



Supporting and Leveraging Your Statewide Interoperability Coordinator

WHAT IS A SWIC?

To do their jobs effectively, public safety responders depend on sophisticated communications systems to relay mission-critical information in real time. Today's wireless communications systems must support an ever expanding set of missions, such as responses to domestic terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, requiring coordinated participation from agencies at all levels of government. Interoperability, or the ability for emergency responders to communicate among jurisdictions, disciplines, and levels of government, using a variety of frequency bands as needed and as authorized, is crucial to responders. The Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) assists in facilitating communications among responders during emergencies and is an important asset when responding to planned and unplanned events.



SWIC'S STATE LEVEL ROLE

The SWIC's primary function is to plan and implement the statewide interoperability program, guided by initiatives outlined in the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP) and Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP). Specifically, SWIC roles and responsibilities include:

- Collaborate with state, local, tribal, territorial, and federal governments and emergency response groups (including those designated as Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Urban Area Security Initiative [UASI]), in long-term strategic planning
- Provide assistance to stakeholders in the development of projects, plans, policies, standards, priorities, and guidelines for interoperable communications
- Communicate regularly with all interoperability stakeholders and partners to ensure transparency and information sharing
- Coordinate governing body activities to maximize integration and collaboration across the emergency communications landscape.
- Serve as the point of contact for the Federal Government and industry on issues concerning statewide interoperable communications
- Seek guidance, input, and recommendations from state, local, tribal, territorial, and federal agencies on the SCIP
- Drive the development, implementation, and regular update of the SCIP
- Coordinate interstate, intrastate, and regional public safety communications interoperability

SWIC'S STATE LEVEL ROLE: SUPPORTING GOVERNANCE

SWICs play an integral role in establishing and maintaining statewide governance systems and bringing together stakeholders from the broad spectrum of public safety communications. As one small part of a complex governance matrix, the SWIC serves as a neutral and unbiased coordinator for interoperability issues within the state, including supporting the establishment and maintenance of a statewide governing body. It is important for states with diverse communications systems and geography to include the SWIC on all communications-related governance bodies to help identify opportunities and bridge gaps between efforts. While the SWIC does not need to serve as a voting member on the governing body, it is

important for the SWIC to be granted adequate authority and autonomy. Elevating the SWIC position as close to the Governor (or similar tribal or territorial executive) as possible will serve to strengthen the statewide interoperability program through increased visibility and access to high level decision makers within state government. This will also build relationships by bringing together stakeholders across the broad spectrum of public safety communications. Ultimately, the SWIC builds trust across state, local, tribal, territorial, and federal stakeholders to enhance program efficiency and effectiveness.

SWIC'S NATIONAL LEVEL ROLE

SWICs serve as members of the National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (NCSWIC), a national governance body established to assist interoperability coordinators with promoting the critical importance of interoperable communications and best practices within their states and nationally. DHS Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) facilitates various in-person NCSWIC meetings to build partnerships, discuss pressing issues impacting emergency communications interoperability, and share best practices and lessons learned. Additionally, NCSWIC meetings are an opportunity for the Regional Interoperability Councils (RIC), a subcomponent of the NCSWIC, to discuss and address regional interoperability challenges.

SWICs help to ensure federal funding for emergency communications projects are coordinated, align to the SCIP, and are compatible with surrounding systems. SWICs also share success stories that are instrumental in developing products and strategies to advocate and secure funding for interoperability solutions within their respective states and at the federal level. As noted in the DHS Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP), “recipients investing in emergency communications must describe how activities align to their SCIP...and must coordinate with their SWIC and/or statewide governing body when developing an emergency communications investment prior to submission to ensure the project supports the statewide strategy to improve emergency communications and is compatible and interoperable with surrounding systems.”¹ This coordinated effort enhances response capabilities by developing collaborative interoperable communications strategies at all levels of government.

