



## **Snohomish, Whatcom, Island, Skagit, and San Juan County (SWISS) Regional Partnership**

### **Organizational Charter**

#### **I. Name**

This Charter refers to the Snohomish County, Whatcom County, Island County, Skagit County, and San Juan County Regional Partnership as “SWISS.”

#### **II. Mission and Purpose**

##### Mission

The mission of SWISS is to identify and advance shared priorities that will improve the quality of life of the people who live in the region.

##### Purpose

- Provide a forum for the discussion and review of issues consistent with the SWISS mission statement, and identify those issues where there is a shared mutual interest;
- Create a unified, clear, and concise regional voice to our state and federal legislators and governmental agencies;
- Be an advocate for our region as a whole in dealings with legislative, governmental, and private entities upon those issues that SWISS selects;
- Assist partner organizations with their legislative advocacy on issues that align with SWISS priorities.

#### **III. Guiding principles**

- SWISS activities will not interfere with the authorities and responsibilities of each member county or county elected official.
- SWISS will work to build coalitions with other regionally significant entities.

#### **IV. Organization**

The Chair, Vice Chair, Executive Committee members, and committee members represent their respective counties.

SWISS may create ad-hoc subcommittees as necessary to further explore, develop or address a specific issue or task. These subcommittees will sunset upon completion of their assignment or the project.

#### **V. Composition**

SWISS membership is composed of the elected county executives (2) and officials (21) comprising the county legislative authority from Snohomish, Whatcom, Island, Skagit, and San Juan Counties.

## **VI. Responsibilities**

### Chair and Vice-Chair

A Chair and Vice-Chair shall be appointed by the members of SWISS and serve concurrent one-year terms. The Chair and Vice-Chair are responsible for ensuring the presence of a quorum prior to conducting SWISS business, facilitating meetings, calling emergency or special meetings, ensuring motions are clear, and acting as spokespersons for SWISS.

At no time shall the Chair and the Vice-Chair be from the same County. The Chair and Vice-Chair positions can be held only by an elected member of SWISS.

### Executive Committee

A standing Executive Committee shall be comprised of seven members:

- County executives or their staff designees (2);
- Chair of each county legislative authority or a designee(5).
- SWISS Chair and Vice-Chair will be annually appointed from the seven Executive Committee members.

The Executive Committee is responsible for developing recommendations for consideration by the entire membership and recommending the Chair and Vice-Chair annually.

### SWISS Members

Collaborative problem solving depends on mutual respect and careful listening among participants and active participation by all. Meetings will be conducted in a respectful atmosphere, where all parties foster trust and understanding.

Members are expected to:

- Make every effort to attend meetings. If an alternate is needed, the alternate will be briefed prior to meetings.
- Represent their own personal views and expertise, and the perspectives of their county and/or department; this means participants are responsible for coordinating with their organizations and constituencies to bring perspectives forward.
- Strive for honest and direct communication and a focus on interests and needs, rather than positions. Participants will allow for open discussion, and the right to disagree, and will look for opportunities to find common interests, agreements, and solutions.
- Focus on clarifying their own views and interests; they will refrain from characterizing the views of other participants, especially in conversations with outside stakeholders and the press.

### Ad-hoc Subcommittees

A Subcommittee may be formed by the Chair or Vice-Chair to address a specific question or issue. Such committees generally consist of fewer than a quorum of members who typically develop issues for later consideration by the full SWISS membership. The term of the subcommittee shall be determined by the Chair upon creation and may be based on a timeframe or on the completion of a task. The SWISS Chair shall also appoint a Subcommittee Chair who will be responsible for developing subcommittee agendas and for the running the meetings of the subcommittee.

#### SWISS Administrator

The SWISS Administrator will provide administrative and management support.

## **VII. Meetings**

### Meeting Schedule

SWISS will hold regular quarterly meetings. No meetings will occur on a federal or state holiday. Meeting preparation may require outside reading or research prior to the meeting.

SWISS meetings will take place remotely, online, unless otherwise communicated in advance.

