Regional Intrastate Governance Guide for Interoperable Emergency Communications Efforts

Homeland
Security

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Director's Introduction

Dear Colleague:

Within the State, it is critical to organize and support interoperable emergency communications efforts at the Federal, State, regional, local, and tribal levels. Regional governance organizations are an essential part of any statewide governance structure. While States are setting up and strengthening their statewide governance organizations, it is important for stakeholders to focus on building strong vibrant regional governance organizations that can then feed into the statewide governance structures. Additionally, these organizations can provide a new means for establishing procedures, communicating, and sharing resources within a region. These regional governance structures provide a way to unite stakeholder voices and ensure that local concerns are heard and addressed at the State level.

Establishing regional governance structures is also vital to the achievement of the vision, objectives, and milestones outlined in a State's strategic document, known as its Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP). The SCIP relies on multi-discipline and multi-jurisdictional coordination. Today all 56 States and territories have SCIPs. These SCIPS support the vision, goals, objectives, and priority initiatives outlined in the Nation's strategic plan for interoperable communications, the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP). A coordinated stakeholder-driven approach to regional governance will ensure the comprehensive implementation of communications interoperability strategies outlined within the NECP and each State's SCIP as well as those strategies outlined within Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), regional, and local planning documents.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) developed, with stakeholder input, the *Regional Intrastate Governance Guide for Interoperable Emergency Communications Efforts* to provide recommendations for implementing a robust, stakeholder-driven, governance system focusing on emergency communications interoperability.

The Guide is a starting point from which your organization can begin to plan and implement regional governance structures. Additionally, the Guide provides information to help you educate agency and jurisdictional leadership on the importance of regional governance, as well as enlist potential members in State, regional, and local governance associations.

I trust that you will find this guide helpful and encourage you to visit http://www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/ to learn about other educational resources offered by OEC.

Sincerely,

Chris Essid
Director, Office of Emergency Communications

Introduction

In 2008, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) released *Establishing Governance to Achieve Statewide Communications Interoperability: A Guide for Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP) Implementation.*[1] The Guide provides recommendations for implementing a robust, stakeholder-driven, statewide governance system focusing on interoperable emergency communications. Interoperable emergency communications refers to the ability of diverse emergency response organizations and systems to work together (interoperate).

Central to the vision outlined in the Statewide Governance Guide is the creation of a collaborative statewide governance system where a Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) serves as the binding entity for the statewide interoperable communications effort (see figure 1). A SWIC relies heavily upon the competence and motivation of State and local government officials with whom the SWIC coordinates but cannot directly control. Of course, all stakeholders face political, financial, and technical changes that often occur in the midst of planned implementation. The achievement of the vision, objectives, and milestones outlined in a State's strategic communications interoperability planning document, known as its SCIP, relies on multi-discipline and multi-jurisdictional coordination. The same holds true for the vision, goals, objectives, and priority initiatives outlined in the Nation's strategic plan for interoperable communications, the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP). A coordinated stakeholder-driven approach will ensure the comprehensive implementation of communications interoperability strategies outlined within the NECP and each State's SCIP as well as those strategies outlined within Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), regional, and local planning documents.

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[1] **Establishing Governance to Achieve Statewide Communications Interoperability**
DHS Office of Emergency Communications. December 2008
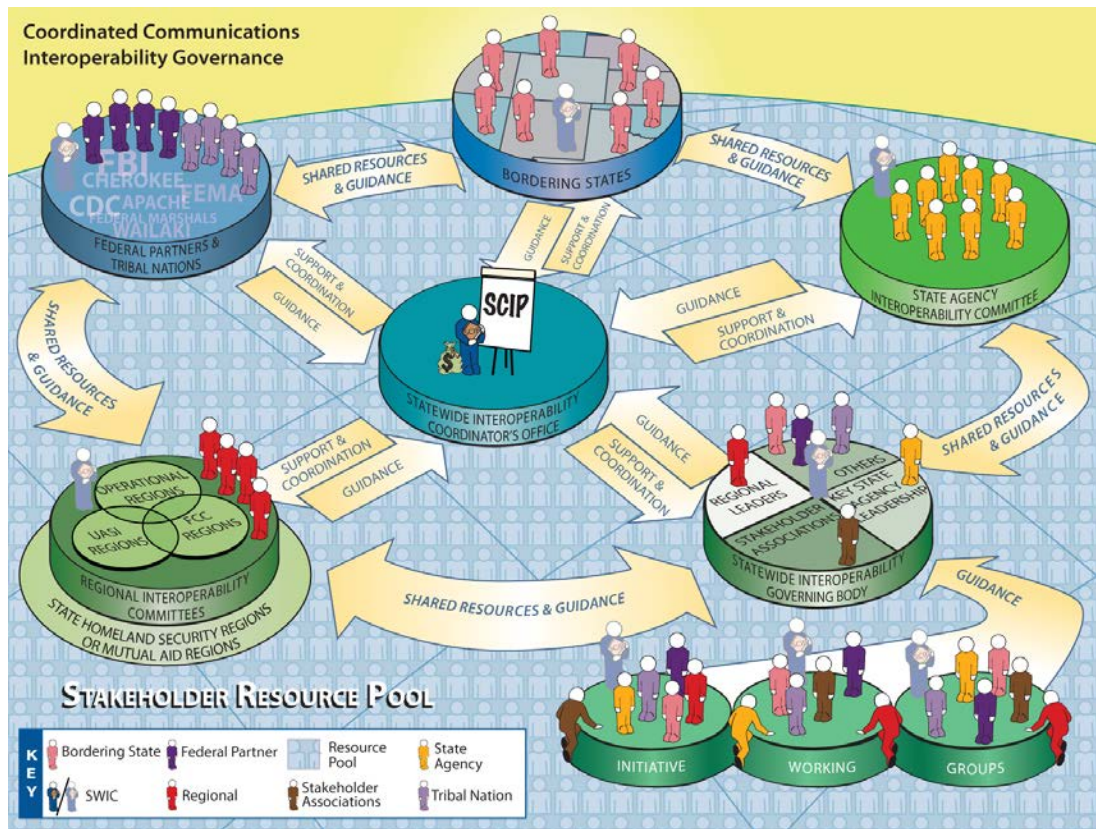
Figure 1: Statewide Communications Interoperability Governance System

The *Regional Intrastate Governance Guide for Interoperable Emergency Communications Efforts* offers recommendations for establishing regional intrastate governance. It identifies a baseline from which interoperable communications stakeholders from across the Nation can develop their own regional governance structures that align with their Statewide Interoperability Governing Body (SIGB) and SCIP as well as the NECP.

To effectively coordinate statewide governance and receive insights from all stakeholders, the SWIC needs to be able to drill down beyond the high-level association representatives serving on a State's SIGB. The SWIC must incorporate and respect the input of the entire Federal, State, county, city, town, and tribal stakeholder community. For this to happen successfully, the structure cannot be top-down or exclusive but instead must be collaborative and inclusive of all stakeholders. Regional Interoperability Committees (RICs) provide a framework for facilitating this coordination.

RICs are a critical component of the statewide governance structures. The establishment of RICs within each of the State's regions provides a method for tying together the disparate needs of geographic areas across the State. These needs can then be addressed by the RIC at the local level or communicated on up into the SIGB. In this way, RICs are integral to ensuring statewide governance addresses the needs of all stakeholders, especially local ones. This coordination is crucial to emergency response. After all, Federal and State interoperability cannot be truly achieved until interoperability exists at the local level.

OEC recognizes that all regions and localities are unique. As such, the suggestions outlined here should not be seen as definitive and regional governance efforts currently underway should not be abandoned if they do not perfectly align with the enclosed guidance. Instead, regions are encouraged to adapt and incorporate recommendations outlined in this guide within their own efforts.

A key ingredient of any successful regional governance structure is the regular engagement of interoperable communications stakeholders. The Regional Intrastate Governance Guide is no different. The development of this guide was aided by regional governance stakeholders who participated in interviews describing their professional experience. A stakeholder working group also reviewed and validated drafted guidance. (A complete list of the stakeholders who offered their assistance is provided in the front of the Guide.) OEC's interaction with the stakeholder community increases the Guide's relevancy to the public safety community.

This document is organized into four main chapters:

1. **The Business Case: How Regional Governance Strengthens Interoperable Emergency Communications:** This chapter identifies key regional governance benefits to communicate to potential stakeholders. A list of RIC roles and responsibilities is also provided.

2. **Defining Regions: Structuring and Linking the Intrastate Communications Interoperability Effort:** This chapter provides guidance for defining and determining regional governance boundaries and offers recommendations on how to link the RIC to existing local governance groups, regions within the RIC region, and State-designated Homeland Security and Mutual Aid Regions. This chapter explains that there is no "one size fits all" approach to designating intrastate regions and stakeholders are encouraged to identify the regional map that best meets their governance needs.

3. **Eight Steps to Creating a Regional Governance Structure:** This chapter lays out a step-by-step process for establishing a RIC.

4. **Achieving Communications Interoperability through Regional Governance:** Without a stakeholder defined strategy, the goal of regional interoperability is unachievable. This chapter focuses on effective regional planning and implementation. It explains a high-level process for leveraging the regional governance system and methodologies to identify and implement a region's strategic initiatives.

1. The Business Case: How Regional Governance Strengthens Interoperable Emergency Communications

Coordination and collaboration among interoperable communications stakeholders makes the success of any governance structure possible. The more diverse—both in terms of jurisdictions and disciplines—the stakeholder pool, the more a governance group's decisions are representative of its constituents. In the case of regional intrastate governance, this requires the active engagement of interoperable emergency communications stakeholders operating at the local level, within the same State, across jurisdictions and disciplines.

Communications demands special attention among the emergency response community because it is fundamental to all emergency response scenarios. Consider the response to an overturned tanker on a State highway versus the response to a hostage situation. Both scenarios require an emergency response, but each with an emphasis on different capabilities. A tanker scenario typically demands attention from a Hazmat response team, while the hostage situation usually relies much more heavily on law enforcement. Despite these differences, there is one constant for both scenarios: The need for effective communications.

> "Relationships are important for operational success. As a fire chief, when I request resources from a fellow responder whom I have never met, the expected response is, 'Who are you? Why do you need it? Who authorized this?' When the same request is sent to a colleague with whom I have a relationship, the response is different: 'How can I help? Where should I take it? How fast do you need it?'"
>
> – Charles Werner, Charlottesville Fire Department Chief and current SAFECOM Executive Council (EC) Vice Chair

Given the central role communications plays in day-to-day activities, all would benefit from emergency responders having a forum in which to voice their suggestions and opinions about interoperable communications. Regional intrastate governance bodies provide this forum, allowing representatives of law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS) disciplines to shape long-term planning and strategy. Incorporating stakeholder input in this way enhances capabilities in the Governance Lane of the SAFECOM Interoperability Continuum (see figure 2) and greatly enhances a region's ability to meet its goals and initiatives.

In order to recruit a diverse and wide-reaching regional emergency services stakeholder group to regional governance efforts, it is important to understand and clearly communicate why these stakeholders should participate. A sound business case will make the process of recruiting local agency representatives from disparate jurisdictions in a region—including law enforcement, fire, EMS, emergency management, public health, public transportation, and other response and public service workers—much more straightforward.

Recruitment efforts can also greatly benefit from State representatives, such as the SWIC, demonstrating genuine interest in regional governance efforts. For example, by attending RIC meetings, SWICs reaffirm their commitment to a statewide governance structure that engages emergency services stakeholders at both the State and local levels about interoperable communications. This travel also provides SWICs with an opportunity to personally meet their stakeholders. Given these benefits, States should allocate a portion of their grant funding to support SWIC travel as this assists regions in understanding, aligning, and adopting the statewide vision expressed in their SCIP.
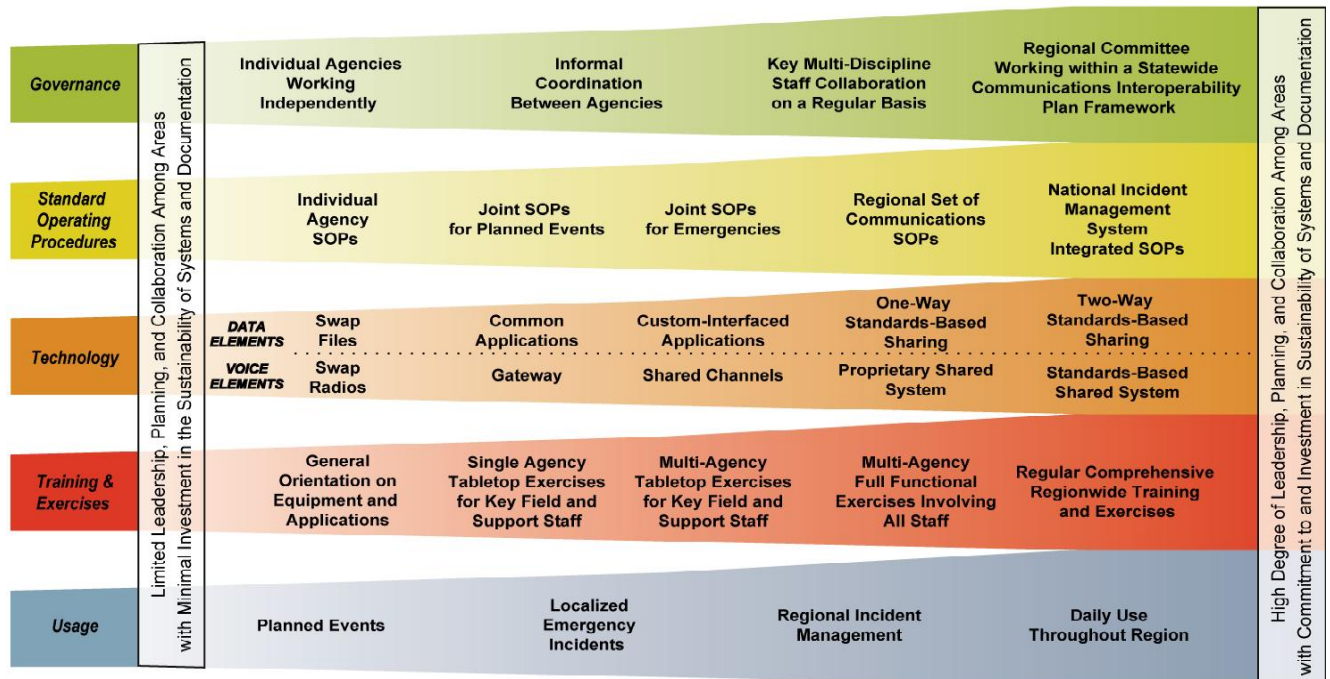
Figure 2: SAFECOM Interoperability Continuum

RIC Roles and Responsibilities

In order to convince local stakeholders to participate in RICs, it is important that statewide and regional leaders first identify the RIC's basic roles and responsibilities. While each RIC can define its own roles and responsibilities in alignment with their SCIP and the NECP, RICs typically address the areas listed below.

Outreach

Governance requires that disparate stakeholders accept an overall decision-making structure. Outreach encourages this unity by educating interoperable communications stakeholders about the accomplishments, initiatives, and requirements of their RIC. Responsibilities may include:

- Provide the SIGB with input for all relevant local communications interoperability issues.

- Foster development of Tactical Interoperable Communications Plans (TICPs) and a mechanism for keeping them updated.

- Develop consensus among all localities, disciplines, and organizations within the region regarding communications interoperability projects.

- Provide opportunities for collaboration between all UASIs and other sub-regions within the RIC.

- Educate local policymakers.

- Collect and document issues faced by all localities within the region so that the needs of one do not overshadow the needs of the collective whole.

SCIP and Regional Strategy Programmatic Implementation

If an intrastate regional strategy does not align with its State's SCIP, State and local efforts do not support one another and fall short of true statewide governance. If, on the other hand, a region identifies a strategy which aligns with the State SCIP and is also consolidated into future SCIP updates, State and local efforts work in conjunction with one another and are more effective and efficient. Responsibilities associated with SCIP and regional strategy programmatic implementation include:

- Align regional communications goals and activities to the SCIP.

- Provide the SIGB with input and data for the development and revision of the SCIP.

- Develop a standing memorandum of understanding (MOU) among all counties and localities within the region; this MOU should address sharing resources for regional communications interoperability planning and implementation.

- Develop a process to allow associated equipment to be purchased collectively ensuring compatibility and favored pricing throughout the region.

- Develop a regional communications interoperability strategy and prioritize and implement regional communications interoperability initiatives.

Grants Coordination and Policy Development

By demonstrating alignment with Federal and State initiatives, RICs, and the local interoperable communications stakeholders that comprise them, greatly improve their eligibility for grant funding. In fact, more and more Federal grants related to communications interoperability are employing a regional approach to the disbursement of their funds and, as a result, are incentivizing the adoption of regional governance. In general, grants coordination and policy development requires RICs to:

- Develop grant investment justifications for all entities within the region and provide recommendations to the SIGB for consideration.

- Administer awarded grant funds for regional projects.

The Benefits of Regional Governance

When RICs adopt the above roles and responsibilities, most can experience the following benefits:

- **Improved access to neighboring resources.** The partnerships built through regional governance provide agencies with access to knowledge (e.g., best practices and lessons learned) and resources previously unavailable.

