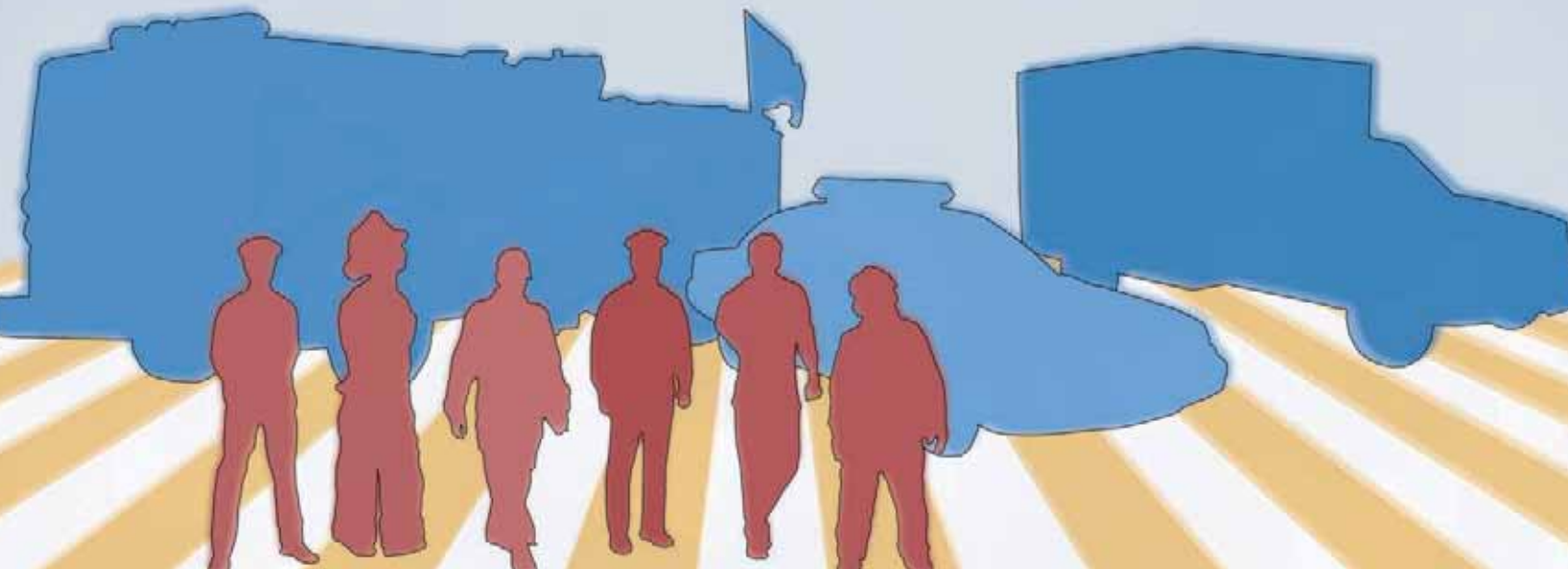


# Lessons Learned from the Commonwealth of Virginia: One Year Later

Supplemental Information on the Statewide Communication Interoperability Planning (SCIP) Methodology



Homeland Security



Partnering to Save Lives



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## Executive Summary

The Statewide Communication Interoperability Planning (SCIP) methodology provides guidance for states and regions to plan for improved interoperable communications in the public safety community. Developed and supported by SAFECOM, the SCIP methodology draws on the planning approach used by the Commonwealth of Virginia to develop Virginia's FY 2005 Strategic Plan for Statewide Communications Interoperability. The SAFECOM program provides research, development, testing and evaluation, guidance, and assistance for local, tribal, state, and federal, public safety agencies. This helps these agencies to improve public safety response through more effective and efficient interoperable wireless communications.

Now, one year after Virginia's planning process, SAFECOM has sponsored and conducted the study discussed in this report to test and validate the SCIP as a strategic planning model. The study evaluates the effectiveness of the SCIP in:

- Improving overall statewide coordination of communications interoperability
- Developing and maintaining the practitioner-driven approach
- Providing a replicable resource for state and regional planning

The study provides eight lessons learned, as well as five components of success, that led to a more effective implementation of Virginia's Strategic Plan.

