



*Strategy Planning Session*

**Executive Summary**

**May 2003 Findings**



## SAFECOM Strategy Planning

May 2003

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## **SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **A. The SAFECOM Program**

Adequate and reliable wireless communications have been an issue plaguing the local, tribal, state, and federal public safety community for decades. From the 1920's, when two-way radio communication began, spectrum was allocated as needed with little planning and no consideration of cross-jurisdictional interoperability. As the National Task Force on Interoperability (NTFI) report released in February 2003 observed, almost all public safety communications were originally confined to the low end of the frequency range. But as technology improved and increasing numbers of agencies began to set up radio communications systems, more radio spectrum was required and transmission at higher frequencies became both necessary and technologically possible. Hence, the Federal Communications Committee (FCC) assigned frequencies in different bands, offering a temporary solution for congestion and crowding. The result is that public safety currently operates in ten separate bands, which have caused the fragmentation that characterizes public safety spectrum today, and the consequent lack of public safety interoperability. On-going problems related to interference, overcrowding, and proprietary solutions still hamper the most effective use of the limited public safety spectrum.

The fragmentation and limited availability of spectrum are just two of the many issues that make public safety communications interoperability difficult to achieve. Others, such as those cited in the NTFI report – including incompatible and aging equipment, limited and fragmented funding, limited and fragmented communications planning, limited equipment standards, and a lack of coordination and cooperation among public safety agencies – further reduce public safety's ability to achieve interoperable communications.

Public safety personnel need interoperable wireless communication tools in order to provide effective and coordinated responses to incidents and large-scale events. Recent data has indicated that most public safety agencies have limited confidence in their ability to perform in regional response situations requiring mutual aid (54 percent) or task force communications interoperability (66 percent). Even more striking, local public safety agencies express limited confidence in their ability to communicate with state (56 percent) or federal (81 percent) public safety organizations based on Public Safety Wireless Network (PSWN) published reports. While large-scale events dramatically illustrate the need for regional communications interoperability, routine public safety operations that occur daily can also be severely hampered by a lack of interoperability. Police pursuits, highway accidents, and large fires occur daily, each requiring a response from multiple jurisdictions and disciplines. However, even during these routine public safety incidents, more than a third of public safety agencies (36 percent) have limited confidence in their ability to interoperate.

Several government programs have made accomplishments in addressing this issue, but, unfortunately, much of it has been disconnected, fragmented, and often conflicting. In an effort to coordinate the various federal initiatives, SAFECOM was established by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and approved by the President's Management Council (PMC)

as a high priority electronic government (E-gov) initiative. The mission of SAFECOM is to enable public safety nationwide (across local, tribal, state and federal organizations) to improve public safety response through more effective and efficient communications and interoperability. By definition, communications interoperability refers to the ability of public safety agencies to talk across disciplines and jurisdictions via radio communications systems—to exchange voice, data and/or video with one another on demand, in real time, when needed. To this end, SAFECOM recognizes that before interoperability can occur, reliable, mission-critical, agency-specific communications capable of meeting day-to-day operational needs is a *sine qua non*. SAFECOM, accordingly, is addressing the intricately related issues of reliable day-to-day public safety communications as well as the more specialized issues related to communications interoperability. Essentially, SAFECOM is the umbrella program ensuring that all federal efforts are coordinated and spend valuable taxpayer dollars in an efficient manner.

Unlike many other E-gov initiatives, the solution to the problems of public safety communications and communications interoperability—short of a major overhaul of how spectrum is allocated and managed in this country—is not a single nor even a particular *set* of discrete tasks. There are no simple solutions. Instead, the identification and orchestration of many programs is required.

For SAFECOM to accomplish its mission, a systematic approach must be employed, and include the following components:

- Identifying the problem, recognizing that it is not a simple problem with many complex elements and no single solution.
- Collaboration with the leadership of the public safety community to gather comprehensive communications requirements in order to develop appropriate approaches to solutions, referred to as work packages. (This is essential since 90% of the public safety infrastructure is owned by state and/or local public safety entities.)
- Identifying current initiatives addressing interoperable communications issues and developing a coordination strategy to leverage existing work, while decreasing unnecessary duplication of efforts.
- Implementing this strategy to develop short- and long-term projects to address public safety communications and communications interoperability requirements.

## **B. Strategic Planning Session**

Effective May 2003, DHS S&T established Dr. David Boyd as Director of the SAFECOM Program Office. In an attempt to (a) ensure that SAFECOM obtains input from a cross section of public safety representatives and (b) identify the direction and key initiatives for SAFECOM, Dr. Boyd tasked Touchstone Consulting Group to pull together several key public safety (local, state, and federal) officials and conduct interviews pertaining to the present and future state of interoperable communications.