- **Increased purchasing power and potential cost savings.** Regional governance supports the pooling of resources, including capital. This financial support provides the region with greater leverage when purchasing new equipment or hiring contract support. Regional governance can also minimize the unnecessary duplication of efforts among neighboring constituents, resulting in a region-wide reduction in expenditures and smarter use of limited public monies.

- **Alignment with grant guidance.** With more and more Federal grant monies being tied to regionally-developed projects, local stakeholders who are engaged in regional intrastate governance are much more likely to see their priorities considered by reviewers and

ultimately funded. This is due to the fact that RICs make a concerted effort to align with the interoperable communications goals of the Nation and their State.

- **Stronger coordination with the statewide effort.** Not only will regional governance ensure that the SWIC has a way to provide important information and feedback to the regions, but local stakeholders will have a clear way to communicate their region's priorities directly to State leaders. With this two-way communications channel established, regions can take on a more active role in helping to update their State SCIP.

- **New working relationships.** Regional governance helps neighboring stakeholders who wouldn't normally talk to one another enter into a dialogue. This familiarity facilitates the smooth sharing of equipment and other resources: Mutual aid is more easily coordinated, back-up capabilities more easily shared, and training and exercises more easily organized.

- **Adapt with the times.** As explored in greater detail in Chapter 4, the regional governance life cycle requires constant planning, implementation, and assessment. By encouraging stakeholders to engage in constant reevaluation, regional governance adapts to changing environments, integrating newly formed organizations or technologies (such as geographic information systems or Web 2.0) into the regional structure.

- **Recognition, formalization, and maintenance of current relationships.** Emergency communications stakeholders are already interacting with each other. Implementing a governance structure with consistently scheduled meetings will ensure these previously established relationships remain strong.

- **Building future leadership.** While the enthusiasm may already exist, interoperable communications stakeholders need a framework in which to channel their energy. Regional governance provides that framework, providing present and future leaders of interoperable communications with an opportunity to distinguish themselves. Chapter 3 explores this further and describes the importance of identifying a regional interoperable communications champion.

- **Ensuring voices are heard.** Every public safety agency is a stakeholder in emergency communications. Some—such as law enforcement, fire, EMS, emergency management, and public health workers—deal with emergency communications everyday. Others—such as public works and transportation workers—deal with it solely during times of emergency. Either way, everyone has a vested interest in emergency communications and they deserve to have a voice in guiding its future.

- **Identification of requirements.** Regional governance structures provide a forum in which localities, regardless of their population size or technological capabilities, can communicate their needs to a larger audience. This open discussion mitigates the gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" and encourages that action be taken to identify and address the region's interoperable needs.

- **Setting the foundation for future success.** Only with a governance system in place can a region fully coordinate efforts to address the other lanes of the SAFECOM Interoperability Continuum: Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Technology, Training and Exercises, and Usage (see figure 2).

Regional Governance Promotion

As is the case with anything that asks people to voluntarily offer their time and energy, the way statewide and regional leaders communicate the value of participating in regional governance is

important. Leaders will need to develop outreach mechanisms for communicating the business case. Canned presentations (both in-person and online), brochures, and one-pagers can provide a quick and efficient means of enlisting the support of potential governance participants including members of the emergency response community and elected officials such as county administrators, city managers, and mayors. To facilitate the development of promotional materials, a template one-pager explaining the importance of regional governance as well as a template letter recruiting regional governance participants is included in Appendix A of this guide. Interoperability exercises are also a great way to demonstrate the need for regional coordination. A tabletop or a full-scale, functional exercise can bring exposure to regional projects which can build enthusiasm to participate in regional efforts.

Although outreach plays a critical role in ensuring the successful establishment and sustainment of regional governance, it does take time and resources. Leaders should not be discouraged if those resources are not abundantly available, as sometimes a modest promotional approach yields strong results. Leaders should also be cognizant of the fact that, in many ways, regional governance structures function as their own self-perpetuating promotional machines: The more emergency responders who participate in regional governance activities and demonstrate its success, the more likely others will be to participate in regional governance activities. Avoid forcing regional governance adoption. When stakeholders see value in the regional governance effort, they will join of their own volition. This is especially true with respect to the "late adopters" who observe the early successes of the effort, a concept discussed further in Chapter 4.

2. Defining Regions: Structuring and Linking the Intrastate Communications Interoperability Effort

Emergency interoperable communications refers to the ability of diverse emergency response organizations and their systems to exchange information needed to communicate together effectively (interoperate). While the term is often used in a technical systems engineering sense, it also must take into account social, political, and organizational factors that impact system-to-system performance. Intrastate communications interoperability regions provide a venue for stakeholders, administrators, and lawmakers to interact and address the social, political, and organizational factors relevant to a communications interoperability effort. For our purposes, intrastate communications interoperability regions are defined as a collection of smaller political units (towns, cities, or counties) within a State that have agreed to join in a formalized effort to share resources and improve emergency communications within their geographical boundaries and therefore with the State as a whole.

With the end goal of improving regional communications interoperability, any intrastate regional governance effort should first align with, and tie into, the statewide communications interoperability effort. The Statewide Governance Guide advanced the notion that RICs are important for regional interoperability and mutual aid efforts and are also critical to the statewide interoperability effort. As noted in the Statewide Governance Guide, the entire effort should be seen as a seamless circle of partnerships.

State Coordination and Statewide Coordination

To achieve collaborative coordination across the State, it is important to distinguish between State coordination and statewide coordination. State coordination is defined by strategic planning and implementation among State agencies. This type of planning is vital to ensure that all State agencies have and maintain interoperable communications across agencies. One example of State coordination is ensuring that the State's police agency can communicate with the State's Department of Transportation.

Statewide coordination is defined by strategic planning and implementation among all emergency responders and designated public service organizations that serve the residents of the State. Achieving this level of coordination requires a robust, multi-faceted, coordinated governance system that leverages more than just State agencies. Responders and policymakers from Federal, UASI, regional, local, and

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Memorandum of Understanding Template Suite

A formalized charter signed by all jurisdictions' political leadership within the region will empower regional representatives. The Formal Agreement Template Suite and Reference Library, created by the DHS Office of Emergency Communications, provides members of the emergency response community with the guidance they need to construct their own formal agreements and SOPs relating to communications interoperability. The Template Suite provides guidance for the construction of a charter, executive order, local to local MOU, and State to local MOU. The Template Suite is accessible at www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/tools.

When leveraging these resources, emergency responders are encouraged to also review the real-world charter, executive order, MOU, and SOP examples contained within the Reference Library. The Reference Library is available through the National Public Safety Telecommunications Council's National Interoperability Information eXchange (NIIX) website. The NIIX website is accessible at www.niix.org.

tribal governments, as well as leaders from related emergency response associations, must also participate.[2]

Statewide leaders, such as SWICs and SIGB Chairs, need formally recognized representatives from each region of the State who will communicate statewide messages to stakeholders in the region, assist their region with the implementation of statewide policies, and share their region's priorities with the SIGB and other statewide leaders. Additionally, local political leaders need to recognize the representatives from within their region. Those representatives should either be seen as trusted advisors to local political leadership or be empowered to make planning and funding decisions on behalf of the local jurisdictions participating within the region.

Because many communications interoperability grant, strategic planning, and performance measurement efforts require States to utilize a regional approach, how a State defines its interoperability regions is important. The way in which a State defines the geographic boundaries associated with its regional governance structure affects future operations. Because emergency communications issues at the local level tend to be more tactical and less strategic than regional or statewide levels, organizing a sustainable RIC can be complicated. Tactical emergency communications regions can vary based on a host of considerations from geographic boundaries, such as mountains or rivers, to the technical capabilities of bordering jurisdictions or disciplines. For this reason, the designation and development of tactical regions is best done at local levels of government that require the regions to meet specific requirements such as the sharing of a newly procured regional communications system. Local jurisdictions and disciplines know best who they need to work with on a regular basis and have most likely already established the required relationships or governance bodies needed to address day-to-day usage.

Creating a Communications Interoperability Intrastate Region

Whether governance structures are formal or informal, they tend to begin with agreements between the people who will be most affected by the structures. These agreements usually take the form of MOUs, State laws, joint powers agreements (JPAs) signed by agencies in separate jurisdictions, JPAs signed by several jurisdictions in a region, or signed charters. OEC provides a suite of templates online to help with drafting these documents.[3] Whatever the agreement, the document should be a statement of general goals that identifies the members and the decision-making process.[4]
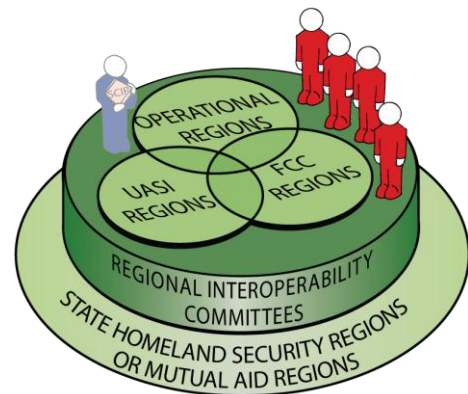
The process for defining or creating regions is unique to each State. Political or geographical conditions or requirements in one State may not exist in another. For this reason, OEC recognizes that the process must remain flexible and no one solution or

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[2] Office of Emergency Communications. December 2008. *Establishing Governance to Achieve Statewide Communications Interoperability; A Guide for Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP) Implementation*

[3] Formal Agreement and Standard Operating Procedure Template Suite and Reference Library, http://www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/tools/templatesuite.htm

[4] National Task Force on Interoperability. February 2003. *Why Can't We Talk?*

organizational structure can be presented within this Guide. The concepts presented here are intended as recommendations for local, regional, and statewide stakeholders to consider when initiating or enhancing the governance of a regional communications interoperability effort.

When creating a communications interoperability region, the following questions should be considered:

- Should the RIC align to pre-existing regions where emergency communications issues are prevalent such as homeland security regions, mutual aid regions, fire regions, State police regions, or council of governments regions?

- Should federally recognized UASI regions be included with non-UASI jurisdictions to form a larger RIC?

- Should jurisdictions sharing a communications system determine a RIC's boundaries? How will geographic boundaries such as major mountain ranges or waterways affect the RIC's borders?

- How will population density affect RIC borders as well as planning and funding efforts?

- Should well-funded jurisdictions be partnered with underfunded jurisdictions?

- Should jurisdictions served by a regional dispatch center determine a RIC's boundaries?

- How can RICs align and tie into the State's grant funding distribution strategy?

Aligning to Pre-Existing Regions or Governing Bodies

Most States have many geographic, political, and administrative regions, each with their own concerns and issues. While respecting the general autonomy of local governments, the State is challenged with creating regional governance bodies that can adequately support multiple issues and statewide efforts. It may often appear that regional boundaries were drawn arbitrarily by State leaders. While that conclusion cannot be endorsed or refuted in this guide, it is clear that political and operational boundaries have to be drawn somewhere to support the administration of interoperable emergency communications and other homeland security issues. Bordering jurisdictions in separate regions will always have a reason to work together. Even after regions are designated, stakeholders will have a need to work with each other across regional boundaries, some of which may be across States or even nations.

For the purposes of managing a State's statewide interoperable emergency communications effort, OEC neither encourages nor recommends creating new regional boundaries for the sole purpose of interoperability planning. Instead, OEC recommends the statewide communications interoperability effort build on political boundaries of the State's homeland security regions or the operational boundaries of the State's emergency management mutual aid regions. Ideally, a State's homeland security regions align with the State's mutual aid regions. If this is not the case, OEC recommends aligning with one of these pre-existing regional bodies since this can offer key advantages.

Homeland Security Regions

Currently, most States have developed, socialized, and are utilizing homeland security regions to manage all homeland security issues within the State. While potentially difficult to adopt at first, most jurisdictions and disciplines involved in homeland security issues have now accepted and are utilizing these homeland security regions and committees for policy, planning, and analysis

purposes. RIC boundaries aligned with these previously established and functioning homeland security regions offer the advantages and disadvantages listed below.

Alignment to Homeland Security Regions – Advantages:

- Ensures the RICs are aligned with the regional disbursement of statewide homeland security grant funds such as the Homeland Security Grant Program and the Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program.

- Simplifies and streamlines the committee's responsibility of developing regional investment justifications for Federal communications interoperability grants.

- Provides a coordination point for agencies addressing homeland security issues such as border security, port security, transportation security, and public health preparedness.

- Guarantees that communications interoperability and emergency communications strategies represented in a regional communications interoperability plan and SCIP are also aligned with the State's Homeland Security Plan.

Alignment to Homeland Security Regions – Disadvantages:

- There may be a lack of technical emergency communications understanding within the greater homeland security committee.

- Regional boundaries may not align with tactical realities.

- Strategic planning and tactical operations may be misaligned.

Mutual Aid Regions

In most States, mutual aid regions have existed for many years and the first responder community is comfortable with their boundaries. For this reason, OEC encourages aligning to the State's mutual aid regions when homeland security regions within the State do not exist or when the statewide communications interoperability effort supports a more tactical than administrative approach.

One unusual aspect that can affect regional planning is participation of an agency with mutual aid responsibilities to more than one region. This is most common for large agencies or those with particularly specific or unique resource-intensive capabilities (e.g., bomb squads, hazardous material units, and mass casualty care). Mutual aid commitments, or even ad hoc requests, may prompt assigning these scarce emergency assets to any of several adjoining regions.

As a result, for training and operational consistency, some jurisdictions may wish to have formal roles and commitments under more than one regional interoperability agreement, even though this involves a greater commitment of time. This is not particularly common in regional interoperability planning and is often locally resolved by the affected regions and agencies due to the specialized nature of the aid relationships among the agencies involved.

Alignment to Mutual Aid Regions – Advantages:

- Ensures the RICs are aligned with the region's emergency management and operational requirements, procedures, and National Incident Management System protocols.

- Provides strategic planning alignment with operational and tactical realities.

Alignment to Mutual Aid Regions – Disadvantages:

- Federal Homeland Security grants may not be administered through this regional construct.

- There may be a lack of strategic planning opportunities due to the fact that the primary role of mutual aid regions is for response purposes.

Empowering Locals to Determine Requirements

While OEC strongly believes that RIC alignment to either the State's homeland security or mutual aid regions streamlines strategic planning, coordination, and grant funding efforts, OEC also understands the uniqueness of each State and the need for flexibility in determining a RIC's border designation. For this reason, a third option of empowering local stakeholders to determine how best a RIC can meet their needs is suggested. The local stakeholders are still encouraged to work closely with their SWIC to ensure alignment and tie in with their statewide communications interoperability effort. For an example of this process, please see "California's Northern Planning Region" (the call-out box to the right).

Linkage of Communications Interoperability Governance Efforts

Once leaders have identified the geographic boundaries for the regional governance effort, they can develop a regional governance structure that links all of the region's interoperability efforts to the larger statewide governance network. This connection between the statewide and regional efforts is critically important to ensure both statewide and regional interoperability needs are being addressed as effectively as possible and with the greatest chance for stakeholder

California's Northern Planning Region

As part of the 2007 SCIP development process, the California Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee (CalSIEC) divided California into four interoperable emergency communications planning areas and mapped it to the State's mutual aid regions. Spectrum allocation and utilization across California served as the logic for the geographic boundaries of the CalSIEC planning areas.

The Northern Planning Area of the CalSIEC, primarily comprised of rural counties in Northern California, was chartered soon afterward. The Northern Planning Area cuts across two homeland security regions and incorporates a community of stakeholders who had never previously collaborated regionally to improve interoperable emergency communications capabilities across northern California. Even with limited resources, the Planning Area has been extremely successful. It maintains steady participation from each county within its borders and is on target for implementing their regional Public Safety Interoperable Communications grant investments.

Success is attributed to a team of Northern Planning Area Committee Co-Chairs who maintain a can-do attitude and serve as regional champions. They diligently represent the area at the statewide CalSIEC meetings and at local government meetings. Alongside the local stakeholders serving on the Committee, they have taken the time to meet with local political leadership across the Planning Area to communicate the importance of supporting interoperable emergency communications efforts and empowering local stakeholders to serve on the Committee. Congenial neighborly relationships amongst all stakeholders in the Planning Area, a commitment to utilize initial grant funds to charter and sustain governance efforts, and an understanding that projects must benefit all jurisdictions within the Planning Area also attest to the region's success.

For more information on the successes of the Northern Planning Area, contact OEC@hq.dhs.gov

Mutual Aid Regions mapped onto CalSIEC Planning Areas

support and agreement. A fully connected statewide communications interoperability governance system—where all regional and State interoperability efforts are engaged with each other—strengthens the system's bottom-up philosophy and accelerates the progress of each effort.

By engaging existing regional planning efforts (whether specifically organized around interoperability issues or not) and leveraging their governance structures, leaders can systematically connect these existing structures into the statewide governance network and engage a broader community of communications specialists at the regional and local levels. With the increasing focus on regional approaches to strategic planning, collaboration among the SWIC, SIGB, and the RICs will form an essential foundation for achieving statewide communications interoperability goals and initiatives documented in the SCIP.