Major findings include:

- As the executive committee membership is identified, the state must clearly define, communicate, and consider the roles and responsibilities of governing bodies. All participants must have a good understanding of what is expected of them.
- All communications systems, and systems under development, must be considered in the process. The state must provide incentives and education to encourage participation from the proprietors of all communications systems, while acknowledging it will not endorse any one system as a statewide solution.
- Governing committees must establish a post-planning communications strategy. Without a communications strategy, practitioners will return to their day-to-day operations without putting insights from the interoperability discussion into practice.

This document is designed to supplement, and be read in conjunction with, the SCIP methodology. As SAFECOM continues to implement the SCIP, and as states move from planning to implementation, additional lessons learned and components of success will continue to supplement the methodology. An enhanced planning process will lead to more successful implementations and, ultimately, to improved communications interoperability nationwide.

## Overview

SAFECOM, a communications program of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office for Interoperability and Compatibility (OIC), provides, with its federal partners, research, development, testing and evaluation, guidance, tools, and templates on communications-related issues to local, tribal, state, and federal, public safety agencies. OIC is managed by the Science and Technology Directorate's Office of Systems Engineering and Development.

In 2004, SAFECOM partnered with the Commonwealth of Virginia to help the state undergo a formal planning process for communications interoperability. The planning process focused on practitioner-driven outcomes and on state-level coordination. Drawing on Virginia's success in developing the Commonwealth of Virginia's Strategic Plan for Statewide Communications Interoperability, SAFECOM developed a standardized approach—the Statewide Communications Interoperability Planning (SCIP) methodology—to guide the planning efforts of states and regions across the Nation.

The SCIP methodology is a working document; it is continually upgraded as Virginia and other states following in its path gather and put into effect repeatable successes and lessons learned. The original SCIP methodology provides real-time lessons learned from the Virginia experience. Now, one year after the signing of Virginia's Strategic Plan, SAFECOM is revisiting the state to validate its methodology as a strategic planning model. The information that follows is designed to supplement the methodology and should be read in conjunction with the SCIP.

## Approach

SAFECOM conducted interviews with several stakeholder groups, including:

- Federal agencies
- Virginia agencies
- Members of Virginia's governing committees
- Other Virginia practitioners

Interviews focused on gathering information on the current status of Virginia's implementation, obtaining advice from Virginia's stakeholders for states that are considering following the SCIP methodology, and collecting data related to lessons learned and key components of success. Interview questions were customized for each stakeholder group. Sample interview questions are in Appendix A.

Lessons learned were used to identify ways to improve the SCIP methodology. Components of Virginia's success have been included for consideration by future SCIP implementers; however, they may not apply to all states or regions equally.



*Lessons Learned from Virginia: SCIP Methodology*

Each lesson has been mapped to the specific phase or phases of the SCIP that the recommendations will impact. There are 10 phases. Appendix B describes each phase. Each phase is listed below.

1. Phase I – Establish Key Relationships and Funding
2. Phase II – Gather Information
3. Phase III – Create Project Plan and Roadmap
4. Phase IV – Identify Roles and Responsibilities – Project Team
5. Phase V – Recruit Focus Group Participants and Prepare for the Meeting
6. Phase VI – Conduct Focus Group Interviews
7. Phase VII – Analyze Data and Begin Preparations for Strategic Planning
8. Phase VIII – Finish Preparations for and Conduct Strategic Planning Session
9. Phase IX – Develop Statewide Communications Interoperability Strategic Plan
10. Phase X – Use Guidelines for First 90 Days of Implementation

## Lessons Learned

The table below outlines lessons and recommendations and the phases to which they apply.