Fourteen representatives of local, state, and federal public safety then attended a Strategic Planning session held at the Touchstone offices on May 30, 2003. The session was intended to

draw from the separate experiences and views of each member to develop a common understanding of a proposed long-term vision for the future of public safety communications and interoperability and a roadmap of programmatic and short-term initiatives for the SAFECOM program to implement to affect this vision.

The attendees were briefed on the results of the interviews Touchstone conducted. Chris McGoff, CEO of Touchstone, facilitated the discussion throughout the day, during which attendees were asked for individual comments and developed a group consensus on wireless interoperability, current and future. The all-day session concluded by identifying four short-term (18 month) initiatives:

- *Integrated Grant Guidance* – Fully integrate SAFECOM grant guidance into all federal public safety communications grant programs
- *Interoperability Information Center* – Develop and operate an web site for public safety users to access the latest information on program developments, technology, and implementation examples
- *National Guide and Handbook* – Develop a handbook to assist local and state officials in the planning, purchase, and operations of interoperable communications systems, including a terminological guide.
- *Interoperability Demonstration Projects* – Identify and publicize successful and replicable interoperability projects from communities across the nation

In addition, four long-term (10-20 years) for SAFECOM to complete:

1. Adopt a national strategy developed from the bottom up to incorporate effective public safety communications.
2. Provide a foundation for the national strategy by the development, adoption and daily application of standards, testing, evaluation and government regulations.
3. Tie the funding that is available to grant and procurement guidance. (Public safety associations and community at large have to promote legislation to implement an enduring and sufficient source of funding.)
4. Develop, implement, and operate a national training and technical assistance program to support the national system.

## **SECTION 2: METHODOLOGY**

Prior to the Strategy Planning session, Touchstone conducted 16 interviews with key members of the public safety communications community. These interviews were intended to develop the background and base material for review and refinement at the Strategy Planning session. Interviews were approximately one hour each and took place over the four weeks prior to May 30.

Each interviewee was asked a standard set of questions (see Appendix A) about the state of interoperability and the role SAFECOM should play in the future of communications among the public safety community. Answers were then analyzed to determine common themes. The top five issues were then identified within each area (areas included Current State, Case for Change, Future State, Barriers and Strategy), and these became the topics used to focus the overall session discussions. Many of the results of this analysis are presented in the Findings section below.

### **A. Interviewees**

Interviewees and their respective organizations represented were as follows:

David Boyd	Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Director, SAFECOM Program Office
John Cummings	DHS, Deputy SAFECOM Program Manager
Tom Coty	Advanced Generation of Interoperability for Law Enforcement (AGILE) Program Manager
Michael Duffy	Department of Justice (DOJ), Deputy Chief Information Officer (CIO) for E-Gov
Dereck Orr	National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)
Tony Frater	Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
Nyla Houser	G&H International
Harlin McEwen	International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), National Sheriff's Association (NSA), Major City Chiefs, Major County Sheriffs
Alan Caldwell	International Association Fire Chiefs (IAFC)
Vinny Stile	Association of public safety Communications Officials (APCO)
Jimmy Downes	Federal Law Enforcement Wireless Users Group (FLEWUG)
George Ake	Capitol Area Wireless Integrated Network (CapWIN)
Steve Proctor	Public Safety Wireless Network (PSWN) Executive Committee, Chair; Utah Communication Agency Network (UCAN), Executive Director
Carl Baker	Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Advisory Council (LECTAC), Police Chief in Chesterfield County, VA
Charles L. Werner	Deputy Fire Chief for Charlottesville, VA
A.D. Vickery	Deputy Fire Chief from Seattle and Chair of Inter Agency Board (IAB)

## B. Findings

The following slides are the output of the analysis of responses provided by the interviewees before the May 30 Strategy Planning Session. Versions of these charts were used to lead discussion during the session, and were commented upon and updated over the course of the day. They identify major issues identified by the public safety communications community, and provide a basis for the goals and direction of the SAFECOM Program.

### CURRENT STATE

#### Current State: Organizational Complexity and Coordination

The President and OMB are supporting this program. Interoperability is high on the public agenda. This is currently a political program and not a program for the citizens. SAFECOM is viewed as mandating interoperability. There is a lack of trust between Federal and S/L. There is a distrust of the DHS standup since DHS is currently viewed as dysfunctional.