Linking the RIC to State and Local Efforts

While existence of local technical and tactical governance groups dedicated to roles such as management of a regional radio system, development of a regional TICP, or oversight of a high-profile event (such as a marathon) is important, the ability of the RIC to link into these local decision-making bodies is equally as important. When establishing a RIC, regional and local leaders should ask themselves: How will RIC efforts tie into the efforts of local governance groups that are already established? How will information flow between these entities?

Once a RIC is established, local agencies or jurisdictions can use their previously established technical and tactical governance groups as a means of communicating with the RIC. Ideally, a representative from these local groups will serve on the RIC so that the group's projects, concerns, and strategies can be communicated up to the next level of the governance structure. The messaging will continue up to the statewide level when the RIC Chairperson communicates those messages through their official position on the higher-level SIGB. If the message is endorsed by the SIGB as a body of regional chairs and key emergency association leaders, it will be provided to the SWIC as an official recommendation. The SWIC is then empowered to communicate that message to State leaders such as the Homeland Security Director, the State's Administrative Agent (SAA), or the Governor. This is merely one simple scenario of how a local message can reach higher-level decision-makers and leaders through a stakeholder-driven communications interoperability statewide governance network.

Linking the RIC to Regions within the Region

The pre-existence of specific operational sub-regions within the political boundaries of the desired RIC often makes regional planning along RIC boundaries challenging. For example, a desired interoperability region may include a federally recognized UASI within its borders or a grouping of small- to medium-sized urban areas that have joined through an MOU or JPA to share a communications system. It is likely that both the UASI and the urban area's shared systems also have standing communications interoperability governance groups.

These sub-regional governance bodies should be incorporated into the more broadly organized regional body. This can occur by allowing each sub-region to have one official voting position on the RIC. For instance, the chairperson of the committee responsible for UASI communications interoperability planning should also serve on the larger statewide-focused RIC. While appearing bureaucratic, this process allows for all entities across the State to remain aligned and compliant with the NECP and the SCIP. Furthermore, this alignment allows for all interoperability bodies to remain informed of the statewide vision and provides fluid access to the grant funding opportunities.

Linking the RIC to the Homeland Security/Mutual Aid Regions

The existence of homeland security regions and mutual aid regions implies that higher-level governance committees also exist to manage an array of subject areas relevant to administration of homeland security/mutual aid policies including communications interoperability and emergency communications. The existence of such committees also implies a high probability that each committee has one representative responsible for communications interoperability or emergency communications issues on behalf of the entire region. Since most regional homeland security / mutual aid committees are comprised of a limited number of high-level local leaders from within the region, it is unlikely the committee will allow more than one official to come to the table to represent emergency communications issues. However, much like the SIGB which serves as the immediate support network for the SWIC, a robust RIC can serve as a vital advisory body to the communications representative on the larger regional homeland security / mutual aid committee. The RIC will ensure the representative serving on the regional homeland security committee is receiving stakeholder input from local stakeholders across the region. This degree of coordination and collaboration promotes buy-in of proposed policies under review by the greater homeland security / mutual aid committee and implementation of eventual decisions and policies.

Bringing It All Together

Using homeland security regions as an example, figure 3 demonstrates how a statewide communications interoperability governance network promotes coordination across coexisting statewide efforts. This occurs when the official chairs of the SIGB and RIC also serve on high-level homeland security committees as the emergency communications representative.
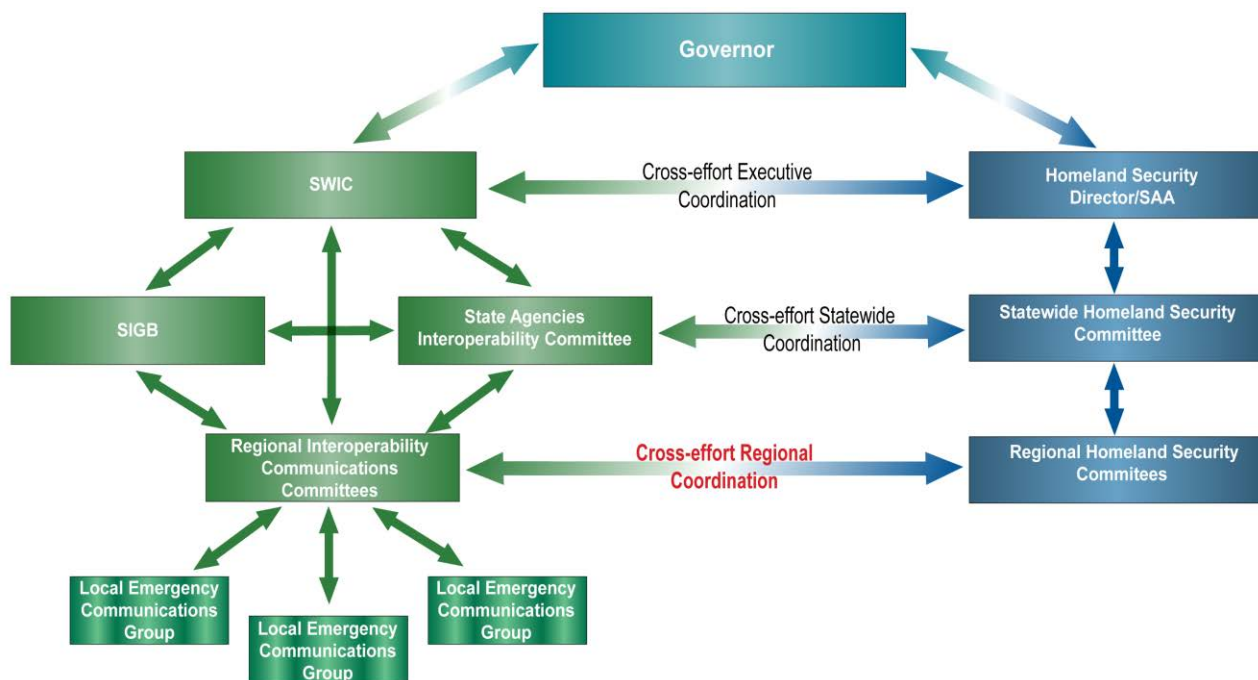

Figure 3: Linkage of Communications Interoperability Governance Networks

3. Steps to Consider when Creating a Regional Governance Structure

The Law Enforcement Tech Guide for Communications Interoperability: A Guide for Interagency Communications Projects[5] identifies six steps to create a project-driven decision-making structure. While the term "decision-making structure" is used in that guide for technical projects with an identifiable beginning and end, similar principles can be applied to governance bodies, such as RICs, which ideally serve on a continuing basis.

Building on the *Law Enforcement Tech Guide*'s six step methodology, OEC identifies these potential components for creating a regional communications interoperability governance body. Due to the size and scope of your geographic region, not all of these steps may be necessary. For example, some regions will incorporate UASIs while others will primarily be composed of rural jurisdictions. The steps for initiating unique regions will naturally be different. Additionally, many of these steps can occur concurrently. Stakeholders are encouraged to consider this list a starting point and adjust as necessary to meet their local requirements. Remember, this is a continuing, repetitive life cycle process. You will always have to refresh your regional governance structure.

These initial recommended steps are:

1. Identify Executive Sponsorship.

   - Determine how State leadership can empower local political leaders by presenting the business case and rationale for developing a regional governance body to support interoperable emergency communications planning. These local leaders tend to become the executive sponsors.

2. Identify an interim RIC Chairperson and a Regional Coordinator.

   - This person serves as an initial coordinator to quickly work on the following steps formalizing the effort and their position. This person is usually highly driven by the vision and has a passion for improving interoperable emergency communications across the region.

3. Identify Stakeholders.

   - Coordinate efforts with appropriate associations and association chapters and leverage chapter membership into the regional governance body.

   - Incorporate appropriate State agency presence.

     o For example, if a State prison is present within region, the State's Department of Corrections should be incorporated.

   - Incorporate appropriate Federal agencies.

     o For example, if an army base is present within the region, the Department of Defense should be incorporated.

4. Create the Structure.

   - Create an organizational structure that:

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[5] US Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. December 2006. *Law Enforcement Tech Guide for Communications Interoperability*. www.cops.usdoj.gov/ric/ResourceDetail.aspx?RID=238

- o   Incorporates all counties or county equivalents within the region.

- o   Links to the statewide effort.

- o   Links to other regions focused on homeland security or all-hazard issues.

5. Involve Other Subject Matter Experts (SMEs).

- Determine the appropriate blend of emergency communications stakeholders, engineers, political leadership, non-governmental organizations, and private sector representatives needed to serve on the committee.

6. Formalize the Effort.

- Develop a charter.

- Inform political leaders within the region of the RIC's status.

- Validate an elected RIC Chairperson.

7. Conduct Effective Meetings.

- Consider implementing Robert's Rules of Order[6] in bylaws.

- Determine whether meetings should be open to the public and if vendors are allowed to attend. State and local laws often have a specific definition for "open meetings." RICs should consult their legal advisors prior to determining the attendance policies of their meetings.

8. Decide on an Initiative Implementation Approach.

- Determine how the committee will achieve the priorities outline within its strategy.

Step 1: Identify Executive Sponsorship

Many RICs are started organically by a local champion who feels passionately about communications interoperability for the region. State leaders should work to identify executive sponsorship across all jurisdictions and disciplines at the local level. These leaders should empower local political leaders by presenting the business case and reasoning for developing a regional governance body to support interoperable emergency communications planning. In some cases, these local champions are discovered and assisted by the SWIC.

It is critical that a local champion act as the executive sponsor, and usually the executive sponsor will serve as the RIC's first chairperson as the group matures. Sponsors should have a sufficient stake in the outcome of the group and be able to lead from a position of authority, with the skill to draw others together. Examples of potential executive sponsors include a county or city commissioner, sheriff, fire chief, county emergency manager, or anyone else that commands respect across a broad range of jurisdictions and disciplines. As explained by the *Law Enforcement Tech Guide for Communications Interoperability*[7]:

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[6] Robert, Henry M. *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 10th edition, Perseus Books Group, Cambridge MA, 2000.*
[7] US Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. December 2006. http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/ric/ResourceDetail.aspx?RID=238

The executive sponsor's key role is to communicate a vision. For communications interoperability, this vision paints a picture of what success looks like when radio seamlessly connects parts of an emergency response. For every project, there is a nugget, an acorn from which everything else grows. The sponsor's main job is to regularly impart a succinct vision of success to all stakeholders. This vision is captured in the charter.

Charters will be discussed further in Step 7.

Step 2: Identify a RIC Chairperson and a Regional Coordinator

In addition to an executive sponsor, regional governance structures benefit from the identification of a RIC Chairperson and a Regional Coordinator. A RIC Chairperson and a Regional Coordinator have the ability to establish a framework for the RIC and are able to make initial recommendations regarding RIC membership. Potential responsibilities of the Chairperson include organizing and conducting RIC meetings, facilitating the development of a regional charter, and serving on the SIGB and committees associated with their respective homeland security or mutual aid region. The Regional Coordinator will help to relieve administrative burden from the RIC Chairperson and serve as a liaison between the SWIC and the region which they represent. The Regional Coordinator stands in the center of the regional governance system in much the same way that the SWIC sits in the middle of the statewide governance system as seen in figure 1. In this way, the Coordinator aids all regional governance components in sharing resources as well as providing support and coordination.

Most regional communications interoperability efforts operate under tight budgetary constraints. Identification of a RIC Chairperson and a Regional Coordinator, however, does not require hiring a new staff person and assuming additional financial burdens. Ideally, a local stakeholder will volunteer to serve as RIC Chairperson. This person can then serve their region's interests in conjunction with other duties as assigned by their employing agency. Their duties will help reduce administrative costs and responsibilities associated with managing a governance body.

A similar approach can be used when identifying a Regional Coordinator. By designating a State employee as the Regional Coordinator, administrative costs and responsibilities associated with the regional governance effort are minimized. Partnerships between the SWIC Office and other relevant State agencies serving on the SIGB can be incorporated into creation of such positions. In Virginia, for instance, the SWIC Office[8] is supported by members of the State 911 Board who fulfill the duties of a Regional Coordinator. The SWIC can help the executive sponsor and other regional leaders in identifying an agency that might partner with them to staff the Regional Coordinator role.

Step 3: Identify Stakeholders

While each regional area should develop a governance system that best fits its needs, the SWIC, working alongside each Regional Coordinator, regional Chairperson, or executive sponsor, should ensure the RICs have adequate representation from law enforcement, fire, EMS, emergency management, and other relevant government services from each local entity (e.g., UASIs, counties, cities, and tribal nations) within the region. This inclusive stakeholder diversity on the RIC supports region-wide strategic communications interoperability planning, coordination,

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[8] In the Commonwealth of Virginia, the SWIC Office is referred to as the Commonwealth Interoperability Coordinator's Office (CICO).

collaboration, and build-out. It also encourages operational and response planning and implementation at the regional level.

While the SIGB membership focuses on members tied to statewide associations, RIC membership should come from operational, front-line stakeholders who also possess expertise or passion to resolve interoperable communications dilemmas. As previously mentioned, to ensure alignment, the RIC Chairperson should serve on the SIGB as well as on the committees associated with their homeland security or mutual aid region.

The regional and statewide interoperability efforts will benefit from regional bodies that include at least one local member from each county, city, or town within the region. It is important, however, to balance the committee's membership to assure that no one jurisdiction or discipline consistently has a majority presence. Each region should write

> ### THE RELUCTANT STAKEHOLDER
>
> [A]ll stakeholders are going to be equally enthusiastic about this initiative to improve their interagency communications, right? Wrong. Most projects and governance bodies of any size "enjoy" a range of buy-in across the wide variety of stakeholders discussed here. From the comfortably non-communicative to the incurably cynical to the painfully frugal, interoperability governance bodies and projects have their share of stakeholders who won't wildly embrace change. It's a big mistake to proceed by simply labeling these folks, pigeonholing them, and stacking committees with cheerleaders. We see this most frequently where a "solution" arises before problems are well understood.
>
> By bringing dissenters to the table, issues get aired and the group - as a whole - can make the commitment to move forward. Even those whose ideas or objections were considered and decided against have to acknowledge that a deliberative, consensual process delivered the results. Often enough, these folks understand real challenges that need to be faced. A good committee chairperson can use the art of facilitation to move stakeholders from simply reacting, to problem solving, and on to creative choices.
>
> - US Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. December 2006. *Law Enforcement Tech Guide for Communications Interoperability*, p.68.

bylaws that ensure balance and equity; one approach is to ensure that no one jurisdiction or organization represented has more than one vote. Another approach could have the weight of a vote determined by the resources or investment of each jurisdiction or organization in the regional

effort. A region could also consider a Congressional model, with one branch of the RIC containing a single representative from each organization and the other containing representatives according to the relative size, resources, or population of each organization. This model would then need an executive committee to reconcile differences and reach a final decision. Each region will need to tailor their approach to local conditions. Figure 4 (Diversity of Regional Stakeholders) demonstrates how all the various stakeholders from each jurisdictional entity within the region should come together. Additionally, the call-out box above addresses the issue of "The Reluctant Stakeholder."

An effective RIC will:

- Ensure committee members have authority to speak for their agencies' policies and sustainability.

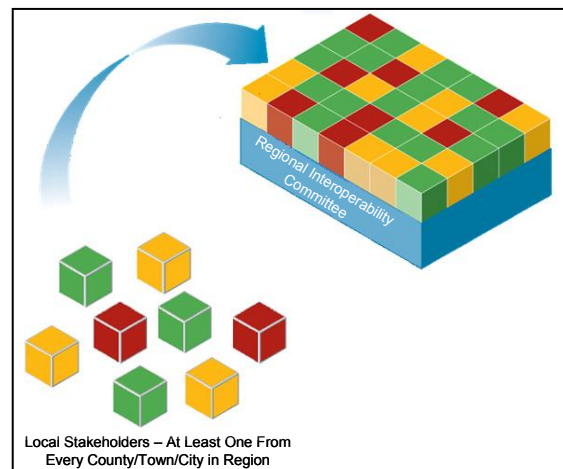Local Stakeholders – At Least One From Every County/Town/City in Region

Figure 4: Diversity of Regional Stakeholders

- Solicit buy-in from local emergency response associations and ask them to recommend their own representatives.