Lessons	Recommendations	Phase
<b>Lesson 1: Be ambitious but realistic.</b>	Balance initiatives that are immediately achievable with initiatives that are harder to accomplish.	VIII, IX
	Set an ambitious but flexible timeline and share it with practitioners.	VIII, IX
	Set up a mechanism to collect and share success stories.	IX, X
<b>Lesson 2: Stay true to the practitioner-driven process.</b>	Clearly define the role and responsibilities of governing committees.	II, IX
	Provide incentives to include all current communication systems as well as systems under development.	All
	Conduct an outreach campaign to avoid losing momentum at the conclusion of the planning period.	IX, X
	Consider additional meetings at the regional level to ensure continued participation.	X
<b>Lesson 3: Ensure continued diversity of disciplines and jurisdictions.</b>	Create a balance between participating disciplines to ensure all those involved have an equal voice.	All
	Ensure that all disciplines and jurisdictions are represented on governing committees.	II, IX
	Recruit associations that represent public safety practitioners.	II, IX
	Heavily recruit participants from rural jurisdictions and non-traditional public safety agencies.	V
<b>Lesson 4: Centralize coordination of the effort.</b>	Establish centralized, non-practitioner coordination.	IV
<b>Lesson 5: Take advantage of initial interactions among agencies.</b>	Leverage local experience and successes to inform and improve the process.	II, V, VI
<b>Lesson 6: Establish a clear communications strategy.</b>	Establish a communications plan to help prepare for implementation.	IV, IX
	Create a continuous feedback loop between practitioners and their representatives on the governance structure.	II, IX
<b>Lesson 7: Obtain endorsement and funding from the state.</b>	Seek financial and political endorsement from the state to obtain funds and necessary legislation.	I, IX
	Consider all funding channels, including collaborative efforts among jurisdictions and agencies.	I, IX
<b>Lesson 8: Mitigate disparities in technical knowledge and professional culture.</b>	Create a working knowledge of operability and interoperability.	VI, VII, VIII
	Provide information on simple interoperability solutions using knowledge from across the Nation.	VIII
	Collect and disseminate information to practitioners about relevant standards and federal programs.	II, VIII

## Detailed Lessons Learned Analysis

The following is a detailed description of the findings presented in the lessons learned table. Each lesson summary is followed by specific recommendations, suggested SCIP modifications, and the phases affected by these modifications. Finally, the key findings from Virginia that informed the lessons learned and recommendations are presented.

### Lesson 1: Be ambitious but realistic.

The planning process presents an opportunity to make key decisions that will influence the success of the effort throughout its lifetime. By tempering ambitious goals with realistic initiatives, communications interoperability will achieve incremental improvements over time.

#### Recommendations

- ▶ Balance initiatives that are immediately achievable with initiatives that are harder to accomplish.
- ▶ Set an ambitious but flexible timeline and share it with practitioners.
- ▶ Set up a mechanism to collect and share success stories.

#### SCIP Upgrades

The SCIP should:

- Reinforce the importance of short-term milestones.
- Suggest limiting the initiatives to those with a high impact at the state and local level.
- Provide guidance for development of a roadmap that shows major implementation milestones and practitioner impact points.
- Encourage the inclusion of an initiative for the collection of case studies.

**Phases Affected: VIII, IX, and X**

### Key Findings from Virginia

Virginia's planning process led to the development of a comprehensive Statewide Plan for communications interoperability, which is a major milestone. Interviewees made insightful observations on the scope and timing of initiatives, as follows:

- According to some respondents, the strategic plan was too abstract and high level for practitioners and didn't focus on what was immediately achievable.
- Practitioners may not be aware of how and when the Statewide Plan will impact them or how the plan will progress.
- Virginia was unable to achieve all 19 of its FY 05 strategic initiatives. These unachieved initiatives led many to believe that the plan was less than a complete success, despite its many accomplishments
- Respondents expressed frustration at their inability to easily gain access to information from across the state.



## Lesson 2: Stay true to the practitioner-driven process.

The initial planning effort asks for a high level of up-front participation from practitioners. If the effort is to stay true to its original intent and maintain consensus beyond the planning phase, the input of practitioners must continue to be the impetus. This input should include information on existing communications systems, and systems in development, that the process will inherit.

### Recommendations

- ▶ Clearly define the role and responsibilities of governing committees.
- ▶ Provide incentives to include all current communication systems as well as systems under development.
- ▶ Conduct an outreach campaign to avoid losing momentum at the conclusion of the planning period.
- ▶ Consider additional meetings at the regional level to ensure continued participation.