We have many levels of stakeholders and many interest groups within any particular level. We have serious turf and culture battles. Associations and Vendors have their own interests and have powerful lobbyists.

*"For a lot of reasons – we are not playing together!"*

*"This only works if we all choose to make it work."*

*"Any one or a few of us can make it not work on our own."*

*"Public Service and Federal Law Enforcement cannot effectively respond to major emergencies"*

*"No person should lose their life because Public Service officials cannot communicate."*

#### Current State: Funding

Money flows are not reinforcing interoperability. Grant money and Federal program money should work towards the same interoperability goal.

*"9/11 had a major impact on this nation's economy"*

*"There is not enough money. If money was available, it would take years to coordinate and train everyone"*

#### Current State: Technology

There are very few manufacturers. Industry does not play well together. A few vendors who are using proprietary systems control interoperability. Vendors are driving technology and speaking as authority. There is only single vendor voice in many jurisdictions. Pockets of interoperability exist. "Hodgepodge" of interoperability solutions. There is a lack of standards or standardized systems. Interference is also a problem

*"A vendor sells its product in one jurisdiction. Same vendor sells the same equipment to another neighboring jurisdiction. But these 2 jurisdictions still can't talk"*

*"Vendors are dragging their feet to further promote open standards."*

## CASE FOR CHANGE

### Case for Change: What if the USA doesn't commit to a national interoperability program?

Interoperability will happen anyway in a disparate and uncoordinated way. This country needs to commit to interoperability so that we don't continue to lose lives and property, and waste money on non-coordinated approaches.

*"Call this a war. This is what it is going to take to make this all work."*

*"Not having interoperability will cost lives and property by not being able to effectively communicate"*

*" We need a paradigm shift in how state and local jurisdictions and organizations (i.e.: Police, Fire, EMS and Transportation) work together. There is too much I and My... and not enough We and How to share"*

## FUTURE STATE

### Future State: 30 Year Vision

Every practitioner would be able to talk to whom they need to when they need to. Every practitioner is able to access any info it requires such as for:

- Building layouts
- Chemical specifications
- Responder locations
- Video feed from incident
- Database access
- Etc.

*"Technology in 30 years is going to change. For example neural networks may be in place. We are thinking of the future 30 years out with what we know today using current state technology."*

*"The ability to communicate with who you need to when you need to."*

### Future State: Technology

Public Safety is driving technology needs. Pricing is competitive. Sufficient National standards are in place for interoperability

*"Technology solution is a piece of cake. It is the people and politics that make this a major issue"*



# STRATEGY AND INITIATIVES



## Strategy and Initiatives: Change the World

Create "CapWINS" all over the nation. Put an ACU1000 (or similar system) in every major metropolitan area. Develop an emergency satellite communications system.

*"We need mobile communication links all over the country with the ability to reach any town in the US by land or air within 12 hours or less."*

*"Create CapWIN & ARJIS – type systems"*

*"Define performance requirements"*

## Strategy and Initiatives: Programmatic

### Funding

Need Grants Guidance for all interoperable communications funding so all public safety is building toward the same goal. Create a "How To" guide for applying for interoperability grants. Create an Evaluation template/tool for grants. Create a Clearinghouse database for interoperable communication grant applications as well as equipment purchased with grant funding.

*"Legislation is needed to tie federal funding to interoperable equipment"*

*"Develop funding (grants) strategy that will support interoperability strategy"*

*"Funding (grants) is a major issue."*

## Strategy and Initiatives: Programmatic

### Coordination of Interoperability

We need to create a repository of interoperable communications information. Connect with Universities and Associations for best practices and lessons learned. Establish partnerships with related associations and agencies. Hold regular meetings with local, State and Federal stakeholders. Get buy-in from State and local - they must have a sense of ownership. National interoperability leadership is in place. Feds, states, DD, FCC, counties, metro regions, localities, jurisdictions, public safety agencies and associations, and vendors are all working together. Focus is on needs of community rather than on politics.

*"Public safety needs a central location to learn about communications studies. This would also be a way to bring people together and share information."*

*"Share lessons learned and share RFPs etc."*

## Strategy and Initiatives: Programmatic

### Federal/Policy/Legislation

Gain support of Congress. Finalize Governance. Coordinate National Incident Command System to have all public safety speaking the same language.

### Master Plan/National Plan

Create a SAFECOM Master Plan to outline the program's strategy. Coordinate the creation of true National Strategy.