### Attendance

If the attendance of a SWISS member is not possible, prior notification to the Chair, Vice-Chair, or SWISS Administrator is appreciated. This applies both to an absence or the delegation of a prepared alternate.

### Additional Meetings

Special or emergency meetings can be scheduled by the Chair or by a majority of SWISS members as needed. Emergency meetings require a minimum of 24 hours of notice prior to the meeting, an agenda stating the meeting time, location, and business to be transacted at the meeting, and a prohibition against taking final action on matters not on the special meeting agenda.

### Subcommittee meetings

Subcommittee meetings are scheduled by the Subcommittee Chair with assistance from the SWISS Administrator. Subcommittee meetings require a minimum of 24 hours of notice prior to the meeting, an agenda stating the meeting time, location, and business to be transacted at the meeting, and a prohibition against taking final action on matters not on the special meeting agenda.

### Legislative Lunches

Regional Legislative Lunches with SWISS members and Washington State Senators and Representatives to discuss SWISS priority topics will be coordinated annually. These meetings will take place prior to the legislative session, preferably in November or December.

### Conduct

Full membership SWISS activities are subject to the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act.

All SWISS meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the most current issue of Robert's Rules of Order, except where alternative conduct has been identified.

Membership Meeting Agendas, Meeting Materials, and Minutes

Agendas for regular meetings will be developed in advance of meetings. SWISS administrative support staff prepare the relevant meeting materials and work with the Executive Committee Chair to prepare the agenda. Meeting materials will be sent to members in accordance with the timeline set forth in the following table.

Timing	Action Item
Four weeks prior	Draft agenda for meeting distributed to members and staff for review and comment
Two weeks prior	Final agenda distributed to members and staff Meeting notice posted on SWISS page on WSAC site and sent to SWISS counties.
One Week prior	Any materials to be used during the meeting are distributed to members and staff
Two weeks after	Draft minutes from the previous meeting are distributed to members and staff for review and comment

**VIII. Procedures**

Role Appointments

Chair and Vice-Chair will be recommended by the Executive Committee at the first SWISS meeting of each calendar year. The Executive Committee will make a recommendation for Chair and Vice-Chair from current Executive Committee members for consideration and approval by the full membership.

Consensus Decision-making

Because the SWISS regional partnership is a collaborative effort to identify and make progress on shared regional issues, SWISS will make decisions by consensus. "Consensus" means that each county actively supports or at least can live with the decision. SWISS members will strive to solve each other's problems and look for opportunities to find consensus.

Consensus must be reached among all SWISS Counties for all decisions. SWISS will discuss issues, consider options, evaluate pros and cons and make every effort to reach a consensus that can be supported by all SWISS Counties.

Each County is allotted one equal vote that will be given by a designated representative. Prior to taking a vote, counties will be given the opportunity to caucus and discuss their decision prior to coming back to the group and voting.

In absence in consensus, SWISS members may choose to continue discussions or act independently of SWISS.

Establishing Priorities

The work of SWISS focuses on shared priority topics. SWISS will annually review and evaluate the list of priority topics.

Dissolution or Departure from SWISS

Any member may put forward a motion to dissolve SWISS. If passed, the Executive Committee will discuss the need to develop a “plan of dissolution,” describing how to address any remaining needs, assets, or liabilities.

Any member County may also choose to leave the partnership. Member counties choosing to leave SWISS must provide 180 days’ notice to the remaining members. In the event a SWISS County chooses to remove themselves from the partnership, remaining members will discuss and decide on the future of the organization.

**IX. Approval**

This charter has been reviewed and approved by:

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**Councilmember Nate Nehring** | Snohomish County  
Chair  
Date

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**Commissioner Peter Browning** | Skagit County  
Vice-Chair  
Date

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**Commissioner Melanie Bacon** | Island County  
Executive Committee Member  
Date

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**Councilmember Todd Donovan** | Whatcom County  
Executive Committee Member  
Date

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**Councilmember Christine Minney** | San Juan County  
Executive Committee Member

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Date

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**Executive Satpal Sidhu** | Whatcom County  
Executive Committee Member

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Date

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**Executive Dave Somers** | Snohomish County  
Executive Committee Member

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