### SCIP Upgrades

The SCIP should:

- Provide guidance on the role and responsibilities of practitioner governing committees to ensure the necessary practitioner input is available.
- Encourage a formalized outreach effort to maintain interest in the plan.
- Suggest follow-on regional level meetings to gain continued support and participation from practitioners.

**Phases Affected: II, IX, and X**

- Recognize the existing communications systems that the process will inherit and provide guidance on how to handle such systems.

**Phases Affected: All**

## **Key Findings from Virginia**

Virginia involved a large number of practitioners in the planning process. It established two practitioner-based governing committees to continue to receive feedback from the public safety community. Despite Virginia's effort, the following concerns were reported:

- Respondents felt that the role and value of the Advisory Committee were not clear. Some participants felt that Executive Committee membership provided the only real influence over the process.
- Respondents felt that the state endorsed a statewide interoperability solution (STARS) (see note below) that did not receive practitioner consensus and that did not build from pre-existing systems in the state.
- Some respondents stated that practitioners in the field have not directly felt the effects of the plan, and therefore, continue with business as usual; they do not take into account the new vision for the state.
- Some respondents stated that the SCIP process alone did not ensure that local and regional needs were addressed.



Note: Colonel W. Steven Flaherty, State Police Superintendent, and Mark Moon, Vice President and General Manager of Motorola, signed a \$329 million contract on July 13, 2004 between Motorola and Virginia for the design, construction, and implementation of a Statewide Agencies Radio System (STARS). The implementation phase of STARS is underway.

### Lesson 3: Ensure continued diversity of disciplines and jurisdictions.

The planning process offers an opportunity to energize public safety practitioners from across the state to improve communications interoperability. Continued participation beyond the planning stage from a multitude of disciplines and jurisdictions should be ensured to maintain the strength of the effort and to improve communications interoperability.

#### Recommendations

- ▶ Create a balance between participating disciplines to ensure all those involved have an equal voice.
- ▶ Ensure that all disciplines and jurisdictions are represented on governing committees.
- ▶ Recruit associations that represent public safety practitioners.
- ▶ Heavily recruit participants from rural jurisdictions and non-traditional public safety agencies.

#### SCIP Upgrades

The SCIP should:

- Explicitly mention the need for cross-disciplinary and jurisdictional representation on governing committees.
- Emphasize the use of associations and their ability to access a wider net of practitioners.
- Encourage a wide recruitment effort to specifically target rural jurisdictions and non-traditional public safety agencies.
- Establish discipline equality at the outset of the process.

**Phases Affected: II, V, and IX**

### Key Findings from Virginia

Virginia made a considerable effort during the assembly of its practitioner-based governing bodies to ensure a variety of disciplinary and jurisdictional representation. It did this through the effective use of associations and the pursuit of several non-traditional public safety agencies such as the National Guard and hospital systems. Despite this effort, some interviewees felt individual agencies dominated the conversation, and some jurisdictions or disciplines were or remain underrepresented:

- Many respondents think the Virginia State Police has had more weight than other disciplines in the effort. This is largely due to the state's substantial investment in STARS.
- Some respondents expressed concern that their jurisdiction was not initially represented on the Advisory Committee.
- Some respondents felt that Virginia has not leveraged relationships with associations to communicate more effectively with practitioners.
- Respondents stated that rural jurisdictions were underrepresented in regional focus groups.



## Lesson 4: Centralize coordination of the effort.

Establishing and naming a body to coordinate an effort of this magnitude is essential. Practitioner committees offer guidance and expertise; however, due to already full schedules, they may not offer the coordination needed to ensure plan implementation. A designated, full-time coordinator or coordinating body is an investment that can significantly enhance project success.

### Recommendations

- ▶ Establish centralized, non-practitioner coordination.

### SCIP Upgrades

The SCIP should:

- Emphasize the need for a paid coordinator or coordinating body to centrally organize interoperability efforts.

**Phases Affected: IV**

## Key Findings from Virginia

Early in the process, Virginia established the Commonwealth Interoperability Coordinator's Office (CICO) to coordinate planning and implementation. This created a forum to continue state-wide collaboration and identified a person designated to plan implementation.



## Lesson 5: Take advantage of initial interactions among agencies.

Initial meetings among practitioners and stakeholders from different agencies are ideal for trading experiences and ideas. These meetings can be used to formally capture knowledge from across the state to better understand the status of communications interoperability.