*"If the USA is going to drive wireless interoperability into the next decade then a coordinated national plan and appropriate funding will be needed to get there"*

### Technology

Help public safety agencies understand how to plan for interoperability. Aid with CAPRAD enhancements. Create a technical assistance team to aid with planning. Work with CapWIN. Create strategy to influence vendor community to build public safety focused equipment. Provide training for existing ACUs.

*"Don't let technology use us, let us use technology"*

*"Create a design of what is needed to correct inefficiencies"*

## Strategy and Initiatives: Programmatic

### Outreach/Communications

We need to help Leadership and Congress to understand the steps necessary for first responders to become interoperable. SAFECOM is the overarching umbrella providing guidance, Grants, and standards. Develop a website. Publish articles in magazines; create pamphlets and an interoperability guide. Sponsor and coordinate a "Tech Day" on the Hill.

*"SAFECOM needs to make a Broadway debut"*

*"People don't even know the program exists right now"*

*"SAFECOM is the wireless interoperability organization with arms covering outreach, grants, resource piece, standards and Federal"*

# BARRIERS

## Barriers: Policy/Political Influence/Law

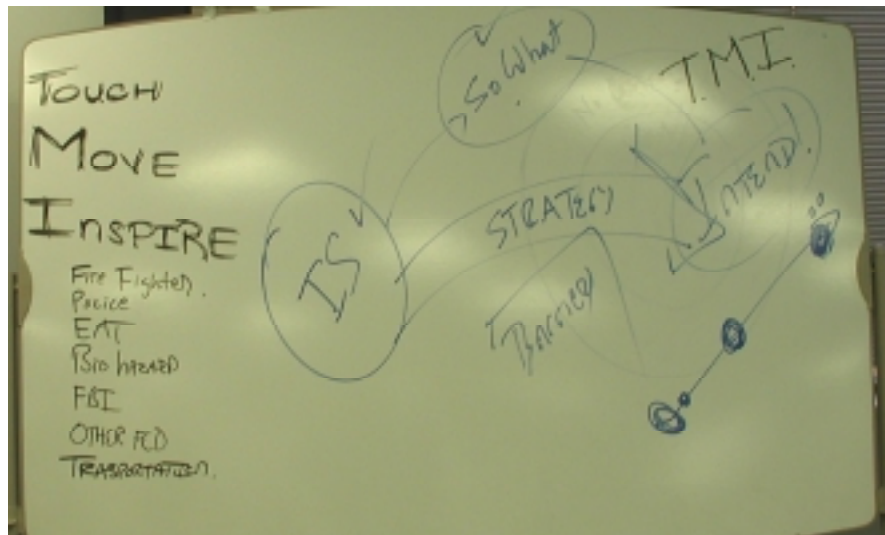
Congress can take SAFECOM funding away anytime they want to. Lack of coordination within the Federal government. Lack of cooperation among and between State and local agencies. Lack of SAFECOM information. Distrust of feds by State and locals. Vendors are driving the technology rather than public safety driving the technology.

*"Turf battles within the Federal, State and local governments"*

### C. Session Overview

The session was designed to proceed in a logical manner, and the agenda is shown on the following page. After an introduction by Dr. Boyd, a discussion of desired outcomes helped to clarify purpose and set tangible goals for the meeting. First, the “Current State” was examined by discussing the results of the interviews using the charts presented in the previous section. Group members were allowed to comment, ask questions, and suggest edits to the content on each slide.

Next, the room split into smaller groups for a brainstorming session using the Consensus @nywhere tool. This program allows users to post ideas anonymously about a specific topic to a web site message board where other users can read and respond to the comments in real time. After the @nywhere session, members of the



Introduction of Gameboard, which shows the relationships of the topics discussed in the slides above

