

## Additional Information

Additional information included in the complete SCIP methodology:

- Comprehensive explanations of each phase as well as respective components and outputs
- Diagrams and graphics mapping processes and methodologies
- Funding resources
- Templates to:
  - Measure interoperability
  - Manage participants and stakeholders
  - Conduct facilitated meetings
- Tabletop exercises
- Sample letters
- Governance models

For more information, visit:  
[www.safecomprogram.gov](http://www.safecomprogram.gov)

SAFECOM, a communications program of the Office for Interoperability and Compatibility (OIC), with its federal partners, provides research, development, testing, evaluation, guidance, tools, and templates on communications-related issues to local, state, and federal public safety agencies. The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) OIC is managed by the Science and Technology (S&T) Directorate's Office of Systems Engineering and Development (SED).

# SCIP

at a glance

## An Overview of the Statewide Communications Interoperability Planning Methodology

A ten-step roadmap to wireless interoperability for state and local first responders



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## Background

The lack of interoperable wireless communications systems is an issue that continues to impact public safety agencies in communities across the country. In many cases, agencies are unable to communicate or share critical voice and data information with other jurisdictions or disciplines during natural disasters, emergency response scenarios, terrorist acts, or even day-to-day operations.

It has become increasingly clear to the public safety community that communications interoperability cannot be solved by any one entity alone. The solution will require a partnership among public safety organizations (local, state, federal, and tribal) and industry. In addition, a truly effective and interoperable communications system will require a clear and compelling statewide strategy focused on increasing public safety effectiveness and coordination across all related organizations. To truly gain this type of required consensus, the state strategy must be driven by the local level public safety organizations and officials in the planning process.

## Overview

The Statewide Communications Interoperability Planning (SCIP) methodology addresses these issues by describing a step-by-step process for developing a locally driven statewide strategic plan for enhancing communications interoperability. The methodology identifies 10 phases and describes in detail the critical tasks and key considerations under each phase. In addition, the SCIP offers tools and resources to meet the objectives of each phase.

## Target Audience

While the SCIP methodology may be most appropriate for a state interoperability coordinator or an individual in a comparable position, officials at all levels of government may apply this methodology to develop strategies for improving interoperability with practitioner support. In addition, the SCIP methodology may be helpful to public safety practitioners interested in promoting a strategic planning process in their state or locality.

“The process SAFECOM utilized when assisting Virginia with the development of a statewide interoperable communications plan was outstanding. The focus placed on ensuring that local first responders drive the process when creating interoperable communications plans has been long overdue. Who better to identify what works and what does not work than the very same public safety responders that use radios on a daily basis to save lives? Virginia now has a strategic plan for statewide communications interoperability that was developed by local public safety responders for local public safety responders.”

*Chris Eassid, Commonwealth  
Interoperability Coordinator,  
Office of the Secretary of  
Public Safety*

## **Phase I**

### **Establish Key Relationships and Funding**

In the first phase of the SCIP methodology, a contract or written agreement should be drafted between the state sponsor and the project team responsible for carrying out the planning process. This contract or written agreement, often in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), should address funding issues and identify key relationships to facilitate the funding process. The SCIP offers a grant guidance resource section as a starting point to locate funding in your area.

## **Phase II**

### **Gather Information**

In Phase II, efforts should be made to gather as much data and information as possible. By gaining an understanding of current and past efforts to improve communications interoperability as well as the perspectives of the practitioners, a communications interoperability plan can be created that meets the actual needs of the public safety community. The SCIP offers SAFECOM Web links, templates, and tools to facilitate research and specifically addresses many of the common issues that arise during this phase.

## **Phase III**

### **Create Project Plan and Roadmap**

Phase III consists of determining the direction and process of the state's strategic plan and developing a clear roadmap. The roadmap process should include the careful preparation and planning necessary to account for the budget, resources, and timeline each state will face. To assist in project planning, the SCIP offers sample roadmaps and project management and planning guidance.

## **Phase IV**

### **Identify Roles and Responsibilities – Project Team**

Once the roadmap is complete, a project team must be assembled and roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined. The project team plays a vital role in ensuring the success of the entire planning process, so its roles and responsibilities must be well established. In this phase, the SCIP helps identify the critical players who must be involved, provides a template for the kick-off meeting, and suggests a role clarification exercise.

## **Phase V**

### **Recruit Focus Group Participants and Begin Meeting Preparation**

Through focus groups, the state can get members of the public safety community involved. Focus groups include a diverse representation of practitioners from the major public safety disciplines of fire, law enforcement, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS). The focus groups also actively involve practitioners in the development of a strategy. For Phase V, the SCIP offers sample letters, a participant database template, phone scripts for contacting local agencies, and media and outreach guidance.

## **Phase VI**

### **Conduct Focus Group Interviews**

Focus group interviews provide an efficient and effective way to gather an array of diverse practitioner perspectives while identifying individuals to include in the strategic planning session at the end of the process. The SCIP employs a methodical approach to the delivery of these interviews to ensure that each region is asked the same type of questions in a similar manner. For Phase VI, the SCIP provides strategic guidance and tools for facilitated sessions, an introduction to dialogue mapping software, and sample focus group reports.

## **Phase VII**

### **Analyze Data and Prepare for Strategic Planning**

Phase VII concentrates on making sense of the data collected during the focus group interviews in Phase VI. The data must be compiled and assessed to determine the local practitioners' collective voice on issues pertaining to communications interoperability. The collective perspectives will fuel recommendations for the development of the statewide strategic plan.

## Phase VIII

### Prepare and Conduct Strategic Planning Session

The strategic planning session brings together key decision- and policy-makers who can ensure the successful adoption and implementation of public safety communications interoperability initiatives. The session participants will review the data analysis from Phase VII and ultimately confirm initiatives that will immediately and directly impact communications interoperability across jurisdictions and agencies. For this phase, the SCIP offers Web links to strategic planning session reports and sample invitation letters.

## Phase IX

### Develop Statewide Communications Interoperability Strategic Plan

The statewide strategic plan will leverage the technical expertise of the project team, the results of the focus group interviews, and the output of the strategic planning session. The design of the strategic plan will vary based on the needs of each state; however, as guidance, the SCIP offers strategic plans from other states that have implemented the methodology. In addition, the SCIP provides governance models and charters as references.

## Phase X

### Establish Guidelines for First 90 Days of Implementation

As mentioned in Phase IX, the planning and writing of the strategic plan mark the start of the implementation process. Phase X provides preliminary guidelines for putting that strategic plan into action, including prioritizing initiatives, developing a project plan, identifying funding considerations, and leveraging the resources of the governing bodies involved.

**“The method that the sessions used made the people think about the real issues that affect their own agency. Having these issues put on paper helps others realize that they share the same problems.”**

*Jim Wilson, Southern Nevada Area Communications Council (SNACC)*

**“I have been working in fire and law enforcement my entire career and have experienced interoperability problems firsthand. This is the first time I have seen light at the end of the tunnel on this critical problem. In the Commonwealth of Virginia the problem has never been cooperation between agencies. The problem has always been coordination and control of resources. Hopefully, this series of meetings will result in a plan that will pave the way for enhanced communications for all concerned.”**

*Steven Counts, Virginia Department of Forestry*