### Recommendations

- ▶ Leverage local experience and successes to inform and improve the process.

### SCIP Upgrades

The SCIP should:

- Encourage a more detailed and organized collection of local experiences and lessons during regional focus groups. This should also be referenced in the communications plan.

**Phases Affected: II, V, and VI**

### Key Findings from Virginia

In general, most interviewees expressed a high level of interest in gaining access to information from across the state. They had yet to see a more organized effort to gather such lessons and success stories in order to benefit the state. Interviewees observed that challenges varied, based on location and resources. They thought localities could benefit from an understanding of how other similar jurisdictions have responded to communications interoperability issues.





## Lesson 6: Establish a clear communications strategy.

A clear and comprehensive communications plan is essential to: 1) keep regional and local practitioners well informed; 2) continue to collect relevant information from across the state; and 3) ensure that first responders are still coordinating interoperability efforts.

### Recommendations

- ▶ Establish a communications plan to help prepare for implementation.
- ▶ Create a continuous feedback loop between practitioners and their representatives on the governance structure.

### SCIP Upgrades

The SCIP should:

- Include communications planning guidance and recommendations as well as the tools to execute the plan.
- Provide guidance for the establishment of specific communications channels between governing committee members and their constituencies.

**Phases Affected: II, IV, and IX**

## Key Findings from Virginia

The CICO distributes information through a comprehensive Web site as well as through the annual Interoperable Communications Conference. Despite these venues, interviewees expressed concern about the interactions between governing committees and their constituencies:

- The distribution of information from committee members to practitioners seems ad hoc.
- It is unclear if committee members seek out practitioner input to help make strategic decisions.



## Lesson 7: Obtain endorsement and funding from the state.

Funding and legislative support are essential components of any state or federal program. To ensure institutionalization of the plan, policymakers, elected officials, and practitioners must seek high-level endorsement and consider creative funding channels.

### Recommendations

- ▶ Seek financial and political endorsement from the state to obtain funds and necessary legislation.
- ▶ Consider all funding channels, including collaborative efforts among jurisdictions and agencies.

### SCIP Upgrades

The SCIP should:

- Emphasize the importance of state-level political and financial support.
- Stress cross-agency collaboration as a potential funding channel.

**Phases Affected: I and IX**

### Key Findings from Virginia

The CICO was extremely effective at developing strong relationships on the federal level to secure support and funding. At the state level, the CICO worked to modify the Virginia Code to institutionalize the Statewide Plan. Agencies have also started to pursue creative ways to fund interoperability improvements. However, much frustration remains over the lack of state funding for various efforts:

- While Virginia strongly endorsed the plan, to date, it has not put any state funds behind its implementation.
- The continuance of a successful effort hinges on the CICO's ability to maintain steady federal funding or to secure a budget allocation in the state budget.



## Lesson 8: Mitigate disparities in technical knowledge and professional culture.

Some stakeholders involved in planning are focused on the communications field, while others have only a vague awareness of interoperability concerns and complexities. A strong understanding of interoperability and its importance and impact on localities must be created to maintain practitioner consensus and emphasis on the interoperability message.

### Recommendations

- ▶ Create a working knowledge of operability and interoperability.
- ▶ Provide information on simple interoperability solutions using knowledge from across the Nation.
- ▶ Collect and disseminate information to practitioners about relevant standards and federal programs.

### SCIP Upgrades

The SCIP should:

- Recommend workshops prior to regional focus groups to level the playing field between technical and non-technical practitioners.
- Provide examples of and access to simple, quick-fix interoperability solutions that have been applied across the Nation.
- Provide information about related standards and federal programs to consider during planning.

**Phases Affected: II, VI, VII, and VIII**

### Key Findings from Virginia

Virginia's planning process effectively defined interoperability for participants as they worked on development of the Strategic Plan. According to respondents, however, this did little to establish the long-term technical knowledge needed to bring the message into the day-to-day lives of practitioners. Respondents recommended providing additional education to eliminate gaps in technical knowledge.