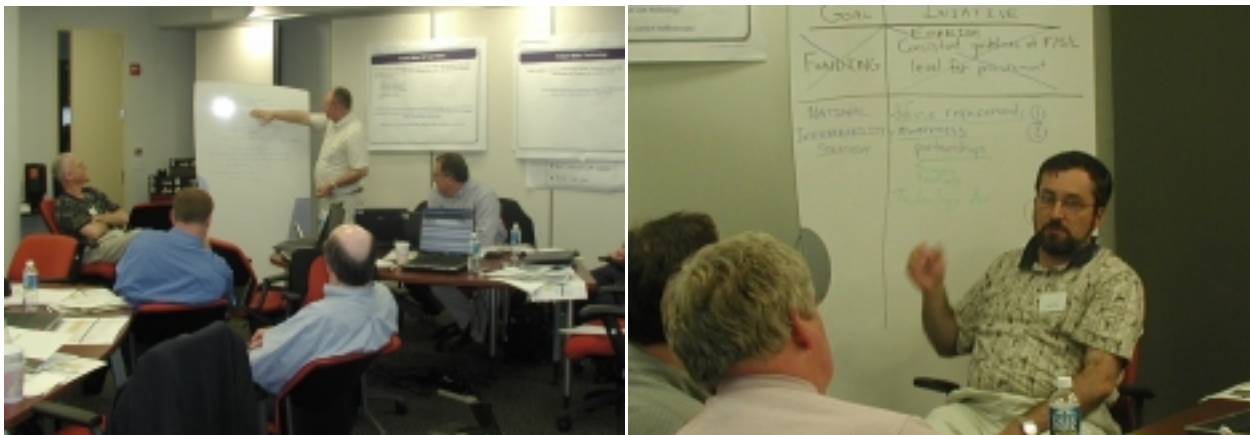
Touchstone team guided groups in discussions to identify the key issues found within the “Current State”. These points were then presented to the entire group, where the general findings were discussed and recorded. This process was repeated for each of the remaining four areas and allowed for general consensus on the issues facing communications within public safety. Along with identifying issues, this process also suggested a set of short (18 month) and long (10-20 year) initiatives for the SAFECOM Program to peruse.

## MEETING AGENDA

### Agenda for SAFECOM Strategy Planning

- **David Boyd Intro**
- **Chris McGoff Intro:** Explain process and agenda
- **Current State:** Touchstone summary
  - Break into groups to discuss
  - Re-convene to reach consensus
- **BREAK**
- **Case for Change:** Touchstone summary
  - Break into groups to discuss
  - Re-convene to reach consensus
- **BREAK**
- **Future State:** Touchstone summary
  - Break into groups to discuss
  - Re-convene to reach consensus
- **LUNCH (Eat in)**
- **Short-Term Initiatives:** Touchstone summary
  - Break into groups to discuss
  - Re-convene to reach consensus
- **BREAK**
- **Long-Term Initiatives:** Touchstone summary
  - Break into groups to discuss
  - Re-convene to reach consensus
- **Barriers:** Touchstone summary
  - Break into groups to discuss
  - Re-convene to reach consensus
- **David Boyd Closing**

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Harlin McEwen and Tom Coty lead discussions in their breakout groups

For each section of the meeting, groups split apart to discuss issues in less formal breakout sessions and then came together to reach a consensus as an entire unit.



**Chris McGoff facilitates discussion after a breakout session**



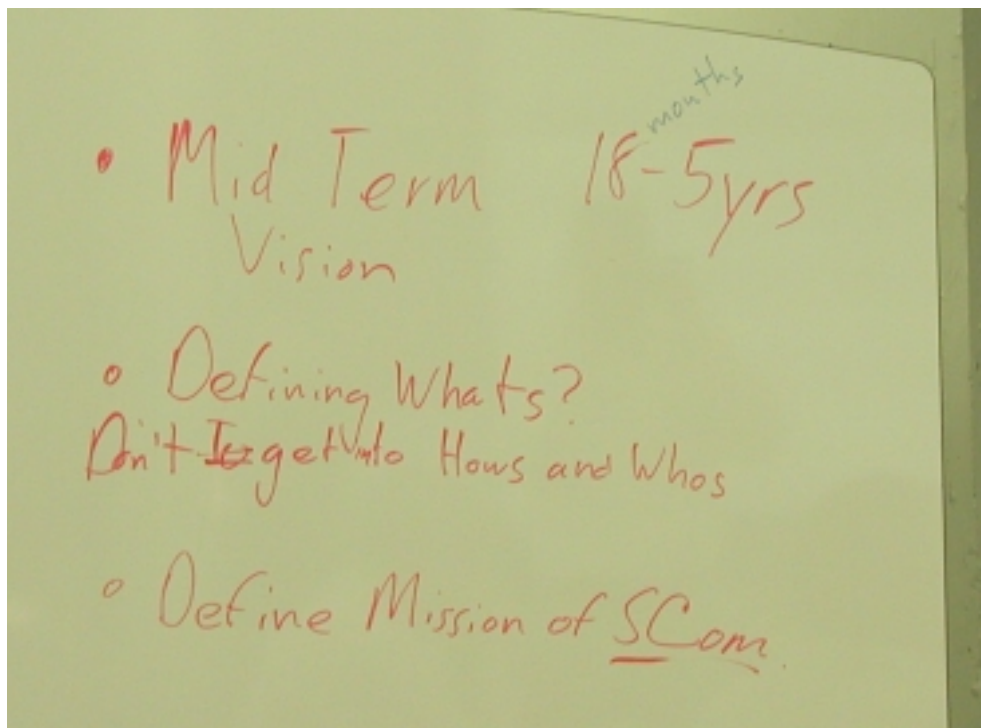
**Session participant Tony Frater utilizing Consensus @nywhere software**

The desired outcomes listed below were used as a means to keep the group focused on the purpose of the meeting. By establishing an agenda at the beginning of the meeting, all following discussions enabled these ultimate goals to be reached.