- Manage competing stakeholder demands between larger and smaller agencies and jurisdictions by creating a balanced governance structure with a documented conflict-resolution process.[9]

In general, RIC membership could include representation from each of the following potential categories and should come from across all disciplines and jurisdictions within the region. It is also important to ensure consistent representation from participating organizations. The same person should serve consistently and be committed to the RIC's vision and mission. The list below provides a sample of recommended committee members. It is not a fully comprehensive list nor is it required that RICs incorporate all recommended members. It is, however, important that the RIC's leadership allow municipalities to select their own representatives

Local Government Leadership

- County administrators

- Chief information officers

- Town mayors

- County/Town council members

- County/Town budget officers

- County/Town grant writers

- Other elected officials

Local Disciplines

- EMS providers

- Fire chiefs

- Chiefs of police and sheriffs

- Emergency management officials

- Public safety access point (PSAP) managers

- Major transportation organizations (such as port authorities)

- Dispatch management

- Additional fire, law enforcement, and EMS chief executive officers

State Agencies

- Representatives from State agencies frequently operating within the region

Federal Agencies

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[9]*Summit on Implementing Wireless Communications: Perspectives on Interoperability from the Law Enforcement Community.* US Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. May 2005. http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/Default.asp?item=1495

- Representatives from Federal agencies frequently operating within the region

Local Subject Matter Experts

- Communications Unit Leaders

- Communication assets survey and mapping tool managers

- Field operations command staff

- Primary operational leadership[10]

- Field operations radio users

- Technical support staff

Sub-Regions within the RIC

- Communications representative from each UASI within the region, if applicable

- Representatives of each tactical and operational area within the region, if applicable

Tribal Nation Representation

- Tribal nation law enforcement, fire, EMS, and government representatives, if applicable

A Volunteer Effort

Regional communications interoperability and a State's SCIP implementation efforts are primarily driven by relationships among the volunteer stakeholders and stakeholders who serve on various committees within statewide and regional governance networks. Labor, typically the largest cost associated with any effort, is primarily donated by volunteers when operating stakeholder-driven governance networks. This is because communications interoperability governance networks rely greatly on volunteer members who are driven by the desire to improve emergency response.

It is critical for the SWIC and Regional Coordinator to acknowledge and support volunteer membership. Sustaining this effort is, in part, achieved through recognition that the primary labor force implementing strategic initiatives, or "getting the work done," are volunteers. As with any volunteer-driven organization, keeping contributing members happy and appreciated ensures success and sustainability.

> ### Continuing Operations after Budget Cuts
>
> Florida has taken steps to continue interoperability efforts despite travel restrictions and budget cuts. The Florida Interoperable Communications Committee, founded in 2001, has met four times a year in conjunction with other disciplines to discuss interoperability efforts. In 2009, most committee members were unable to travel due to budget cuts and travel restrictions. Still needing to address critical issues and projects, the committee initiated bi-monthly conference calls, allowing them to continue their efforts at no cost. The State takes notes on each call and forwards them to all members so that everyone stays informed.
>
> - Pamela Montanari, Radio and Data Systems Manager, Pinellas County Public Safety Services Department

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[10] As defined in the FEMA National Incident Command System 200, Unit 2: Leadership and Management.

Most importantly, the SWIC and the Regional Coordinator support the governance system's volunteer members by making sure their work and time is appreciated, strategic, and efficient. As it is a best practice for meetings to occur in person, it is important for the regional effort—possibly through an arrangement with the SWIC or by using regionally awarded grant funds—to reimburse its members for travel and lodging costs associated with committee meetings.

Not surprisingly, secure and consistent funding is essential to sustain the effort. It is vital that when leaders identify and secure short- and long-term funding streams they remember the marginal costs associated with sustaining the regional governance effort. Rather than immediately allocating grant funds to procure new land mobile radio technologies, regions should consider allocating a portion of the funds to regional governance sustainability in order to leverage the RIC for strategic and tactical planning and implementation of initiatives. Grant programs administered by DHS generally allow for investment justifications that support statewide and regional governance. With seed money to stand up the effort, regions can utilize multiple Federal grants to fund the costs associated with maintaining a volunteer-driven regional governance body. Such costs may include, but are not limited to, travel, lodging, and meeting supplies.

Several funding streams, including DHS, may allow for the funding of contractual positions to support interoperable communications projects. The RIC or SWIC should check for allowable costs with each agency that is offering grants. After the initial grant period has ended, however, the grant recipient is often required to identify an alternative permanent funding source for the governance effort. For ideas, please see the "Continuing Operations after Budget Cuts" call-out box above.

Step 4: Create the Structure

Once champions and stakeholders are identified, the region can develop its regional structure. Early on, a simple regional group may suffice. As the body matures and grows in importance and standing, however, membership and participation will grow organically. Ideally the RIC may eventually have multiple disciplines represented from each jurisdiction (county, city, and town) within its regional borders.

Due to the unique nature of States and their regions, it is not possible for OEC to propose an ideal or best-practice intrastate governance structure that meets the requirements of all States and regions. Rather, important design fundamentals for the regional governance group are presented. Elements to consider when structuring a regional governance group include, but are not limited to:

- **Ensure robust and inclusive committee membership.**

- **Provide organizational linkage to the SWIC and the SIGB.**
    - Demonstrate linkage through shared membership and an organizational chart.

- **Develop Standing Subcommittees.**
    - Organize along the lanes of the SAFECOM Interoperability Continuum (Governance, SOPs, Technology, Training and Exercises, and Usage).

- **Utilize Initiative Specific Working Groups.**
    - Use matrix-based ad hoc working groups to address specific short-term and long-term initiatives, such as the development of a TICP or the maintenance of a regional radio cache. The roles and responsibilities of Initiative Working Groups (IWGs) are discussed further in Step 8 as well as in Chapter 4. The size of the region will influence how many working groups need to be developed

Additionally, Appendix B provides case study samples of different types of regional governance structures from the States of Idaho, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and New Mexico. Formalized RICs and SIGBs should consider posting their regional structures to the NIIX website[11] so that others may benefit from the case study.

Step 5: Involve Other Subject Matter Experts

Outside subject matter experts SMEs can provide much needed assistance and can be involved in the governance structure at several levels. Some ideas include:

- Bring in organizational and strategic management experts early in the RIC development phase to sit down with the SWIC, regional champion, RIC Chairperson, and Regional Coordinator to get the RIC started on the right foot.

- Rely on legal and procurement expertise within local agencies, jurisdictions, or elsewhere in government to keep the regional effort out of trouble.

- Have incident management specialists work with the SOP Committee to define interagency communications needs in terms consistent with the National Incident Management System and its Incident Command System.

- Use technology experts to help the Technology Committee frame available opportunities to use or extend existing infrastructure.

- Reach out to:
  - Federal government representatives such as those from the Federal Communications Commission, United States Customs and Border Protection, United States Coast Guard, United States Forest Service, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Groups, and the Office of Emergency Communications' Regional Coordinators.
  - Non-governmental organizations specializing in disaster relief that may have a need to communicate with incident command during or following an incident.
  - Public works associations that manage critical infrastructure, such as power plants.
  - Leaders from bordering regions, both intrastate and interstate.
  - Private industry.

Step 6: Formalize the Effort

As mentioned in Step 1, charters play a crucial role in the establishment of a RIC. Until RIC members have signed this formal agreement identifying the policies and procedures around which future governance efforts will be structured, the RIC does not exist as a formal governance committee.

During the formalization process, consider including these sections in the RIC charter:

- **Introduction.** The introduction provides a high-level explanation of the events and situations that have prompted the establishment of the RIC. It highlights the norms and

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[11] National Interoperability Information eXchange. www.niix.org

processes needed to transform the multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional body into a highly effective team with common goals. The introduction should touch on the authority, purpose, leadership, and circumstances surrounding the establishment of the RIC.

- **Authority.** This section lists any legal directives or funding sources that give authority to the RIC to perform its prescribed tasks. It should offer a brief description of the chain of command when the committee submits policies or proposals for review. It should also highlight who is authorized to act upon the committee's behalf.

- **Purpose.** The purpose section should identify RIC goals. In addition, the section should explain which agencies and jurisdictions are establishing the RIC and their reasons for establishing it.

- **Objectives.** This section describes RIC objectives and the process for implementing these objectives. It is important to be ambitious, but realistic, when listing objectives. When possible, the committee's objectives should be quantifiable so effectiveness and progress can be measured.

- **Membership, roles, appointment, and term.** This section should list and describe committee membership and organizational structure. By defining the roles of its members, this section ensures the committee operates effectively, efficiently, and equitably. This section should be aligned with the goals and objectives described in the previous section.

- **Operating principles.** This section describes how committee members will interact, the ground rules to be used during meetings, issues to be addressed, and standards for member accountability.

- **Decision-making.** This section can outline how the operating principles will be used in a managerial capacity. Though members may alternate, rules for membership and accountability should still be enforced.

- **Logistics.** This section should describe the administrative responsibilities of the RIC. Even though these considerations may appear minor when creating a charter, a carefully developed schedule can save time and money.

- **Operating agreements.** The way each governance component will conduct business should be clearly described. Examples of operating agreement elements include defining what constitutes a quorum for meetings; the chain of command between the layers of the governance structure; the authority for calling and chairing meetings; alternate meeting options like video conferencing, web meetings, and conference calls; and other similar procedural issues.

- **Voting procedures.** Clear voting procedures are necessary for collaboration and conflict resolution. This section should address topics such as voting versus non-voting participation; the definitions of simple majority, super majority, unanimity, and consensus; the use or non-use of proxies; and a procedure for breaking a tie vote. Because some members might not always be able to travel to attend a particular meeting and affect the ability to meet a quorum, it is recommended that procedures for phone or e-voting be established.

These outlined charter sections are based on guidance provided in the OEC Charter Template[12]. For further guidance concerning the development of a RIC charter, consider referencing the OEC Charter Template which provides a more detailed description of each of the sections listed. Also consider visiting the Formal Agreement and SOP Reference Library located on the NIIX[13] website. This library contains a number of real-world charter examples that can be referenced during development of a RIC charter.

Step 7: Conduct Effective Meetings

Inefficient meetings cost organizations nationally billions of dollars each year and, as a primarily volunteer-driven organization, it is important that RICs and their meetings are perceived as meaningful and successful to the participants. A meeting is an assembly or gathering of people. An effective meeting is one in which participants gather to achieve specific results. Productive and useful meetings include detailed preparation, thoughtful delivery, and thorough follow-up.

Because regional governance is largely a volunteer effort, it is important to make sure everyone's time is being used effectively. When people feel they are wasting their time, they are unlikely to continue being involved. Regional governance efforts don't have the luxury to squander the goodwill and time volunteered by these stakeholders. While there are many tips for planning good meetings, leaders should keep in mind the following simple, easy-to-follow principles when planning and conducting a meeting:

- **Define the meeting's purpose and outcomes.** Ask "Why am I holding a meeting?" Clearly define the meeting's purpose and only hold meetings when necessary. Think through the desired results and determine what decisions or deliverables should come out of the meeting.

- **Build an agenda.** Determine the topics for discussion based on the desired results. Allot an appropriate amount of time for each topic area.

- **Identify how the meeting will be conducted.** Determine who (e.g., the Chair or a facilitator) will run the meeting.

- **Consider meeting logistics.** Ensure that the meeting location is convenient for most participants and offers a pleasant environment with adequate space and good acoustics. When possible, provide healthy snacks and refreshments as well as ample breaks. Consider video conferencing and teleconferencing.

- **Budget for all meeting expenses.** Ensure that funds are available for meeting materials (e.g., handouts, flipcharts, and markers) and organizational expenses such as taking and distributing meeting minutes.

- **Start and end the meeting on time.** To demonstrate the importance of the topics at hand, the meeting leader and participants must start precisely on time so as not to punish those who are punctual.

- **Document key decisions and action items.** Meeting conversations should be recorded, distributed to participants, and archived.

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[12] Office of Emergency Communications. 2009. Charter Template. www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/tools/templatesuite

[13] www.niix.org

Step 8: Decide on an Initiative Implementation Approach

One of the hardest parts of any interoperability effort is determining who will take the lead in implementing initiatives the group has agreed upon. OEC recommends forming regional IWGs to organize implementation of the projects. Regional IWGs are the engine of the regional interoperability effort. They complete the tasks associated with initiatives identified within the regional strategy and by the larger RIC. Regional IWGs are described in greater detail in the following chapter.

4. Achieving Communications Interoperability through Regional Governance

As is often true with regional and local communications interoperability groups, the RIC serves as both a tactical and strategic governance body. Its tactical responsibilities range from implementing a regional communications system to developing a regional TICP to sharing redundancy and back-up assets, such as a regional radio cache. Its strategic responsibilities include building a roadmap of projects and initiatives designed to address long-term goals identified by the region and specified in the statewide and national strategic interoperable communications plans. One potential method for building this roadmap is the creation of a regional strategy that aligns with the State SCIP and the NECP.

In OEC's first governance guide, *Establishing Governance to Achieve Statewide Communications Interoperability*, OEC created the SCIP Planning and Implementation Life Cycle to illustrate communications interoperability as a long-term objective requiring a multi-phased approach involving planning, implementation, and assessment. The life cycle model depicts phases the SWIC must go through to see statewide progress on communications interoperability.

Similar to the SCIP Planning and Implementation Life Cycle phases, regions have their own planning, implementation, and assessment phases to follow. Regional interoperability will be most successful when regional stakeholders recognize these phases and understand how to use the regional governance structure to drive the interoperability effort clockwise. Figure 5 (Regional Strategy Planning and Implementation Life Cycle) illustrates this regional level, multi-phased approach and shows the alignment of the Federal, State, regional, and local strategies.
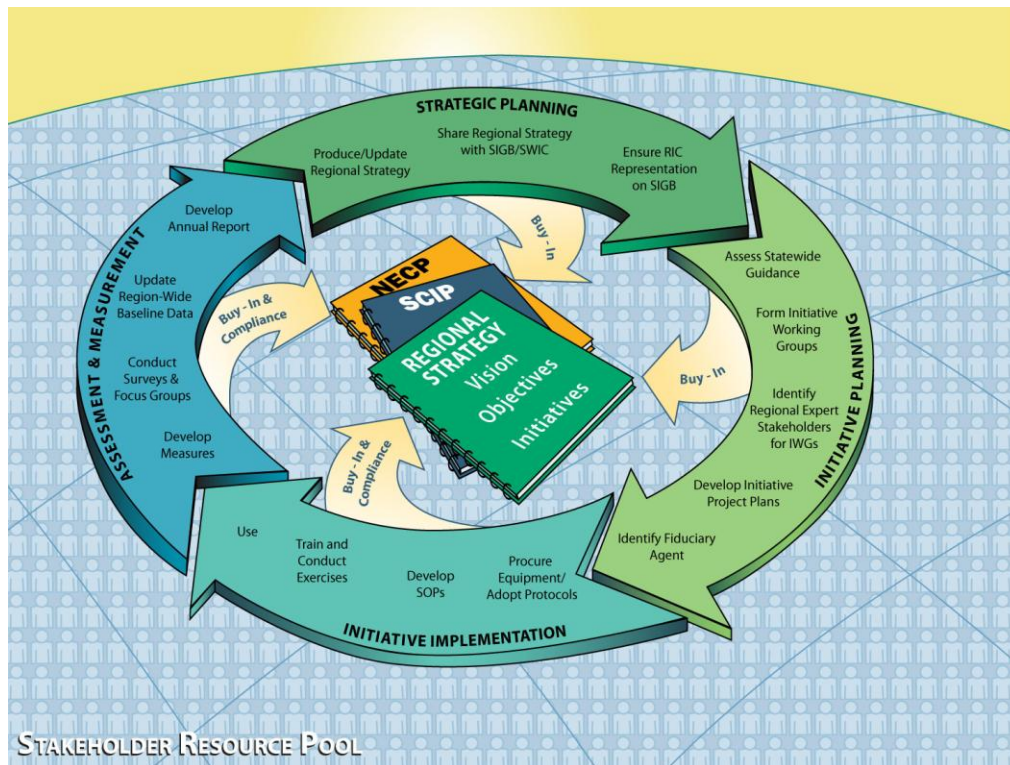

Figure 5. Regional Strategy Planning and Implementation Life Cycle

Strategic Planning

While the SIGB tends to focus broadly on statewide interoperability from a strategic viewpoint, RICs view interoperability much more tactically. Unlike most SIGB members, the majority of RIC members have day-to-day responsibilities in emergency communications and response that prompt them to focus operationally on interoperability planning. While tactical planning is extremely important, it is equally critical that RICs develop, implement, and update a regional strategy of their own.

During the strategic planning phase, the RIC creates and updates a long-term regional strategy that not only addresses local needs, but also aligns regional interoperability efforts with statewide and national efforts. In order for regional stakeholders to influence the State's interoperability priorities and align their own regional priorities to the highest SCIP and NECP priorities, regions need to outline the vision, mission, goals, objectives, and milestones of the region's interoperability strategy. A stakeholder-developed strategy supports quick and efficient identification and coordination of future regional interoperable communications projects. The regional strategy, whether one page or fifty pages long, is the region's roadmap for interoperability that will evolve and be updated as progress is made and external conditions change.

Produce/Update Regional Strategy

Useful strategies are created with diverse stakeholder inputs that often take time to collect. Given that most RIC members have limited time to volunteer for any given interoperability task, it is important to identify someone who can organize the strategic planning process. Unless there is an existing Regional Coordinator or there are resources to hire a consultant to do the work, local interoperable communications stakeholders should be solicited to volunteer as the Regional Coordinator in order to gather stakeholder input and write the strategy.

Effective stakeholder management and involvement is vital to the development, acceptance, and implementation of the regional strategy. To this end, the Regional Coordinator and RIC members should utilize the expertise within the regional governance system when preparing for and updating the region's strategy. This process should include gathering input from across the region through localized, discipline-specific planning sessions, baseline assessments, and executive input. The process should also include careful review of the SCIP and NECP to ensure the regional strategy adequately addresses the local and regional initiatives that those plans identified as critical to interoperability, and to ensure the region does not pursue policies conflicting with statewide and national priorities. In most cases, the SWIC can be a valuable resource in this process—often able to provide assistance and almost always able to provide insight about these statewide and national priorities.