## Key Components of Virginia's Success

By following the SCIP methodology, Virginia was successful in establishing the Commonwealth of Virginia Strategic Plan for Statewide Communications Interoperability. To ensure the achievement of the goals and initiatives in the plan, Virginia implemented the following key components of success:

- Centralized Coordination
- Practitioner Governance
- Establishment of High-Level Support
- Alignment of Local Grants
- Pursuit of Resources and Funding

### Centralized Coordination

*“A coordinated and centralized effort is a big plus.” – Virginia Practitioner*

*“We are disseminating a consistent message across the Commonwealth. Before, there was no standardized method.” – Executive Committee Member*

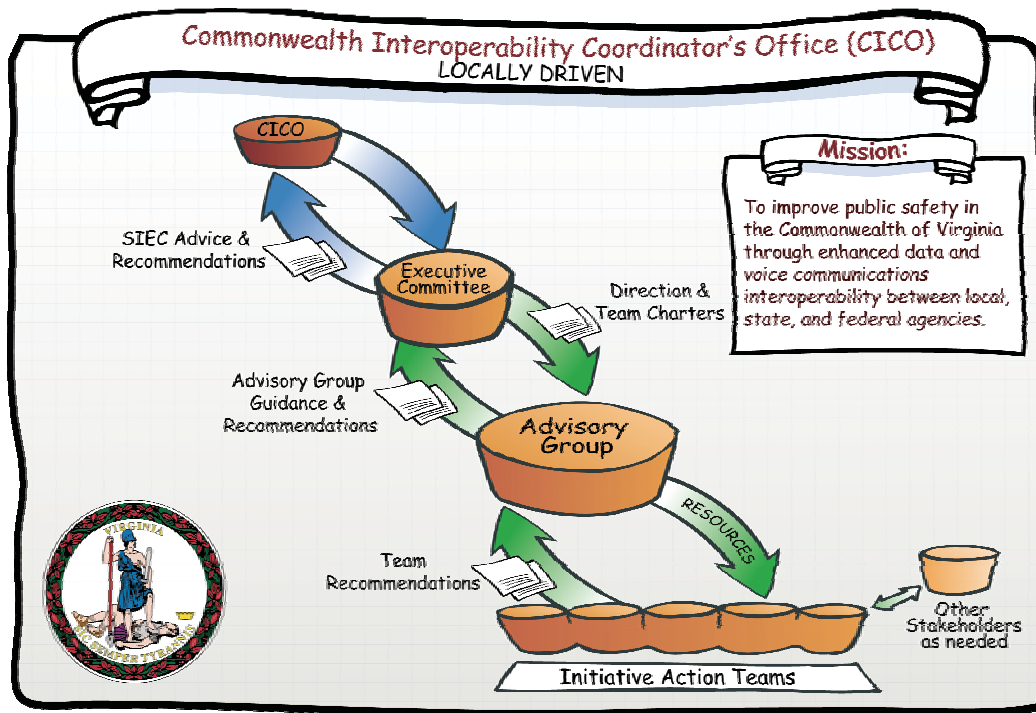
Early in the effort, Virginia hired a full-time interoperability coordinator to identify stakeholders, coordinate the completion of key initiatives, convene the state interoperability governing committees, and maintain the continuity of the effort from planning to implementation. The CICO provides a designated entity within the state whose sole responsibility is to ensure the Statewide Plan is executed and that practitioners throughout the state are kept informed of the progress of the Statewide Plan. Despite funding and resource challenges, the CICO was able to fully put six key initiatives into action.

The CICO also hosted a Statewide Interoperable Communications Conference. In addition, it developed an interoperability Web site and listserv for practitioners to learn about the most current interoperability issues. See Lesson 4 for insight into coordination in Virginia.

### Practitioner Governance

*“When the right people are involved, it can create a good team atmosphere. We gain an understanding that we are all in this together.” – Executive Committee Member*

Virginia established a practitioner-based governing structure, following the SAFECOM model, to guide the interoperability effort. By leveraging SAFECOM's best practices model for practitioner-driven interoperability efforts, Virginia continues to receive guidance from the public safety community throughout the state. Virginia's governance and information flow model is shown on the following page.