### Desired Outcomes

1. *Long Term Vision:* 10-20 years from now – where are we in terms of public safety interoperability?
2. *Short Term Vision:* Describe our intent for the next 18 months.
3. *Roadmap:* Achieve a shared understanding of recommended “quick wins” and initiatives that will get us to our intended states (visions).

These are the goals desired before the session started




These are the goals desired by the participants of the session

The two posters below adorned the wall of the room where the session took place to remind participants that the goal of the day was to receive their input by working together in a quick and efficient manner while not getting hung up on details.

**WORKING DEFINITION OF CONSENSUS**


- The process we used was explicit, rational & fair;
- I was treated well, my inputs were heard;
- And I can live with the outcomes.



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## PRINCIPLES

- Move on despite ambiguity
- Listen as allies
- Get to the point
- Give criticism with upgrades



- What not How  
(Functional not Technical)

The end result of the session was a set of documents that detail ideas, goals and strategies for the SAFECOM Program as determined by members of the public safety Communications community. The following section contains the results of the Strategic Planning session.



Ron Prater of SAFECOM leads discussion during one of the breakout sessions



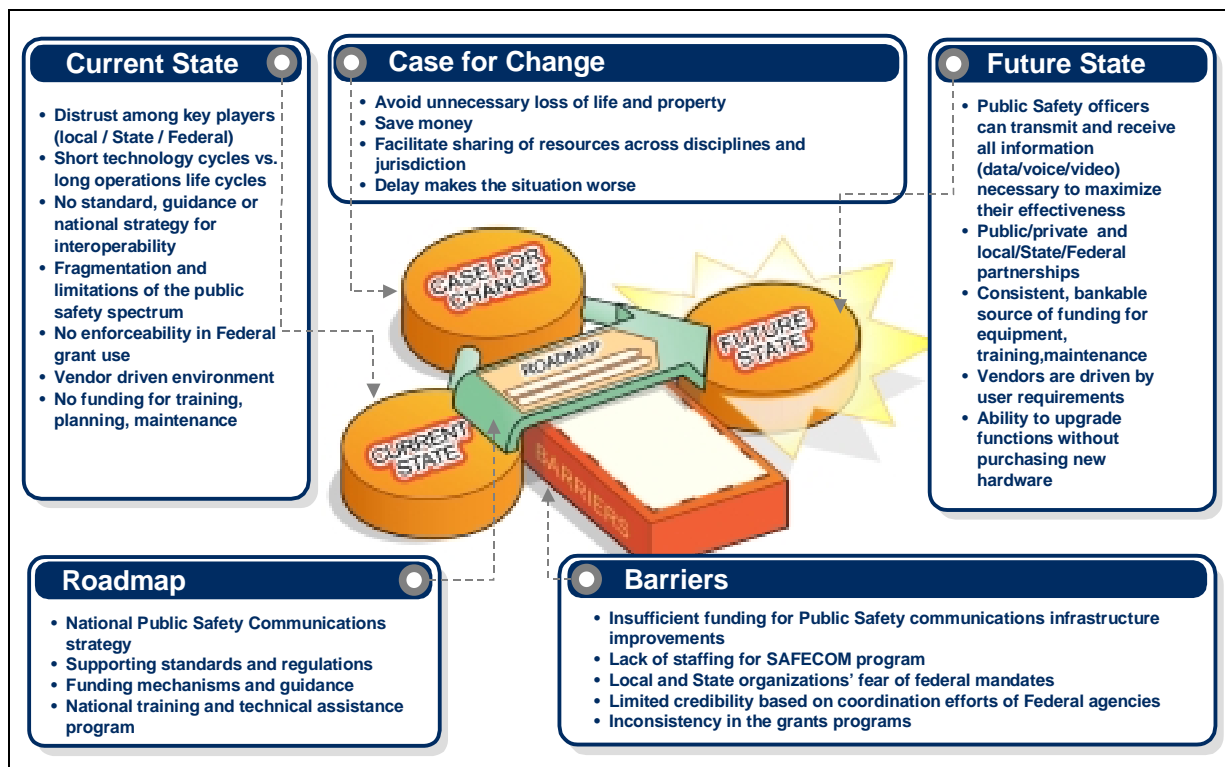
Dr. David Boyd, SAFECOM Program Director, reviews information gathered over the course of the session

A letter written by Dr. Boyd to the participants of the Strategy Planning Session can be found in Appendix B. This letter summarizes the findings of the session.