To start, the Regional Coordinator should gather relevant stakeholders to validate and update the proposed approach to developing the strategy. This can be done at a RIC meeting, ensuring all stakeholders understand the purpose of the strategy and how they can provide input into its development. This is an important first step in building buy-in to the strategy and enhancing relationships across the region.

Similar to the process the State uses to develop the SCIP, each RIC should collectively define its mission and current state of communications interoperability, declare the desired future state or vision for improving communications interoperability, and determine the short-term strategic initiatives for reaching that vision. This will set the region up to develop tactical action plans for each initiative during the initiative planning phase. While each region will have its own mission, vision, and set of initiatives, each RIC should review the priorities of the statewide and national plans and use these plans to influence the development of the regional strategy. With the strategies aligned, the regional strategy will likely provide useful input to the future updates of the SCIP.

> ### A Strategic Planning Model
>
> In 2005, the DHS SAFECOM program partnered with the Commonwealth of Virginia to develop a strategic plan for improving statewide interoperable communications. The Commonwealth and SAFECOM created the plan using a "bottom-up," locally-driven approach. The planning process included six regional focus group sessions that culminated in a final strategic planning session. The focus group sessions captured perspectives from numerous local emergency response representatives throughout Virginia; these perspectives were used in the final strategic planning session to develop key initiatives for the statewide strategic plan. This example demonstrates how regional efforts should tie into larger statewide efforts.
>
> Based on lessons learned from the Virginia planning process, SAFECOM released the *Statewide Communications Interoperability Planning (SCIP) Methodology*, which details how to integrate stakeholder input into a successful statewide strategic plan. While the SCIP Methodology was originally written as one approach for States to consider as they initiated statewide communications planning efforts, the 10 phases of the Methodology can serve as useful guidance to regions undertaking a strategic planning effort.
>
> This Methodology can be found at:
> http://www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/library/interoperabilitycasestudies/1223_statewidecommunications.htm
>
> **Statewide Communications Interoperability Planning (SCIP) Methodology v2.0**
> *A Collaborative Approach to Statewide Communications Interoperability Planning*
>
> Homeland Security   SAFECOM
>
> Partnering to Save Lives

Given that the number of important projects far surpasses the resources available to support them, it is crucially important to prioritize initiatives. As part of the regional strategy development process, RIC members should rank the identified initiatives to guide funding requests and tactical regional planning. The strategy should include this ranked list of projects and the RIC should regularly review the list to ensure it is current and reflects changes in policy and technology.

When evaluating which interoperable communications projects to pursue, regional stakeholders should consider choosing projects that provide the greatest benefit to the region instead of projects that benefit a particular stakeholder's jurisdiction or discipline (particularly when those projects may reduce the overall interoperability profile of the region). However, there are rare cases when a single jurisdiction or discipline project is a high priority; generally, this occurs when the project brings an underserved or underperforming community up to the regional median. Whenever
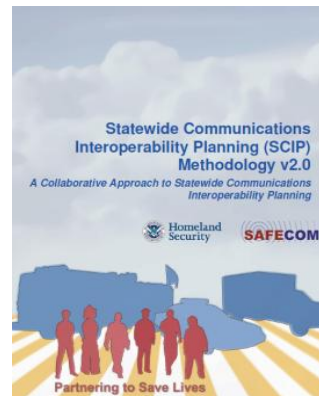
possible, regional stakeholders should place a high value on initiatives that enable the region to support statewide and national initiatives.

There are no limits to the kinds of initiatives a region may choose to pursue. While some regions will opt to create regional TICPs and regional SOPs, others may chose to pursue multi-jurisdictional technology purchases, conduct region-wide trainings or exercises, or hire a consultant or part-time staff person to support the regional effort. Most regions will choose a mix of these ideas. All regions, however, should ensure the list of regional initiatives reflects the SAFECOM Interoperability Continuum (see Figure 2) and conforms to national and statewide guidance and protocols.

Ideally, each RIC will update its strategy annually to ensure the prioritized list of initiatives is current and that it guides the regional interoperability effort. While the vision, mission, goals, objectives, and milestones identified in a region's initial strategy represent the region's long-term strategy, initiatives and tasks identified should be regularly revised and those changes should be noted in updated versions of the strategy. These strategic updates will continue to propel a region toward its vision of greater regional interoperability.

When updating the regional strategy, the Regional Coordinator and RIC should use a process similar to the one recommended to the State for updating the SCIP. Specifically, RIC members should consider recommendations identified from previous cycle reviews, any assessment information that may be on hand, recently released statewide and national guidance (including updated SCIPs and the NECP), and the current political and technological environment. Referencing these materials will help to:

- Add new initiatives to accomplish in the upcoming cycle.

- Ensure regional initiatives do not conflict with statewide and national priorities and initiatives.

- Identify, update, and carry over pertinent incremental initiatives and tasks from the previous strategy.

- Add new content to provide stakeholders with the most current information about the status of interoperability within the region.

Share Regional Strategy with SIGB/SWIC

Regional input is often difficult for the SIGB and SWIC to collect; as a result, the SCIP initiatives are often heavily focused on the needs of State agencies and large metropolitan areas. By sharing its strategy, a region may influence the State's annual update of the SCIP and ensure the SWIC and SIGB create policies and allocate funds that reflect regional priorities. Of particular interest to the SIGB and SWIC is the ranked list of initiatives in the regional strategy, particularly when Federal grants are released that demand prompt application submission. Because the initiative list is prioritized by regional stakeholders, the projects submitted by the State are more likely to align to regional needs.

Ensure RIC Representation on SIGB

In addition to providing the SIGB with the regional strategy, regional representatives should, whenever possible, serve on interoperable communications governance structures at the State level. This ensures that a region's activities align with those of their State and their SCIP. If regional representatives are not granted a voting seat on the SIGB due to statute or executive order, it is important to find another way to participate at the State level. Possible approaches include attending SIGB meetings in a non-voting capacity, participating in statewide IWGs, and holding regular conference calls with the SWIC and SIGB members to share information and ensure the

region and State are working together. The SWIC should be an advocate for adding RIC representatives to the SIGB and to other statewide governing committees.

Initiative Planning

The initiative planning phase is where the region's strategy—specifically the strategy's initiatives—becomes more than just a promising idea they take shape and win supporters. Thorough, inclusive planning efforts will greatly increase the success of the implementation efforts to follow. At its core, initiative planning efforts include substantial stakeholder engagement and strong project management, all of which builds support for stakeholder acceptance and compliance.

Assess Statewide Guidance

Many statewide initiatives depend on regional and local participation to be successful. To help local stakeholders implement these initiatives, the SWIC and the SAA will often distribute statewide guidance, such as grant guidance or suggested protocols for a statewide initiative. These tools can impact the number of statewide initiatives that are implemented. For example, because emergency response communications systems are owned and operated by local entities not directly controlled by State officials, local officials may use grant guidance to encourage local governments to voluntarily implement SCIP initiatives. With the promise of funding, regional and local leaders are often persuaded to pursue the grant funds and implement policies described in the grant guidance.

Whenever statewide guidance is received, the RIC must evaluate the guidance against the regional strategy— specifically the high-priority initiatives—to ensure there is alignment. Most of the time, the statewide policies support the regional strategy, and only minor changes to previously identified regional initiatives are required for the region to adhere to the guidance. In rare cases, however, RIC members will need to create a new initiative or modify or removing an existing initiative.
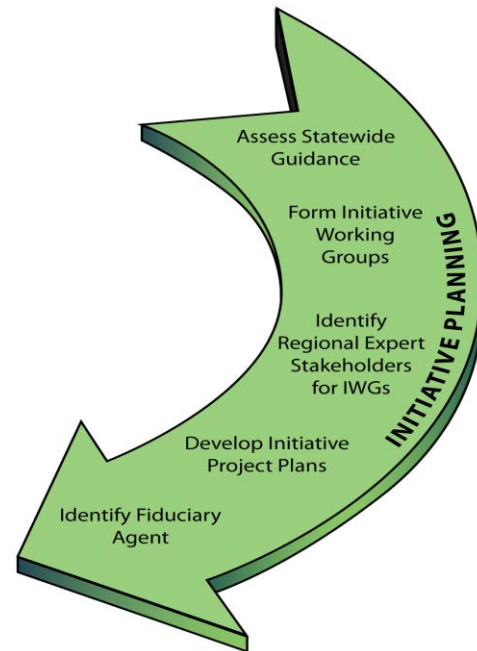
Form Initiative Working Groups

As mentioned in the previous chapter, regional IWGs are the engine of regional interoperability efforts and can play a crucial role in addressing action items identified during regional governance meetings. Regional IWGs can also be responsible for initiatives identified within the regional strategy, providing recommendations on the initiatives to the RIC for consideration and potential adoption. Whenever possible, the Regional Coordinator should help organize, steer, and maintain the IWGs.

The IWGs are informal

groups of stakeholders that are assembled for a limited period to work toward accomplishing a specific initiative. The IWGs are comprised of regional and local emergency response stakeholders. Members generally consist of SMEs on the issue the initiative addresses. OEC recommends that IWG members be drawn from the entire stakeholder community regardless of whether they serve on a standing committee or not. IWG members may include:

- Technology and communications interoperability experts

- Local emergency responders

- Stakeholder association representatives

- Professionals who represent emergency support functions such as transportation and health care

- Self-selected participants from across the region

The IWGs should:

- Review their initiative timeline and determine the project plan for initiative accomplishment.

- Establish an IWG lead to coordinate activities, arrange meetings, and report back to the RIC with recommendations and progress reports.

- Pursue additional resources, as needed, to complete tasks.

In some instances, existing standing committees—often organized along the lanes of the SAFECOM Interoperability Continuum—may become the lead IWG for a particular initiative. For example, an SOP committee may develop a regional TICP. In other instances, the standing committee members may determine they need additional assistance and form an IWG as a temporary subcommittee. For example, a technology committee may create an IWG to define requirements for the purchase of a regional radio cache.

Identify Regional Expert Stakeholders for the IWGs

One of the most important steps in the initiative planning phase is to identify a pool of regional expert stakeholders who can be used throughout the region's interoperability efforts. For initiatives to gain any support, both regionally and at the statewide level, the RIC must engage stakeholders who have the expertise and experience to assist RIC leaders in the implementation process.

A region with a comprehensive regional governance system, particularly one with standing committees formed along the SAFECOM Interoperability Continuum lanes, will find it easier to utilize a stakeholder-driven approach to implement initiatives. As a first step in the planning phase, the Regional Coordinator and the appropriate standing committee members should identify SME stakeholders from the region to form an IWG. These SMEs can be identified through various sources, including the RIC, statewide governance bodies, relevant listservs, and previously engaged stakeholders' personal networks.

Early efforts to identify SMEs for an IWG will ensure unexpected resistance does not occur later in the process. It is important to select individuals who bring a wide range of viewpoints to the effort and who can explain how to engage others like them. While there should be some well-respected, high-profile champions associated with the group, there should also be a few dissenters. This balance will keep the group optimistic and energized without ignoring very real problems that must be addressed to gain buy-in.

Develop Initiative Project Plans

Before the initiatives in the regional strategy can be implemented, the RIC needs each IWG to develop an action plan for each key initiative. Each action plan should include:

- Detailed, measurable initiative tasks

- Specific timelines and milestones

- Task owners, task partners, and missing stakeholders

- Available resources and resource needs and constraints

- New opportunities and lagging concerns regarding alignment with other regions' strategic plans, the SCIP, and the NECP

The following chart (Figure 6, Regional Strategy Initiative Project Plan) can help each IWG develop its initiative project plan.

Initiative

Tasks
Required to Implement Initiative

Task	Owner	Date

Implementation Team

Project Lead:
Rest of Team:

Who is Missing
Who do we Need to Recruit

Estimated Resources & Cost

Potential Obstacles

Mitigation Strategies

Figure 6. Regional Strategy Initiative Project Plan

Identify Fiduciary Agent

One of the most challenging regional governance issues revolves around distributing money to a region that is not a legal entity. In order to spend grant money, the region must identify a fiduciary agent. For the purposes of this guide, a fiduciary agent is an entity that holds financial assets in trust for other entities in the region and helps distribute those assets to those entities.

The region can identify a fiduciary agent on a case-by-case basis or designate one entity to always serve as the fiduciary agent for all the region's grant funding-related projects. Generally, the organization agreeing to be the fiduciary agent is one of the largest in the region. This occurs because fiduciary agents take on a certain level of risk in this role. That risk, however, can be mitigated by tightly aligning sub-grantee awards to the language in the original grant guidance, implementing requirements for detailed record keeping and procurement, including an indemnification clause in the MOU, and disbursing funds on a reimbursement basis.

Relationships play a crucial role in ensuring buy-in to the grant funding process. When regional entities trust their fiduciary agent, they are more likely to support the agent's grant disbursement decisions. An MOU facilitates grant funding coordination between the region's fiduciary agent and a region's grant funding participants and engenders trust. To simplify the procurement process and reduce risk to the fiduciary agent, MOUs may state that each jurisdiction will follow its own procurement rules and not those of the fiduciary agent. Additional safeguards, like a clause insisting on a competitive process, are common.

In most cases, the fiduciary agent may be able to recover many of the costs associated with administering a grant through a management and administrative expense fee imposed on all distributions. The amount of that fee is usually between three to five percent of the awarded amount. The fiduciary agent can simplify its administrative burden by only working with one organization in each jurisdiction (e.g., county, city). That one organization would be responsible for redistributing the funds to the other organizations in that jurisdiction.

Questions to Consider When Establishing a Regional Fiduciary Agent

- Is there a county or other legal entity within the region that has the ability to develop/enforce funding protocols?

- Do State agencies or non-profit organizations exist in the region that can assume fiduciary agent responsibilities?

- Does the fiduciary agent have the resources to cover the financial expenditures until the grant-making organization can provide the reimbursement?

- Does fiduciary agent designation remain constant or is it determined on a case-by-case basis?

- What criteria and process will the fiduciary agent use to award grant funding within their region? What level of agreement (e.g., unanimous, majority) at the RIC level will be required before awards can be made?

- How does the fiduciary agent ensure that every entity in the region has a fair opportunity of being awarded funding regardless of their level of expertise in writing grant applications?

- How does the fiduciary agent ensure management of the grant is transparent? How does the public access information concerning who in the region received grant funding and when?

- Does the fiduciary agent already possess a means of communicating regional needs up to the SIGB? Does the fiduciary agent already possess a means of communicating grant application opportunities down to its regional constituents?

- What mechanisms exist for mitigating risk assumed by the fiduciary agent? If an MOU exists to establish fiduciary agent authority, does the MOU contain an indemnification clause?

- What percentage of granted monies can the fiduciary agent charge as a management or administrative expense fee?

- Does the fiduciary agent have the resources and authority needed to perform regular check-ins with grant recipients?

- Who writes grant applications for the region? Does the fiduciary agent write the applications or do entities within the region write their own proposals and then submit them to the fiduciary agent for consideration?

Initiative Implementation

During the initiative implementation phase, participating jurisdictions see the operational benefits of partnering with each other on an initiative. Whether the initiative focuses on a new TICP for the region, a robust training program for multiple jurisdictions, or the purchase of shared back-up assets like a regional radio cache, local agencies will see their strategic decisions pay operational dividends.
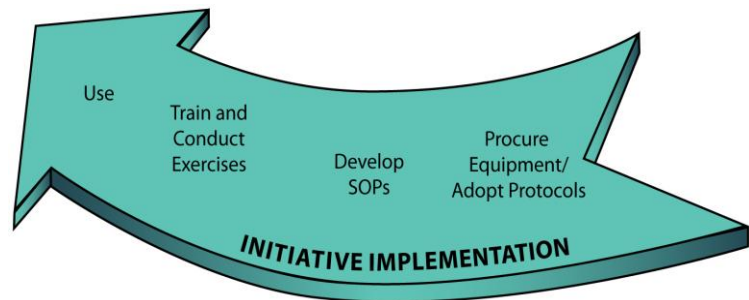
Often, the majority of the work begun during the implementation phase is carried out not by the RIC or the standing committees but by the local stakeholders that support the regional effort. The IWGs, working in conjunction with local agencies and departments, are the primary implementers of the regional strategy. In this phase, the Regional Coordinator and RIC must be very supportive of these stakeholders who will likely carry the heaviest load and need the support of the regional leaders.

The *Law Enforcement Tech Guide for Communications Interoperability*[14] (specifically chapters 9-14) is an excellent resource for guidance on implementing a technology initiative, particularly regarding procuring equipment.

Procure Equipment/Adopt Protocols

Many regional initiatives require a procurement process to be initiated. Others require various governance bodies and stakeholder groups to adopt protocols (e.g., a statewide plain language initiative). In either case, much of the actual work is carried out at the stakeholder level and not by the Regional Coordinator or RIC. The Regional Coordinator and RIC members can help,

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[14] US Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. December 2006. http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/ric/ResourceDetail.aspx?RID=238

however, by coordinating and communicating repeatedly with all stakeholder groups within the regional governance system. As explained in Chapter 3, the Regional Coordinator supports the system that aids all governance components in sharing resources as well as providing support and coordination across the region.