While Virginia has not yet fully leveraged the governing structure to its full capacity, it has laid the groundwork for practitioners to continue to drive the overall process. Virginia continues to define the roles and responsibilities of the committees and make communications channels more specific to fully make use of practitioner input. See Lessons 2-4 for Virginia’s lessons in governance and participation.

### **Establishment of High-Level Support**

*“We have been fortunate to receive so much support from the Federal Government.”*  
 – Executive Committee Member

*“Positioning the CICO in the Governor’s office has sent a message that this effort is important.”*  
 – State Official

Virginia’s interoperability effort received a high level of support and endorsement from federal agencies, such as SAFECOM and the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), and on the state level, from the Governor’s office. Positioning the CICO in the Governor’s office gave practitioners additional influence. The CICO’s close proximity to the state’s Commonwealth Preparedness Office—the office responsible for coordinating all of Virginia’s homeland security efforts—provides a state venue to receive support for communications interoperability.

On March 20, 2005, the Virginia General Assembly prioritized compliance with, and the upgrade of, the Statewide Plan by modifying Title 9.1 of the Virginia Code:

*“The office of the Governor shall ensure that the annual review and update of the Statewide Interoperability Strategic Plan is accomplished and implemented to achieve effective and efficient communication between state, local, and federal communication systems.”*

*All state agencies and localities shall achieve consistency with and support the goals of the Statewide Interoperability Strategic Plan by July 1, 2015, in order to remain eligible to receive state or federal funds for communications programs and systems.”*

See Lesson 7 for Virginia’s lessons in legislative support.

### **Alignment of Local Grants**

*“The plan has made a dramatic difference in the way Virginia looks at communications investments, whether it is state funds or federal dollars.” – Federal Official*

*“When applying for grants, guidance and leadership is provided from the state level. This is a much improved process; the old process was more geared to an individual agency.”  
– Advisory Committee Member*

While the Virginia Code does not call for compliance until 2015, the State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC), the designated reviewing body for interoperability grant funding, immediately urged all grant recipients to be in alignment with the Statewide Plan. The SIEC received \$1.7 million from the state for local interoperability grants. Grant applications that addressed compliance with the Statewide Plan were graded favorably in the distribution of interoperability funds.

In addition, the SIEC coordinated an effort to provide support to localities for obtaining additional funding. This initiative included identifying and distributing \$460,000 for local demonstration projects and assisting the Virginia Beach Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) in obtaining a \$6 million FY 04 Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant.

### **Pursuit of Resources and Funding**

*“Funding is, and will always be, ‘the elephant in the room’.” – Executive Committee Member*

An effort of this magnitude requires adequate resources and funding. The CICO established key relationships on the federal level that provided support and financial backing for the effort and for the office. The CICO continues to maintain ongoing relationships with federal partners as well as to pursue funding through the state budget. The commitment of involved parties still drives the effort. A major goal is to continue to push the importance of communications interoperability with influential state officials and federal partners.

See Lesson 7 for Virginia’s lesson in funding.

## Conclusion

The incorporation of the lessons learned from this study into the SCIP methodology only marks the first wave of upgrades to the process. As other states adopt the SCIP, the successes and lessons learned of the planning process will continue to improve the methodology. Through SAFECOM support, Nevada and Kentucky have both started to use all or part of the SCIP methodology to develop their statewide plans. In this new landscape, the SCIP will provide future guidance as additional states join those that have made communications interoperability a major priority.

## **Appendix A: Sample Interview Questions**

### **Focus Area: Improve Coordination Across the State to Increase Communications Interoperability**

The following questions focus on how the statewide strategic plan improved coordination across the state in the area of communications interoperability:

1. What has been accomplished as a result of the Statewide Strategic Plan?
2. How have these achievements improved overall communications interoperability in Virginia?
  - a. Do you have any success stories you can share?
3. How has the Statewide Strategic Plan improved coordination among organizations across the state?
  - a. Do you have any success stories you can share?
4. As a result of this process, do you have a better understanding of the status of interoperability in Virginia?

### **Focus Area: Replicate the SCIP Across the Nation**

The following questions focus on the ability to use the SCIP methodology in other states across the Nation:

5. In general, what are your thoughts on the process used to develop the Statewide Strategic Plan?
6. What part of the process could have been improved?
7. Drawing upon your knowledge in Virginia, what other issues could affect states when undertaking the same initiative?