## SECTION 3: SESSION RESULTS

A summary of the results of the Strategic Planning Session is presented below in the form of a Gameboard of the public safety wireless communications and interoperability environment and opportunities. It presents key issues as determined by members of the public safety communications community for where the state of interoperability is currently (Current State), where it is going (Case for Change), where it should be (Future State), and what is preventing it from getting there (Barriers). It also presents initiatives that should be taken (Roadmap) to get from the Current State to the Future. This Gameboard should be used as a way of identifying issues, recognizing potential problems, and keeping focused on the ultimate goal.

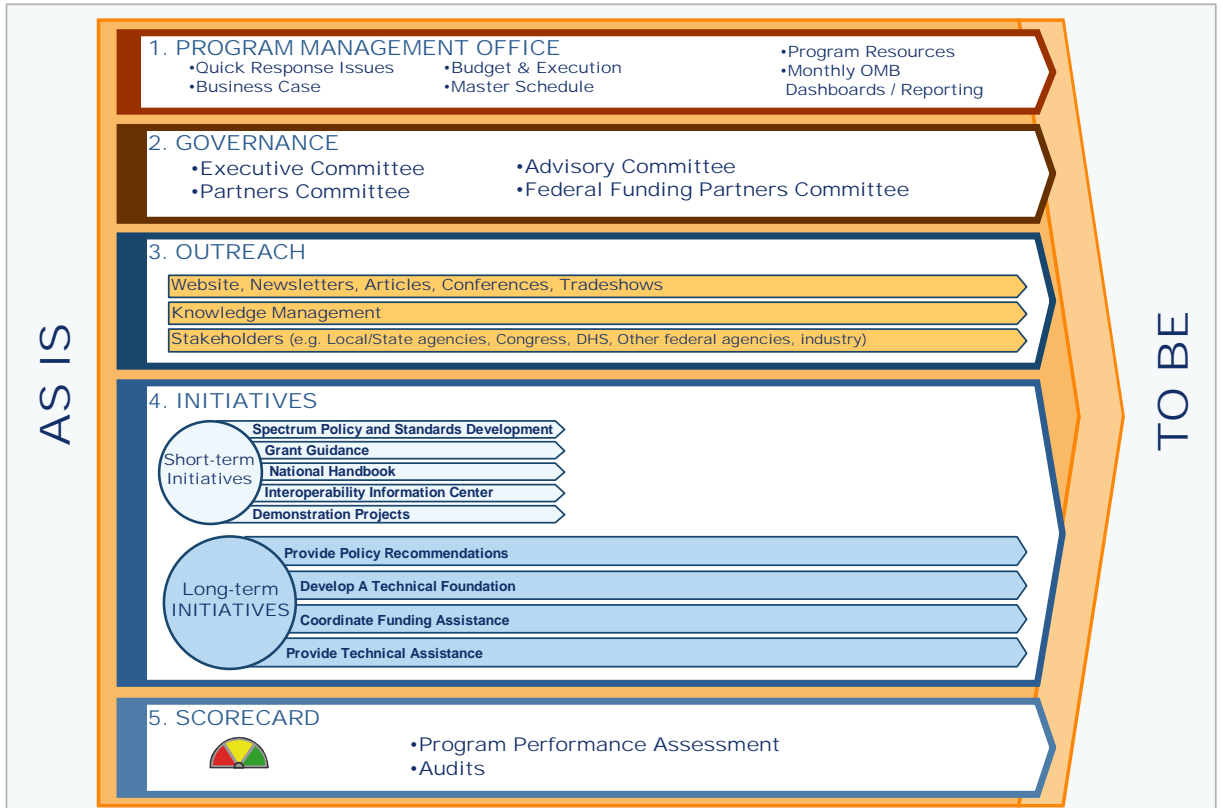
### GAMEBOARD



Based on the Gameboard developed above, the SAFECOM team reconvened on Monday, June 2 to review the outcomes of the planning session and to further refine the initiatives identified and to outline the SAFECOM program oversight necessary to successfully carry out those initiatives. The Roadmap on the following page depicts the areas of responsibility for the SAFECOM program team members. Each “lane” represents an initiative or area of responsibility that must be managed by a SAFECOM team member. A Project Management Office (PMO) will oversee all of the project lanes, and a separate Portfolio Manager will directly oversee the short and long term initiatives. As the SAFECOM Program continues, this outline of program responsibilities will continue to be the basis for managing the program.