Rapidly evolving technologies and rising expectations in emergency communications are changing the emergency communications landscape and expanding the traditional roles and responsibilities of the SWIC. The federal initiative to develop and deploy the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN) has further expanded the scope of emergency communications, and the role of the SWIC. The SWIC may act as the state single point of contact (SPOC) with the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet), or coordinate with the SPOC on issues related to the implementation of the NPSBN. More than ever, strong leadership and governance structures are needed to facilitate information-sharing among potential users, promote asset-sharing between entities, and ensure coordination of ongoing projects to ensure they complement, and do not contradict, the deployment of the NPSBN.

SUPPORTING A FULL-TIME POSITION IN YOUR STATE

The SWIC position is best able to serve the state when there is a stable legislative mandate providing funding, authorities, and governance to the SWIC to oversee communications interoperability projects. Many States and territories employed a full-time SWIC or equivalent position between 2008 and 2010; however, those numbers have declined significantly over the last four years. A single point of contact within the state promotes efficiency and better program management of essential statewide, regional, and local systems. Despite the SWICs' many accomplishments, ample work remains to achieve the NCSWIC vision and mission. This work is part of a continuous cycle; states and territories are required to adapt to evolving technologies, operational tactics, and changes to the emergency communications landscape. SWICs will remain instrumental in overcoming challenges related to operability, interoperability, aging equipment and systems, emerging technologies, and training, as well as implementing a national vision of emergency communications interoperability.

ACRONYMS

DHS: Department of Homeland Security	OEC: Office of Emergency Communications
FirstNet: First Responder Network Authority	RIC: Regional Interoperability Council
NCSWIC: National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators	SCIP: Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan
NECP: National Emergency Communications Plan	SPOC: Single Point of Contact
NPSBN: Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network	SWIC: Statewide Interoperability Coordinator
	UASI: Urban Area Security Initiative

¹ The [Fiscal Year 2016 DHS HSGP Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) provides specific language requiring all recipients coordinate with their SWIC and ensure projects support the SCIP.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Please visit the NCSWIC website at www.dhs.gov/SAFE/COM/NCSWIC or email NCSWICGovernance@hq.dhs.gov.



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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- *Why do I need a SWIC in my State?*
 - A SWIC provides strategic coordination and direction for emergency response organizations in his/her state, thus systematically achieving a common operating picture and preventing more costly and non-interoperable communications solutions.
 - A SWIC serves as the key person to whom inquiries about public safety communications interests and initiatives can be directed, a role especially helpful to elected officials and executive leaders in state, local, tribal, territorial, and federal governments.
 - A SWIC helps coordinate interests and input to efforts that support improved interagency communications across public safety disciplines, and across all levels of government, in his/her state.
 - A SWIC serves as a technical and policy advisor to elected officials and executive leaders at the state, local, tribal, and territorial level and on federal, interstate, intrastate, and regional emergency communications projects.
 - A SWIC maintains awareness of national-level news, programs, and initiatives that can support or influence emergency communications projects and systems, which helps to identify funding opportunities, avoid conflicts with broader policy, and promotes coordination of efforts.

- *How does the SWIC impact interoperability and coordination?*
 - A SWIC acts as the central coordination point for the state. The primary purpose of this position is to preserve and strengthen interoperable emergency communications capabilities throughout the state. The SWIC works with all emergency response leaders within state agencies, public jurisdictions, and private entities to implement and maintain the state's strategic vision for interoperability.
 - A SWIC is able to promote greater awareness of issues and efforts, and help key leaders and officials understand trends, learn about emerging technologies, and understand the impact of policy positions in promoting and achieving effective interoperable emergency communications.

- *What types of funding streams and methods are available to fund the SWIC position?*
 - State funding for a consultant to perform the SWIC functions.
 - State General Funds: securing state funding for the position will help to stabilize the position as a permanent member of the state workforces, included as state personnel within the state budget.
 - Federal Grants: federal grants provide a temporary method of funding a SWIC or SWIC staff. Some grants require the states to match up to 50 percent of the funding. Grantees should be aware that grants expire and provisions will need to be made to secure the position through other means.
 - Project Funding: Some SWICs were also project managers for emergency communications grant programs. As part of their management of emergency projects, some of the activities of the SWIC may be funded through project costs.
 - Shared Funding and Collateral Duties: in some states, persons in related positions (e.g., frequency coordinator, emergency manager) cover the SWIC position.