Develop Standard Operating Procedures

SOPs are formal written guidelines or instructions – in this context, they generally apply to incident response. Emergency response SOPs typically have both operational and technical components. SOPs must be established once equipment is procured or a protocol is adopted by a region, local agency, UASI, locality, or discipline. For example, if a Sheriff decides to implement a plain language initiative, specific SOPs need to be developed and adopted to implement the protocol. Similarly, if a region decides to adopt a shared channel protocol, specific SOPs need to be developed to address the regional requirements.

Train and Conduct Exercises

Proper training and regular exercises are critical to the implementation and maintenance of a successful interoperability initiative. Once SOPs are developed for the newly procured equipment or adopted policy, it is vital to train all stakeholders who are affected by the change.

Use

Usage refers to how often interoperable communications connectivity is used. If usage of the newly procured technology or protocol does not occur often, stakeholders will not be inclined to use the technology or protocol when they need it most. For example, if a radio cache is purchased but is not used regularly during training exercises or planned events, responders may not be able to distribute and activate the cache efficiently during an incident.

Assessment and Measurement

Once the initiative implementation phase has started, the Regional Coordinator and the RIC need to assess and measure the impact of the implementation efforts. They also need to collect data to help stakeholders manage their efforts and influence the regional strategy update process.

This phase of the life cycle requires a region to:

- Develop short-term, initiative-specific measures and long-term, goal-specific measures to evaluate progress.

- Reach out to stakeholders to receive input on the year's implementation activities.

- Develop or update a regional capabilities assessment baseline.

- Draft a brief report to demonstrate progress, setbacks, and areas for continued improvement in the year(s) to come.

The assessment and measurement guidance provided in Chapter 3 and Appendix D of *Establishing Governance to Achieve Statewide Communications*
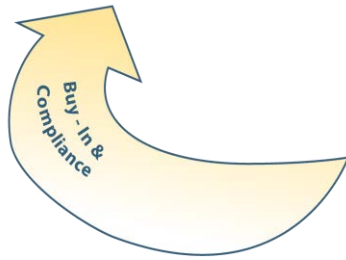
Interoperability[15] can be adapted to assist regional leaders in developing measures, assessing performance, and measuring progress.

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[15] Establishing Governance to Achieve Statewide Communications Interoperability. DHS Office of Emergency Communications. December 2008

Buy-in and Compliance

Buy-in and compliance is the core of the interoperability planning and advancement process. The process of achieving buy-in and compliance will be continuous throughout the process of establishing regional governance. Long-term strategy milestones may not receive full regional buy-in, compliance, and build-out until the effort's final future vision is achieved. Figure 7 illustrates how difficult it can be to persuade people to buy into a new concept. While there is usually a core group of visionaries and early adopters, the majority need convincing to become supporters. Those early supporters can be key allies in winning over the naysayers and others who are resistant to change.
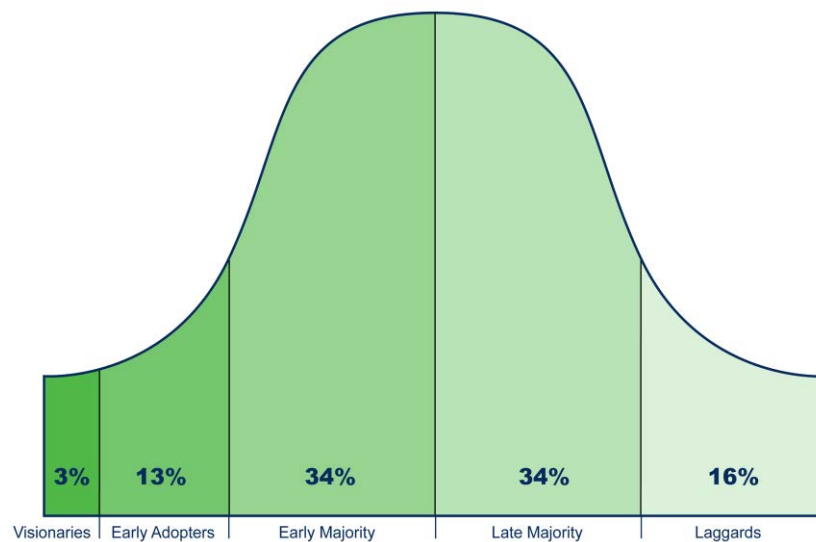
Figure 7: Rogers' Innovation Adoption Curve[16]

Once regional or local recommendations have been approved and a course of action is determined, the process of achieving buy-in from all relevant stakeholders begins. For this phase, relevant stakeholders include governance body members as well as emergency responders such as local sheriffs and fire chiefs. Political leaders, such as mayors, county officials, and city councils, as well as industry leaders should also be involved.

Because regions are usually not legal entities, getting local buy-in, compliance, and build-out for the regional strategy's approved vision, strategies, and initiatives can be a lengthy process. However, when local stakeholders and government officials participate in all phases of the regional strategy's planning process and in supportive governance bodies, policy acceptance and compliance within local entities is much more likely. Regional leaders can pursue buy-in and compliance through the following approaches:

- Collaborate through information sharing, outreach, and education.

- Identify best practice examples from across the region, from other regions, from other States, or from the Federal government that support the policy.

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[16] Rogers, Everett M. "Diffusions of Innovations" Free Press of Glencoe, Macmillan Company, 1962.

- Encourage local compliance through grant management.

- Pass legislation at the city or county level.

Conclusion

All-hazards emergency response changes incident to incident. At one moment, emergency responders may be in a high-speed car chase crossing jurisdictional lines and in the next moment they may be focusing on a wildfire or a search and rescue effort. Emergency response agencies, such as those belonging to the EMS, fire, and law enforcement disciplines, each bring with them their own unique set of capabilities and protocols in tackling these types of incidents. Despite this variance, however, one constant remains with all-hazards emergency response: The need for interoperable communications.

The ability of multiple jurisdictions and agencies to communicate effectively and interoperate with one another during an incident requires a concerted effort among emergency response stakeholders. Significant planning and decision-making must occur prior to the incident to ensure effective management of staff and resources. To assist in this effort, this guide promotes a regional governance framework that ensures interoperable emergency communications stakeholders have a means of mobilizing at the regional intrastate level. Within this framework, interoperable emergency communications stakeholders have an opportunity to voice their opinions and participate in regional decision-making to improve coordination and ensure future incident response success.

Establishing a successful regional governance system typically follows a path similar to the one laid out in this guide. A business case (Chapter 1) must be built encouraging regional governance participation; regions must be designated within the State (Chapter 2); roles and responsibilities within the region must be identified (Chapter 3); and a life cycle must be established so that the region continuously plans for, implements, and assesses its governance efforts (Chapter 4). As implied by this life cycle approach, local interoperable emergency communications stakeholders should feel empowered to establish and sustain a regional governance structure to effectively address regional needs and provide localities with the maximum benefit. These stakeholders are encouraged to tailor the enclosed recommendations to meet their specific regional governance needs as they are in the best position to determine what is necessary for success.

OEC recognizes that the successful planning, implementation, and execution of a regional governance structure requires dedicated time and resources. While this investment may appear daunting, it will bring significant results. Uniting the voices of its emergency response stakeholders, regions will find it much easier to identify and communicate local needs to their SIGBs. States will, in turn, be able to use regional governance bodies to share information with their local constituents. With information flowing freely between States and their regions, both parties will be able to verify and ensure alignment of their strategic plans. They will also ensure both plans comply with regionally focused Federal grant application requirements.

In the end, regional governance is nothing without the participation of interoperable communications representatives who have a committed interest in the success of their region. Consistent engagement of Federal, State, regional, local, and tribal stakeholders will ensure the advancement of a governance structure that best addresses present and future needs. This engagement will also support and enable the sharing of best practices and lessons learned. It is OEC's hope that this guide, developed in partnership with regional governance representatives, will offer stakeholders the guidance needed to successfully establish and sustain regional governance.

Appendix A: Regional Governance Promotion

As mentioned in Chapter 1, "The Business Case: How Regional Governance Strengthens Interoperable Emergency Communications," the effective promotion of regional governance can greatly increase its rate of adoption and implementation. When mobilizing promotional efforts, champions of regional governance should consider developing two marketing instruments: A promotional one-pager describing the business case for regional governance and a letter that actively recruits regional governance participants.

A sound business case provides interoperable emergency communications stakeholders, such as emergency response officials, government officials, and the general public, with the motivation they need to care about regional governance success. This motivation creates a domino effect: The more people who see the value in regional governance, the more likely people are to participate in its operation. The more people who participate, the more likely regional governance is to accomplish its mission of uniting local stakeholders of interoperable emergency communications. The enclosed business case template will help to summarize the importance of a region's governance efforts onto one page so that it can be clearly communicated to potential participants.

Much like a promotional one pager, a letter of recruitment provides champions of regional governance with a means of communicating the case for governance while, at the same time, soliciting participation. By distributing letters of recruitment, champions of regional governance identify and endorse the participation of local interoperable emergency communications stakeholders. Having received this endorsement, stakeholders become more likely to support regional governance efforts and the regional governance champion moves one step closer toward achieving their vision of locally-driven governance.

The following pages provide a business case template that will help to expedite the process of constructing a promotional one-pager for regional governance. A recruitment letter is also provided to expedite the process of enlisting city managers/administrators, mayors, or county executives in identifying individuals able to represent their county's interests on a burgeoning regional governance body. By filling in the templates' blanks and customizing the pre-populated language, emergency responders can quickly and easily build a case for regional governance.

Business Case Template

[Insert Name of Regional Governance Body Here]

Moving Regional Communications Forward

The [insert State authority here] established [insert name of regional intrastate governing bodies here] ([insert acronym for regional intrastate governing bodies here]) throughout [insert State name here] based on its [insert type of intrastate region to which regional intrastate governance bodies align] in [insert year here]. The [insert name of regional intrastate governing bodies here] meet and focus on regional initiatives in training, equipment, communication, and strategy to ensure ready access to response teams in times of emergency and to facilitate testing and training exercises for emergencies and mass casualty preparedness. Membership for each [insert name of regional intrastate governing body here] includes representatives from [*adjust as necessary*] emergency management, fire, law enforcement, local government, the private sector, and institutions of higher learning.

Making Your Voice Heard

Each [insert name of regional intrastate governing body here] assists Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) [insert SWIC name here] and the [insert name of the Statewide Interoperability Governing Body (SIGB) here] ([insert acronym of the SIGB here]) in implementing the initiatives written in the State's strategic plan for interoperable communications known as the Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP). Each [insert name of regional intrastate governing body here] also provides a forum for local communities to coordinate and plan at the operational and tactical level prior to providing input to the strategic statewide planning of the [insert name of the SIGB here]. Each [insert name of regional intrastate governing body here] has [*adjust as necessary*] an elected representative on the [insert name of the SIGB here] to share the local perspective and ensure each region has a voice in the decision-making process regarding future communications projects and funding. This structure helps engage a broader community of communications specialists at the regional level. With the increasing focus on regional approaches to strategic planning, collaboration among the SWIC, [insert name of the SIGB here], and the [insert name of regional intrastate governing bodies here] will form an essential foundation for achieving the communications interoperability goals of both our State and our region.

Uniting State and Local Efforts

The [insert State name here] SCIP is the guiding document for all interoperable communications activities. [Insert State name here] mandates the annual update of the SCIP and statewide compliance to the Plan by [insert date here]. The SWIC provides oversight for the update of the plan through the facilitation of key stakeholders. [Insert name of regional intrastate governing body here] participation provides an opportunity for the SWIC and local emergency communications practitioners to engage in an open dialogue and implement the [insert State name here] SCIP in ways that provide maximum impact at both the State and local levels. This dialogue also ensures advancement along the Governance Lane of the SAFECOM Interoperability Continuum, as depicted below.

| Governance | Individual Agencies Working Independently | Informal Coordination Between Agencies | Key Multi-Discipline Staff Collaboration on a Regular Basis | Regional Committee Working within a Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan Framework |

[Insert Name of Regional Intrastate Governing Bodies Here]

For more information on the [insert name of intrastate regions here] or [insert name of regional intrastate governing bodies here], please contact the [insert State name here] Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) at [insert e-mail address here] or [insert phone number here]. Visit our website at: [insert website here]

[Insert map of intrastate regions here]

Map Directory

Region I: [Insert Name of Region I Here]	Region II: [Insert Name of Region II Here]	Region III: [Insert Name of Region III Here]
[Insert Name of County A in Region I Here]	[Insert Name of County A in Region II Here]	[Insert Name of County A in Region III Here]
[Insert Name of County B in Region I Here]	[Insert Name of County B in Region II Here]	[Insert Name of County B in Region III Here]
[Insert Name of County C in Region I Here]	[Insert Name of County C in Region II Here]	[Insert Name of County C Region III Here]

Recruitment Letter Template

[Insert date here]

[Insert name of sender here]
[Insert title of sender here]
[Insert address of sender here]

Dear [insert name of city manager/administrator, mayor, county executive, or agency point of contact here],

I am writing this letter to ask for your help identifying a representative for the [county/agency] of [insert name of county/agency here] to sit on the [insert name of regional intrastate governing body here]. The [insert name of regional intrastate governing body] unites the efforts of our region's emergency responders so that interoperable communications gaps can be identified and addressed.

The lack of interoperable wireless communications has been an issue plaguing emergency response organizations for decades. In many cases, organizations do not have adequate radio channels, radio frequencies, hardware, emergency response software applications, or equipment to perform mission critical duties. Emergency responders are then unable to communicate or share critical voice and data information with other jurisdictions or disciplines during natural disasters, terrorist acts, or day-to-day operations. The [insert title of local authority here] has recognized the need to mitigate these interoperability risks in our community by supporting the creation of the [insert name of regional intrastate governing body here].

Background on the [Insert Name of Regional Intrastate Governing Body Here]

The [insert name of regional intrastate governing body here] includes emergency response representatives from the [insert number here] counties that make up the [insert name of intrastate region here]: [insert name of counties here]. Each county has [*adjust as necessary*] one designated member and vote on the [insert name of regional intrastate governing body here]. The [insert title of State representative here] also serves on the [insert name of regional intrastate governing body here] to ensure coordination with State programs and initiatives. The State member has [*adjust as necessary*] voting authority only with a tie.

The purpose of the [insert name of regional intrastate governing body here] is to [*adjust as necessary*] develop the [insert name of intrastate region here] strategy, develop investment identifications and justifications, establish funding allocation methodologies, approve all regional grant applications, approve all grant funded projects and programs, and make the final decision on allocation and distribution of grant funds. The [insert name of regional intrastate governing body here] is responsible for ensuring that funding is directed to projects that support regional, multi-disciplinary projects that align with strategic goals or gap analysis identified in the [insert name of intrastate region here].

Formal Appointment of [Insert Name of Regional Intrastate Governing Body Here] Members

With Federal grant funds taking on an increasingly regional focus, it is critical to have appropriate representation from [insert name of county/agency here] on the [insert name of regional intrastate governing body here]. We are asking that you appoint members to the [insert name of regional intrastate governing body here] that are able to support our governance program and

have the authority to represent their [county's/agency's] position on policy, programmatic, and sustainability issues related to specific projects/funding. Members should also be able to adopt a global perspective that considers the alignment of regional initiatives with initiatives at the State and Federal levels.

With this in mind, as we move forward, we ask that you formally appoint your representative to the [insert name of regional intrastate governing body here] by sending a letter to me with the name and contact information of that individual. My mailing information is providing with my signature below. Responses can also be sent electronically to me at [insert e-mail address here].

In closing, every one of our [insert name of regional intrastate governing body here] members has a voice in directing the initiatives and projects that improve our capability to prevent, respond to, and recover from threats that face the [insert name of intrastate region here]. As the [insert title here] of the [insert name of regional intrastate governing body here], and on behalf of the [insert name of regional intrastate governing body here], we look forward to our continued collaboration with your appointed delegate

Regards,

[Insert name here]
[Insert title here]
[Insert address of sender here]

Appendix B: Regional Governance Structure Case Studies

When establishing a governance structure, regional champions must carefully consider the variety of viewpoints held by their constituents and synthesize these viewpoints into a clear vision for the future. In that same vein, this appendix provides examples of regional governance structures established in four States of disparate geographies and populations (Idaho, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and New Mexico).[17] Stakeholders are encouraged to consider these examples when developing their own regional structures.

Unfortunately, no "one-size-fits-all" structure exists when it comes to regional governance. Each of the following case studies presents its own unique advantages, concerns, and recommendations. When leveraging the following information, readers may want to determine the structure which most closely aligns to their regional governance needs while, at the same time, considering how the documented structure can be tailored to best serve their specific region.

Idaho

Grant guidance often serves as the carrot providing the motivation, direction, and funding needed to implement regional governance. Just look at the State of Idaho.