# SAFECOM ROADMAP



## ***APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW GUIDE***

### SAFECOM Organizational Assessment Interview Questions

**A. What is your role or how do you interact with Wireless public safety Interoperable Communications Program (SAFECOM)?**

Role:

Responsibilities:

- a. Who is your customer?
- b. What is your role in SAFECOM?
- c. Who do you think is running SAFECOM?

**B. How would you describe your role to someone who isn't a part of the SAFECOM program?**

**C. What is the current and future state of wireless interoperability for public safety?**

- a. What is the current state?

State and Local:

Industry:

- b. What is the ideal future state?

We did it! What would success look like?

State and Local:

Federal:

- c. What are the strengths and weaknesses?
- d. What will happen if the current state does not change (i.e.: worst case)?
  - If we keep going as we are...
  - If we did nothing...
  - What about people making this happen?

**D. What 5-8 things could SAFECOM do to make the greatest improvement?**

**E. From D above... What does SAFECOM need to do in the next 90 days? 6 months? 1yr.? 5 yrs.?**

**F. What are the barriers for change? What are threats to this program?**

Who (i.e.: agency, org, group, individual, etc.) needs to clean up their act? Who is not playing in sandbox?

- ◆ Who is field general?
- ◆ Can field general do it?

**G. What do you think SAFECOM's vision should be (optional question if there is time)?**

Vision (Long Term). What would this be?

Vision (Short Term 12-18 months). What would this be?

- ◆ Can anyone talk?

**H. What do you think SAFECOM's mission should be (optional question if there is time)?**

**I. What do you think SAFECOM's performance metrics should be (optional question if there is time)?**

How you think SAFECOM should be measured? Success in 12 months...

**J. What else should I know/ask about?**

## **APPENDIX B – LETTER TO ATTENDEES**

June 3, 2003

To: SAFECOM Strategy Planning Session Attendees

From: David Boyd

Thank you for your participation in the SAFECOM Strategy Planning session held on Friday, May 30. I appreciate all of the valuable insights we heard about the challenges of the current public safety communications systems and the opportunities for SAFECOM to improve the ability of our public safety community to save lives and property through more effective and reliable communications. The input we received on Friday will be an important element in determining the focus of SAFECOM's core initiatives and I look forward to your ongoing participation in the SAFECOM program.

As I promised on Friday, I am attaching the findings we compiled on Friday as well as the more detailed responses that you provided in the Consensus @nywhere tool and in the smaller group sessions. The attachment contains the following items:

- An outline of the Friday agenda and a list of attendees
- Summarized group findings on the major topics
- Participant comments and responses on each topic from the session
- Findings from the interviews conducted prior to the group session

We have reviewed the session output and identified four key initiatives that SAFECOM will be putting in place in the coming months. As part of that effort, we will be leveraging the work many of you have already done in these areas; we will have great need of your continued assistance. For each initiative below, I have included the name of the Touchstone representative who will be responsible for managing the initiative and whom you should contact to offer your assistance or if you have any questions. Further details on each initiative will be forthcoming as the project plans are finalized and developments warrant:

- *Integrated Grant Guidance* (Ashley Baker [ashley.baker@touchstone.com](mailto:ashley.baker@touchstone.com) 202-423-8950) – Fully integrate SAFECOM grant guidance into all federal public safety communications grant programs
- *Information Clearinghouse for public safety Users* (Patti Yesko 202-449-7139 [patti.yesko@touchstone.com](mailto:patti.yesko@touchstone.com)) – Develop and operate a web site for public safety users to access the latest information on program developments, technology, and implementation examples
- *National Guide and Handbook* (John McCarthy 202-449-7135 [john.mccarthy@touchstone.com](mailto:john.mccarthy@touchstone.com)) – Develop a handbook to assist local and state officials



in the planning, purchase, and operations of interoperable communications systems, including a terminological guide.

- *Interoperability Demonstration Projects* (John McCarthy) – Identify and publicize successful and replicable interoperability projects from communities across the nation

In addition to these near-term initiatives, SAFECOM will be providing more details on programmatic strategic initiatives in the near future. Thank you for making the strategy planning session a success and I look forward to your continued participation in the SAFECOM program.

David Boyd  
SAFECOM