### **Goal of the SCIP: Focus on Local Practitioners**

The following questions focus on establishing and maintaining a locally driven effort through communications and governance:

8. On a scale from 1 to 4 (1 = poor, 4 = excellent), how would you assess initial efforts to involve local practitioners in the planning process?
9. Do you think the local practitioner approach works? Why or why not?
10. Are local practitioners still driving the process? If so, to what degree?
  - a. How do SIEC and Advisory Committee members communicate with the practitioners they represent?
11. How have practitioners across jurisdictions and agencies collaborated during the implementation process? How have the vision, goals, and accomplishments been communicated on a regional and local level?
12. Is there any kind of tool or supplemental material that could have improved the process?



## **Appendix B: SCIP Phase Summary**

### **Phase I**

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

Draft a contract or written agreement between the state sponsor and the project team responsible for carrying out the planning process that addresses funding issues and identifies key relationships to assist the funding process. This contract or written agreement is often in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The SCIP also offers resources for grant guidance to provide a starting point for locating the necessary funding.

### **Phase II**

#### **Gather Information.**

Gather all relevant data and information that may influence the process. By gaining an understanding of current and past efforts to improve communications interoperability as well as the perspectives of practitioners, the communications interoperability plan will meet the actual needs of the public safety community. The SCIP offers SAFECOM Web links, templates, and tools to aid research and addresses common issues that may arise during this phase.

### **Phase III**

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

Determine the direction and timeline of the state's strategic plan by developing a clear roadmap. The roadmap process should include careful preparation and planning that accounts for the needed budget, resources, and timeline. To assist in planning, the SCIP offers sample roadmaps as well as project management and planning guidance.

### **Phase IV**

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

Once the roadmap is complete, assemble a project team with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The project team plays a vital role to ensure the success of the entire planning process. The SCIP helps identify the critical players, provides a template for the kick-off meeting, and assists in clarifying roles.

### **Phase V**

#### **Recruit Focus Group Participants and Prepare for the Meeting.**

Recruit focus group participants from fire response, law enforcement, and EMS to involve the public safety community in the strategic process. 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 groups provide an efficient and effective way to gather diverse practitioner perspectives. Focus groups can also identify individuals to include in the strategic planning session at the end of the process. The SCIP offers a methodical approach to the interview process to ensure each region is asked the same type of questions in a similar manner. The SCIP provides strategic guidance and tools for facilitated sessions, an introduction to dialogue mapping software (Compendium), and sample focus group reports.

## **Phase VII**

### **Analyze Data and Begin Preparations for Strategic Planning.**

Compile and process the data collected during focus group interviews to determine the local practitioners' collective voice on issues pertaining to communications interoperability. This collective perspective will fuel recommendations for the development of the Statewide Strategic Plan.

## **Phase VIII**

### **Finish Preparations for and Conduct Strategic Planning Session.**

The strategic planning session brings together key decision- and policy-makers to ensure the successful adoption and implementation of public safety communications interoperability initiatives. Session participants will review the analyzed focus group data and identify 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 states that have put the methodology into effect. In addition, the SCIP provides governance models and charters as a reference.

## **Phase X**

### **Use Guidelines for First 90 Days of Implementation.**

Plan for the first 90 days of the project using the preliminary guidelines provided by the SCIP to immediately put the plan into action. This includes prioritizing initiatives, developing a project plan, funding considerations, and leveraging the resources of the involved governing bodies.



The Department of Homeland Security established the Office for Interoperability and Compatibility (OIC) in 2004 to strengthen and integrate interoperability and compatibility efforts to improve local, tribal, state, and federal public safety preparedness and response. Managed by the Science and Technology Directorate's Office of Systems Engineering and Development, OIC's mission is to facilitate the coordination of interoperability efforts across the Department. OIC, as a practitioner-driven office, is strengthening public safety's ability to work together to protect lives and property.

SAFECOM, a communications program of OIC, with its federal partners, provides research, development, testing and evaluation, guidance, tools, and templates on communications-related issues to local, tribal, state, and federal public safety agencies.



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