In 2008, the Idaho Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) committed to establishing a regional governance structure in its State after seeking funding through the Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program (IECGP). IECGP funding required States to distribute 80 percent of their awarded money to local interoperable emergency communications stakeholders. This, however, posed a problem. "If we granted the IECGP dollars to each of our 44 counties and four tribes, we would have had much greater disparity and dilution than delivering the project in a concentrated manner," remembers Dodie Collier, Interoperable Communications Program Manager and member of the Idaho SIEC Governance Subcommittee. "Thinking from a basic organizational perspective, there needed to be a structure by which governance dialogue and decision-making could flow with the focus remaining on the locals as the bedrock of the structure."

To facilitate the targeted disbursement of grant funds, the SIEC Governance Subcommittee identified counties capable of assuming sub-grantee fiduciary and reporting responsibilities (e.g., the development of grant protocols and local-to-local Memorandums of Understanding [MOUs] concerning grant payment). According to Dodie, a list of criteria was developed to identify sub-grantees. These criteria included:

- A record of satisfactory grant management.

- A level of maturity in the interoperable emergency communications process (i.e., demonstration of progress in, and a collaborative approach to, interoperable emergency communications).

- A demonstrated interest in the SIEC and its issues through the years.

- A high percentage of trained staff (e.g., Incident Command System and National Incident Management System staff).

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[17] Information contained in these case studies was collected by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) through a series of interviews with regional governance stakeholders in the fall of 2009.

Soon, three "anchor counties" were selected and each signed an agreement with the State's Administrative Agency (SAA), the Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security. The SIEC notified these "anchor counties" of the roles and responsibilities associated with serving as a sub-grantee as well as the SIEC's intentions of implementing a regional governance structure around the selected counties.

Idaho is divided into six regions, otherwise known as districts. To facilitate grant disbursement, the SIEC determined that it was best to match each "anchor county" with two districts. Each "anchor county" then serves as their districts' champion for causes both tactical (e.g., standard operating procedure [SOP] and training development) and strategic (e.g., grant funding disbursement and local coordination with the State radio system). To support these causes, each district is encouraged to develop a Tactical Interoperability Communications Plan (TICP) as well as a strategic plan. Strategic plans facilitate grant proposal response by providing districts with a mechanism for identifying "shovel-ready" projects that address the district's life cycle planning needs.

Idaho's regional governance structure is beginning to take shape. Each of Idaho's six districts will soon be supporting a District Interoperability Governing Body (DIGB) with membership determined by the district itself. All six Idaho DIGB chairs will then sit on the SIEC Governance Subcommittee.

To encourage DIGB participation, the SIEC put a lot of effort into building a sound business case for regional governance. To Dodie and the SIEC, the business case was pretty clear. "We heard from OEC that projects were going to be regional and that they were looking to regions for funding disbursement," she says. "So we wanted to set up regions because future funding would be based on a regional approach."

For local interoperable emergency communications stakeholders, however, a little more explanation was needed. According to Dodie, many locals initially resisted regional formalization, seeing these efforts as a way for the State to meddle in local affairs. Dodie's team, however, reassured stakeholders that this was not their intent. "We told people that we're not coming in to disrupt pre-established coordination procedures," remembers Dodie. "We're just trying to put in a supporting structure. This is stakeholder-driven governance. You pick the people you work with, develop the protocols, and we'll provide you with the guidelines."

When communicating the business case, Dodie's team also emphasized the influence regional governance bodies, like DIGBs, hold: "We told them, 'This is your process,' and that DHS will look to district boards for the information that comes from stakeholders."

To further encourage the adoption of regional governance, the SIEC Governance Subcommittee developed a collection of promotional materials to serve as a sort of starter kit for fledgling governance bodies in each of the State's districts. The kit includes templates for a DIGB charter, bylaws, MOUs, and frequently asked questions. When SIEC Governance Subcommittee members attend the kick-off meeting of a DIGB, this kit is distributed to attendees. Future plans to expand the kit include the development of SOP templates. The SIEC Governance Subcommittee also hopes to develop DVDs and an online library for communicating training information.

For all of the support and guidance it offers districts regarding the development of charters and bylaws, the SIEC Governance Subcommittee maintains that local interoperable emergency communications stakeholders have the final say in making regional governance decisions. "The point here being the DIGB is their governance structure. Documents will reflect their MO so as not to disrupt existing working relationships," explains Dodie. "Our intent is to better coordinate and formalize the region so that the locals' voice remains and can be tied formally with other regions and the State."

Establishing regional governance is an ongoing, iterative process but Dodie has already noticed its positive effects. "Now that the process is in implementation, so far so good," she says. "For instance, travelers to district governance meetings submit their travel reimbursement requests to their county/tribe who in turn submit [requests] to the anchor county. The anchor county submits to our SAA and the process works just as it does with all other sub-grants."

Dodie continues: "Everyone involved with the governance project has a copy of the IECGP 2008 grant and the budget, so all is transparent. At the district kickoff meetings, I explained the 'anchor county' process. It has received buy-in. The districts are holding second and third meetings moving through the process.

"As we have done with so much of this process over the years, we are taking calculated, albeit small, steps toward the goal."

Idaho Counties by Region

Massachusetts

Establishing a regional governance structure doesn't mean that the wheel needs to be reinvented. Just ask the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

When designating its governance regions for interoperability, Massachusetts chose to leverage its five previously established homeland security regions: The Central Region, the Northeast Region, the Southeast Region, the Western Region, and the Boston Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) Region. According to Massachusetts Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) Rick Andreano, these regions were ideal for tackling the State's interoperability issues because each already possessed a decision-making Homeland Security Council. "Many States probably already have a governance structure that they can leverage when developing their own interoperability regions," notes Rick.

To complete development of Massachusetts' regional governance structure, each region chartered an Interoperability Subcommittee to support its Homeland Security Council. In order to reduce duplication of effort, these subcommittees absorbed the responsibilities of each region's pre-established Information Sharing Subcommittees. This consolidation made perfect sense to Rick. "If there are other existing entities in the region that relate to the interoperable communications effort, any governance entities you establish should share authority with them," he explains.

Meetings of the Interoperability Subcommittee typically occur on a monthly basis. To encourage participation, Subcommittees support online teleconferencing. Regions are also encouraged to regularly change the location of their meeting. "If the governance region is geographically large, you should move the location of the governance meetings around in the region so that everyone has an opportunity to participate in at least a couple of meetings," explains Melissa Nazzaro, SIEC representative for the Western Massachusetts Region. According to Melissa, meeting accessibility goes a long way to ensuring diverse geographic and discipline representation.

Melissa maintains that a strong State presence in each region also helps to ensure participation. "If a State is going to create a structure for regional governance, then the State needs to make the commitment to be present in the regional meetings and provide support," reasons Melissa.

Massachusetts ensures interaction between State and local officials by having its SWIC attend regional governance meetings. Regional meetings also encourage the attendance of State agency representatives.

To ensure further interaction between State and local officials, each Massachusetts region designates a representative—typically an Interoperability Subcommittee member—to sit on the twenty-nine member SIEC, which serves as the State's Statewide Interoperability Governing Body (SIGB). Regional representatives are granted voting rights on the SIEC. These representatives also sit as voting members on the State's Executive Management Committee (EMC), which supports the SIEC. The EMC is composed of the State's five regional representatives, along with the chair of the SIEC and the chairs of the State's other standing subcommittees. This heavily weighs the EMC toward regional representation whereas the SIEC is more heavily weighted toward State representation.

According to Melissa, an open dialogue between State and local officials is essential to supporting interoperable emergency communications efforts. "You need to establish trust and interaction between State and local representatives," she says. "This is important because the locals then realize that the State is committed to building the best State infrastructure and the State realizes that locals aren't misusing grant money."

The coordination of State and local officials plays a critical role in facilitating the disbursement of grant funding in Massachusetts. The SIEC has identified a statewide strategy for the use of Public Safety Interoperable Communications and IECGP funding. This strategy influences the way in which grant guidance is issued to regional fiduciary agents, which are legal entities that administer grants within an identified area. Because regions are not legal entities and are therefore not allowed to receive Federal funding directly, regions in Massachusetts hoping to obtain funding must enter into a contract with a fiduciary agent. Previously, the Western Massachusetts Region signed a contract establishing the Franklin Regional Council of Governments as its fiduciary agent. Agents then write and submit grant proposals to the SIEC. Upon receiving approval, fiduciary agents administer their grant within their region. Agents assume a portion of the grant to help cover administrative costs, such as those associated with staff management.

Grant funding plays a crucial role in ensuring the continued success of Massachusetts' regional governance efforts. The State uses Homeland Security Grant Program funding to cover administrative costs associated with regional governance efforts, such as costs associated with travel to and from monthly EMC meetings. In addition, funding supported the development of strategic plans for each of the State's regions. Recently, the State of Massachusetts received IECGP grant funding under the stipulation that 80 percent of the funding would be distributed to local stakeholders. State leaders had hoped to dedicate this funding to the development of regional strategic plans that aligned to the Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan (SCIP). With so much of the funding going to local stakeholders, however, the State lacked the resources needed to develop plans for each of their regions. Recognizing the State's predicament, local leaders agreed to return the IECGP funding they received back to the State. With this money returned, Massachusetts was able to develop strategic plans for each of their five homeland security regions.
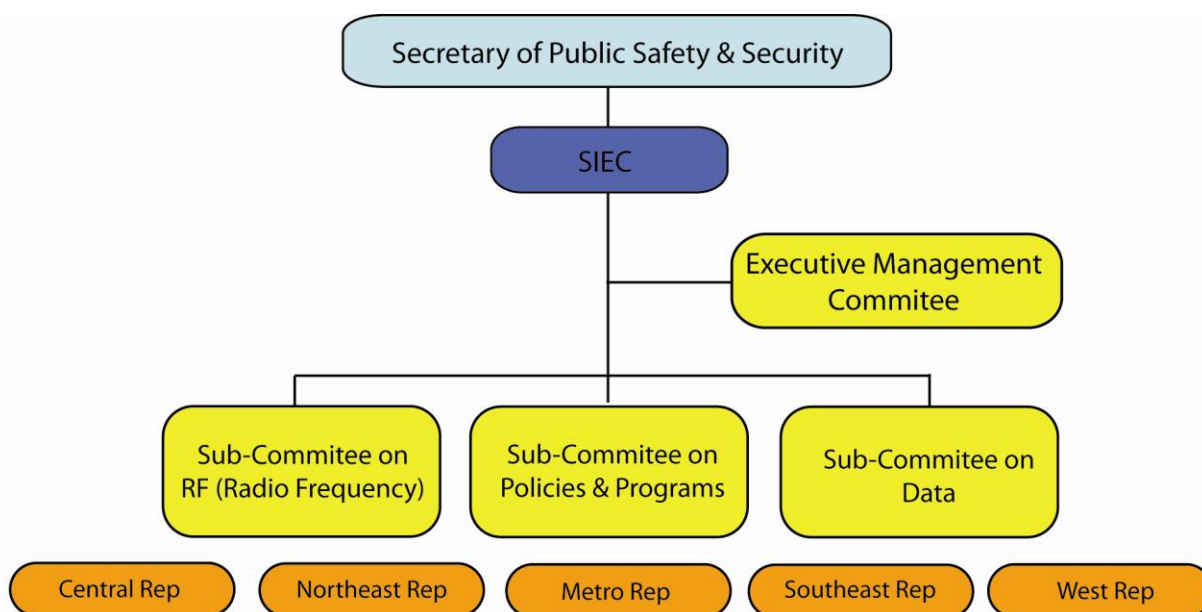
Figure 8: Coordination of Massachusetts' Statewide and Regional Governance Structures

Minnesota

As is often the case, local participation played a critical role in the development of Minnesota's regional governance structure. In 2005, Minnesota's SIGB—the Statewide Radio Board—instructed local interoperable emergency communications stakeholders to identify the State's governance regions. Five years later, local stakeholders had identified seven regions that spanned everywhere from Northeastern to Southwestern Minnesota.

"We suggested to local officials, 'We think it's best for you to determine what your region should be instead of the State,'" remembers Scott Wiggins, Director of Emergency Communications Networks for the State of Minnesota and the person responsible for Minnesota's governance structure. "You need the boots-on-the-ground operational people to determine which entities should make up their region."

In general, stakeholders identified regions that aligned with the State's homeland security regions. In one instance, however, local officials determined that it was best for their region to align to an established emergency services region.

According to Scott, region formation began as soon as two parties joined forces. For instance, the Central Regional Radio Board came together after the City of St. Cloud and Stearns County partnered with one another. "A city and a county or two counties is all it takes to start a regional governance board," adds Tom Hannon, a former firefighter and Emergency Communications System Manager for the City of St. Cloud who is known as "The Architect" of Minnesota's regional governance structure. "After that, everyone wanted to join." Of course, utilizing the governance structure for the disbursement of grants funds didn't hurt the adoption of the regional governance concept by local units of government either. A Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) template was also distributed among Minnesota's regions in order to ease the burden associated with formally uniting regional representatives.

With the regions defined and approved by the Statewide Radio Board, regional governance structures began to take shape. Soon, a Regional Radio Board (RRB) was established within six of the State's regions, joining forces with the Metropolitan Emergency Services Board (MESB) that already existed for the Minneapolis / St. Paul UASI Region. RRBs encourage, create, and maintain functional interoperability between the region's parties as well as provide for the administration of

enhancements to the Statewide Public Safety Radio System (known as the Allied Radio Matrix for Emergency Response [ARMER]). Administrative costs associated with RRB participation are assumed by the jurisdictions represented on the Board.

Regional Advisory Committees (RACs), Regional Radio System User Committees, and Owners and Operators Committees were also established within the regions to support RRB efforts. Each county, city, and tribal nation within the region appoints one representative and one alternate to the RAC. As RACs serve as the region's policymaking body, appointees are encouraged to have a policy background and are granted voting rights to the Committee. Non-governmental organizations and professional associations also participate in the RACs, but they are not granted voting rights. RAC responsibilities include:

- Reviewing all recommendations made to the RRB from all other regional committees regarding policies and procedures prior to RRB action.

- Providing technical recommendations to the RRB on matters affecting technology and system planning and development.

- Developing and recommending administrative procedures for the RRB.

- Recommending an annual budget for the RRB.

User Committees provide a forum for up to five city and five county appointed law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services (EMS), health, public works, and other user group representatives to guide effective operational use of interoperable emergency communications systems between the region's agencies and services. Similarly, Owners and Operators Committees provide a forum for emergency response communications system managers to guide the effective operational use of interoperable communications systems between the region's agencies and services.

To ensure alignment with the efforts of these regional subcommittees, one member of the RAC, one member of the Regional Radio System User Committee, and one member of the region's Owners and Operators Committee sit on the RRB. RRB membership also consists of one county commissioner or city council member from each entity that is party to the regional JPA.

Regional alignment with the Statewide Radio Board is ensured by having local agency representatives comprise two-thirds of the Statewide Radio Board. One-third of the Statewide Radio Board is local from greater Minnesota, one-third is local from the metropolitan area, and the last third are State representatives. "The SIGB has a supermajority of local officials who represent police, fire, EMS, county commissioners, and city council members. That level of local participation on the SIGB provides regional acceptance of the governing body," adds Scott.

The State has begun to leverage the regional governance structure when rolling out statewide policy. During an update of its SCIP, the Statewide Radio Board invited representatives from each of the Regional Advisory Committees to participate in the rewrite. "All events are local so having the local officials engaged in the governance process is critical for long-term success." says Scott.

