternate may vote only in the absence of the primary EC member. 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 OEC 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.

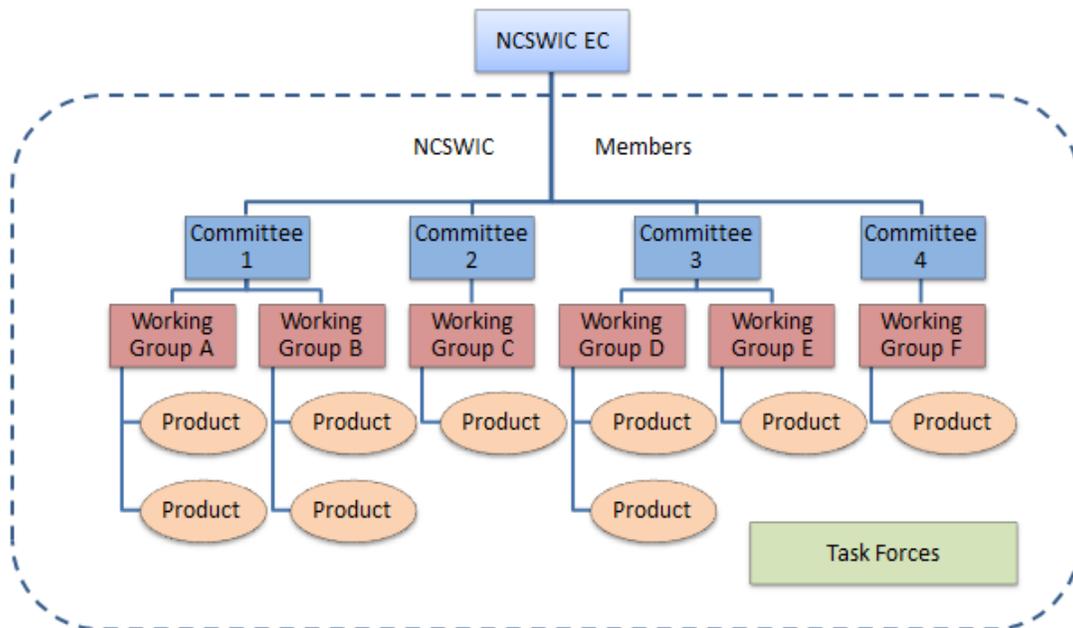
### *Attendance*

The time commitment will vary monthly, but NCSWIC EC members are expected to participate in bi-monthly NCSWIC EC conference calls, quarterly NCSWIC EC in-person meetings, and semiannual SWIC meetings. OEC organizes and facilitates each of these meetings. Members’ attendance at the bi-monthly or semiannual meetings will be reviewed annually. Should a regional member have two absences without prior notification from the bi-monthly or semiannual meetings in one year, their participation on the NCSWIC EC will be re-evaluated. In such an event, OEC shall:

- Inform the EC of the situation
- Alert the RIC that the designated representative (or alternate) has not attended meetings

### *NCSWIC Organizational Structure*

In 2014, the NCSWIC reorganized its structure to better facilitate the way work products are developed.





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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. EC members act as Chairs of the committees.
- *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.
- *Task Force*: Task forces are ad hoc and established at the direction of the DHS OEC, the EC, or the NCSWIC Chair, and may include NCSWIC members from multiple committees charged with creating a defined product over a short period.

***OEC's Relationship to the NCSWIC and RICs***

Subject to the availability of funding, OEC engages with the SWICs on a daily basis through SCIP implementation workshops, the OEC Regional Coordination Program, 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 OEC responsibilities, see Appendix A.

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



APPENDIX A: NCSWIC Roles and Responsibilities

Group	Roles and Responsibilities	
<b>NCSWIC EC*</b>	<b>Members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide strategic leadership and guidance to SWICs on emerging interoperability issues and guidance on best practices for enhancing interoperable communications.</li> <li>• Communicate trends and guidance to NCSWIC members, relevant constituencies, public safety responders and policymakers.</li> <li>• Educate NCSWIC members, relevant constituencies, public safety responders and policymakers on interoperable communication issues.</li> <li>• Participate in quarterly meetings, bi-monthly teleconferences, and on at least one committee each year to provide more in-depth input into NCSWIC activities</li> <li>• Build relationships with relevant constituencies, public safety responders and policymakers on interoperable communication issues.</li> <li>• Provide direction and guidance to the RICs.</li> <li>• Identify appropriate stakeholders to sit on boards and participate in meetings representing the NCSWIC, as needed.</li> </ul>
	<b>Chair</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preside over EC meetings</li> <li>• Oversee the coordination of the EC meetings, including the setting, time, and location of such meetings in coordination with OEC</li> <li>• Work with OEC to create and distribute agendas, relevant read-ahead materials, and reports for all EC meetings and teleconferences</li> <li>• Assist OEC with the coordination of the semiannual NCSWIC meetings</li> <li>• Serve as the representative of the EC on the SAFECOM EC and other external organizations as needed</li> </ul>
	<b>Vice Chair</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take on the responsibilities of the Chair when he or she is not present or available and shall support the Chair in the performance of all of their duties.</li> <li>• Serve as the representative of the EC on the SAFECOM EC and other external organizations as needed</li> </ul>
<b>NCSWIC RIC*</b>	<b>Members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide general guidance and recommendations on interoperable communications to the NCSWIC EC</li> <li>• Communicate trends and guidance to relevant constituencies, public safety responders and policymakers</li> <li>• Build relationships with relevant constituencies, public safety responders and policymakers on interoperable communication issues</li> <li>• Participate in bi-annual in-person meetings and on at least one committee each year to provide more in-depth input into NCSWIC activities</li> <li>• Determine the appointee to the EC</li> </ul>
	<b>Chair</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preside over RIC meetings</li> <li>• Oversee the coordination of the RIC meetings, including the setting, time, and location of such meetings in conjunction with the OEC Coordinator</li> <li>• Work with OEC Coordinator to create and distribute agendas, and relevant read-ahead materials for all RIC meetings and teleconferences</li> <li>• Serve as the official spokesperson of the RIC</li> <li>• Encourage members from the states and territories to attend the RIC meetings</li> </ul>
	<b>Alternate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take on the responsibilities of the Chair when he or she is not present or available and shall support the Chair in the performance of all of their duties.</li> </ul>



Group	Roles and Responsibilities
<p><b>OEC</b></p> <p>(Subject to availability of funding)</p>	<p><b>With NCSWIC:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the NCSWIC EC on meeting design for semiannual SWIC meetings</li> <li>• Work with the NCSWIC EC Chair to develop EC meeting schedules and agendas for the semiannual SWIC meeting and bimonthly conference calls</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Coordinate programs within DHS and with other federal agencies as appropriate regarding public safety communications and communications interoperability</li> <li>• 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</li> </ul> <p><b>With RICs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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</li> </ul>