A graphical depiction of how the State's regional governance structure fits into the statewide structure is provided in figure 9.
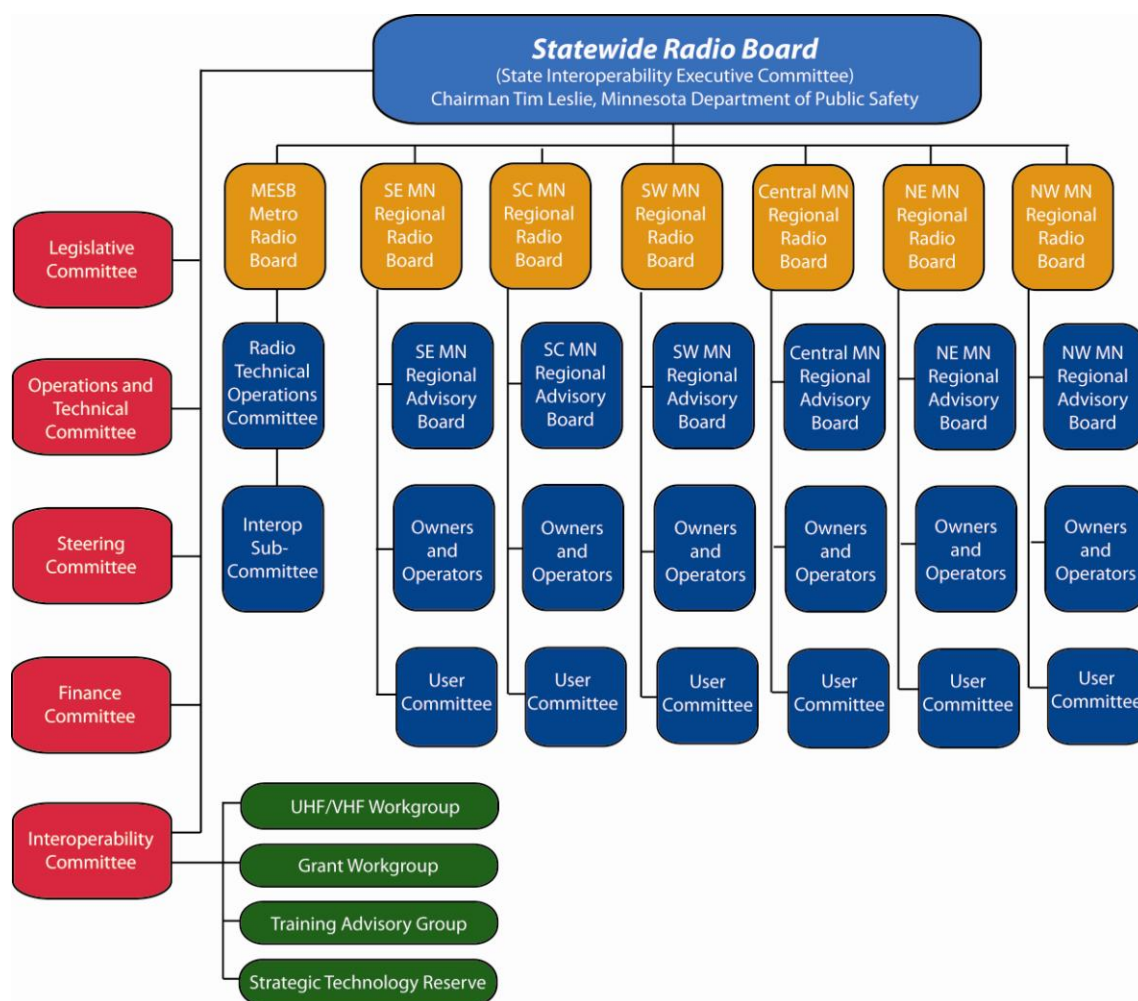
Figure 9: Coordination of Minnesota's Statewide and Regional Governance Structures

New Mexico

Many States employ regional staff who, in addition to their already established responsibilities, can be leveraged in the development of a regional governance system. In the case of New Mexico, the statewide structure of the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) played a vital role in helping the State to develop its regional structure.

By the time New Mexico began assembling a regional governance structure, the DHSEM had already divided the State into six preparedness areas each with its own DHSEM representative. Recognizing how this network of intrastate regions aligned with efforts to develop a regional governance structure, a plan was quickly devised: The DHSEM representative in each of the State's preparedness areas would be designated as a Local Preparedness Coordinator. This coordinator would continue to address their area's emergency management needs but would also assume the role of representing their area's emergency communications issues.

To New Mexico SWIC and Chief Information Officer for DHSEM Jacque Miller, it made perfect sense to leverage regional DHSEM representatives as Local Preparedness Coordinators. Perfectly positioned in between State and local interoperable communications stakeholders, regional DHSEM representatives are the type of well-connected agency representatives needed to support a regional governance system: They possess close ties to the SWIC but also have working relationships with the local interoperable communications stakeholders that serve on the State's six newly formed Preparedness Area Working Groups (PAWGs).

"Local Preparedness Coordinators serve as the official point of contact to reach out to within the region," explains Jacque. "They fulfill a customer service type of role. They aren't expected to be a communications expert. They just have to know who to contact."

DHSEM representatives were at first hesitant to assume the title of Local Preparedness Coordinator. To encourage adoption, it was communicated that very little would change by assuming the Local Preparedness Coordinator designation. According to Jacque, Coordinators were already tackling communications issues prior to assuming their new title. They just needed reassurance that assumption of the Coordinator role would have no affect on their normal day-to-day interactions. "Local Preparedness Coordinators are working with the same regional stakeholders they were working with before they received their title," says Jacque.

To further combat the reluctance often encountered with formalizing a regional governance system, the State has not issued any hard and fast rules regarding PAWG membership. Instead, all interested parties within a preparedness area are encouraged to participate. "We didn't establish any rules and formalities with the Working Groups because with formality comes responsibility and people get uncomfortable when responsibilities become formal," says Jacque.

"In general, participation within the preparedness areas has not been an issue," Jacque continues. "This is in part because DHSEM have employees within the preparedness area to help organize the region." The level of effort required to organize PAWG meetings varies according to preparedness area. Some PAWGs meet monthly to address both emergency management and communications issues. Others meet less frequently, maybe two to three times a year, to specifically address communications issues. These meetings are typically precipitated by the issuing of grant guidance or are at the behest of the State. Local Preparedness Coordinators serve as the leader of their region's meetings.

In addition to hosting regular meetings, PAWGs also manage regional TICPs. Regional TICPs break down equipment inventory on a county-by-county basis which helps planning areas to allocate the resources needed to address their operational needs. By focusing on the county level, TICPs also help PAWGs to align with previously established county governance systems.

To ensure alignment with the State, all PAWG members are also members of the General Statewide Interoperable Communications Working Group (SICWG), which has open membership. Not everyone in the SICWG, however, is invited to join the SICWG Core Team, which serves as the SIGB. The Core Team is appointed by DHSEM, which makes a concerted effort to ensure that the Team is representative of each region within the State.

What does the future hold for New Mexico's regional governance system? Well, like many States, New Mexico struggles when it comes to encouraging urban areas to participate in regional strategic planning. According to Jacque, even though urban areas are ready to supply their rural neighbors with incident support, urban areas are often less than eager to support their rural neighbors' regional strategic planning efforts. "From a planning perspective, it is difficult to pull in the city into working with the larger preparedness area," explains Jacque. "The State's only leverage to get people to work together is through money and funding, but larger communities have plenty of money on their own." Despite this difficulty, however, Jacque remains committed to developing agreements and partnerships to support regional governance. "It is best to keep UASIs part of the larger group with their surrounding counties," maintains Jacque. "That way they can have established relationships before an incident, like a wildfire that occurs outside the city limits."
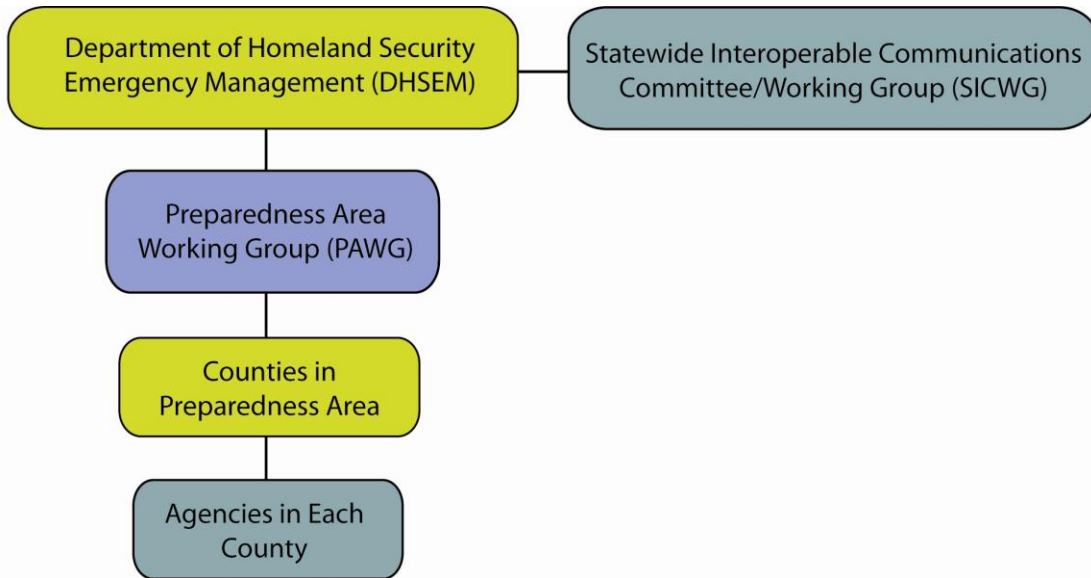
Figure 10: Coordination of New Mexico's Statewide and Regional Governance Structures

List of Acronyms Used Exclusively in the Regional Case Studies

ARMER: Allied Radio Matrix for Emergency Response

DHSEM: Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management

DIGB: District Interoperability Governing Body

EMC: Executive Management Committee

IECGP: Interoperability Emergency Communications Grant Program

MESB: Metropolitan Emergency Services Board

PAWG: Preparedness Area Working Group

RAC: Regional Advisory Committee

RRB: Regional Radio Board

SICWG: State Interoperable Communications Working Group

SIEC: Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee

Appendix C: Glossary of Acronyms

CalSIEC: California Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee

DHS: Department of Homeland Security

EMS: Emergency Medical Services

IWG: Initiative Working Group

JPA: Joint Powers Agreement

MOU: Memorandum of Understanding

NECP: National Emergency Communications Plan

NIIX: National Interoperability Information eXchange

OEC: Office of Emergency Communications

RIC: Regional Interoperability Committee

SAA: State's Administrative Agent

SCIP: Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan

SIGB: Statewide Interoperability Governing Body

SME: Subject Matter Expert

SOP: Standard Operating Procedure

SWIC: Statewide Interoperability Coordinator

TICP: Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan

UASI: Urban Area Security Initiative

Appendix D: References

Creating a Charter for a Multi-Agency Communications Interoperability Committee
DHS Office for Interoperability and Compatibility (OIC) - SAFECOM
This tool provides guidance for developing charter documents for multi-agency communications interoperability committees. The document is laid out in a recommended charter structure with suggested headings for each section. Each section poses questions to consider when writing content for a charter. Sample paragraphs are included for reference.
www.safecomprogram.gov/NR/rdonlyres/49A7EC9B-7227-45D5-930A-83D9145EE1F1/0/Governance_t1.pdf

Establishing Governance to Achieve Statewide Communications Interoperability
DHS Office of Emergency Communications (OEC). December 2008
This document presents information about the role, system, and operations of statewide governing bodies that are charged with improving communications interoperability across a State. Without establishing a mandate, this national guide assists States and localities in developing and refining their governance methodologies and systems.
http://www.safecomprogram.gov/NR/rdonlyres/24F10648-2642-42F3-8305-B29315F833BF/0/EstablishingGovernanceGuide.pdf

Federal Emergency Management Agency National Incident Command System 200, Unit 2: Leadership and Management.
The Incident Command System (ICS) is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazards incident management approach.
http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/ICS200CR/ICS200IGPDF/02ICS200LeaderSept05.pdf

National Interoperability Information eXchange (NIIX)
The National Public Safety Telecommunications Council (NPSTC) with the support of OIC and OEC, provides NIIX as a free, online service to the public safety telecommunications community, for the exchange information on interoperability.
www.niix.org

Formal Agreement and Standard Operating Procedure Template Suite and Reference Library
DHS OIC - SAFECOM
The Formal Agreement and Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) Template Suite provides guidance and templates to expedite the construction of a Charter, Executive Order, Local to Local Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), State to Local MOU, System-to-System Console Patch SOP, Mobile Gateway Patch SOP, Shared Channel SOP, Shared System SOP, and Radio Cache SOP. The corresponding Reference Library is a collection of over 200 practitioner-submitted formal agreements and SOPs. The Library is available on the NIIX website.
www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/tools/templatesuite
www.niix.org

Grants Program Directorate
The Office of Grants and Training within DHS is responsible for providing training, funds for the purchase of equipment, support for the planning and execution of exercises, technical assistance, and other support to assist States and local jurisdictions to prevent, respond to, and recover from

acts of terrorism.
http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/index.shtm

Law Enforcement Tech Guide for Communications Interoperability.
US Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. December 2006.
The Law Enforcement Tech Guide is a comprehensive, user-friendly guidebook that provides strategies, best practices, and recommendations for public safety agencies seeking to develop or already engaged in interagency communications projects.
www.cops.usdoj.gov/ric/ResourceDetail.aspx?RID=238

National Emergency Communications Plan
DHS OEC. July 2008.
The National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP) is a strategic plan that establishes a national vision for the future state of emergency communications, sets national goals and priorities for addressing deficiencies in the Nation's emergency communications structure, and provides recommendations and milestones for emergency response providers and relevant government officials to improve their communications capabilities. The NECP seeks to align Federal, State, local, and tribal planning efforts through a common vision and set of goals, objectives, and priority initiatives that target emergency communications. For State, regional, local, and tribal governments, the NECP provides guidance for future strategic planning efforts as well as recommended initiatives for improving emergency responders' communications capabilities.
www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/natlemergencycommplan/1372_nationalemergency.htm

Operational Guide for the SAFECOM Interoperability Continuum
DHS OIC – SAFECOM.
At the Urban Area Summit, held on October 27-28, 2004, in Washington, D.C., emergency response stakeholders and leaders from the ten RapidCom Urban Areas along with key stakeholders from the Federal, State, and local levels convened to share best practices, lessons learned, and other experiences gained from planning and implementing communications interoperability solutions. The purpose of this report is to share the valuable information learned from the representatives of the emergency response community that participated in RapidCom and to provide a framework for communities and regions to use in their communications interoperability planning efforts.
www.safecomprogram.gov/NR/rdonlyres/5189828C-8D5E-4F66-9B3E-CFF847660023/0/LessonLearnedFinal101305.pdf

Rogers, Everett M. "Diffusions of Innovations" Free Press of Glencoe, Macmillan Company, 1962.
A discussion on innovations and their spread throughout social systems.

SAFECOM Grant Guidance
DHS OIC – SAFECOM. Fiscal Year 2010.
Although SAFECOM is not a grant-making body, it has developed coordinated grant guidance to help maximize the efficiency and effectiveness with which emergency response communications-related grant dollars are allocated and spent. The grant guidance document outlines recommended grant funding eligibility—including applicants and activities, application criteria, guidelines, and resources—to assist the emergency response community in strengthening interoperability.
http://www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/library/grant/1549_fy2010.htm

SAFECOM Interoperability Continuum

DHS OIC – SAFECOM.

The SAFECOM Interoperability Continuum provides a graphical depiction that demonstrates the five critical success factors to achieving interoperability, beyond just technology. This tool also provides a framework from which all emergency response agencies at the Federal, State, local, and tribal levels can use to baseline their planning and implementation of interoperability solutions.
www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/tools/continuum

SAFECOM Program

SAFECOM is a communications program of DHS. SAFECOM provides research, development, testing and evaluation, guidance, tools, and templates on interoperable communications-related issues to Federal, State, local, and tribal emergency response agencies. The Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) supports SAFECOM's development of grant guidance, policy, tools, and templates, and provides direct assistance to Federal, State, local, and tribal stakeholders. The Office for Interoperability and Compatibility (OIC) supports SAFECOM's research, development, testing and evaluation, standards, and tools such as reports and guidelines. OEC is an office within the Directorate for National Protection and Programs. OIC is an office within the Science and Technology Directorate.
www.safecomprogram.gov

Statewide Communication Interoperability Planning (SCIP) Methodology

DHS OIC – SAFECOM.

This methodology helps states develop a strategic plan for improving statewide public safety communications and interoperability.
http://www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/library/interoperabilitycasestudies/1223_statewide communications.htm

Statewide Interoperability Planning Guidebook

DHS OIC. March 2007.

This tool provides an explanation of the statewide plan criteria, a step-by-step guide for developing an interoperability plan, and a recommended layout for the statewide plans. Detailed explanations include common questions to consider, helpful hints in completing each section, and a list of the criteria each section addresses.
www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/library/interoperabilitybasics/1311_statewideinteroperability.htm

Summit on Implementing Wireless Communications: Perspectives on Interoperability from the Law Enforcement Community.

US Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. May 2005.

The summit brought together members of the federal government, leaders in the technology field, and more than 150 invited local and state government officials. In a plenary session, panel discussions, small group breakout sessions, and presentations by leaders in the field, attendees participated in open discussions about interoperability, what works well, what can be improved, and how the Department of Justice can provide appropriate assistance in the future.
http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/Default.asp?item=1495

US Department of Homeland Security

A cornerstone of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) philosophy is a commitment to partner closely with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, emergency responders, and law enforcement entities to ensure the security of the United States. Its website explains how

DHS and local governments can work together.
www.dhs.gov

Why Can't We Talk*?*

National Task Force on Interoperability. February 2003.
"Why Can't We Talk?" is a guide for public officials. It explores barriers to interoperability and strategies to achieve interoperability.
http://www.safecomprogram.gov/NR/rdonlyres/322B4367-265C-45FB-8EEA-BD0FEBDA95A8/0/Why_cant_we_talk_NTFI_Guide.pdf

Writing Guide for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

DHS Office for Interoperability and Compatibility – SAFECOM
This tool provides guidance for developing a memorandum of understanding. The document is laid out in a recommended MOU structure with suggested headings for each section. Each section poses questions to consider when writing content for an MOU. Sample paragraphs are included for reference.
www.safecomprogram.gov/NR/rdonlyres/70169F1E-F2E9-4835-BCC4-31F9B4685C8C/0/MOU.pdf

Writing Guide for Standard Operating Procedures

DHS Office for Interoperability and Compatibility – SAFECOM
The purpose of the Writing Guide for Standard Operating Procedures is to assist communities that want to establish formal written guidelines or instructions for incident response. Each section poses questions to consider when writing content for standard operating procedures. Sample paragraphs are included for reference.
www.safecomprogram.gov/NR/rdonlyres/2D396F0E-CE19-4DCB-A30A-35982721F5AA/0/SOP.pdf