



Nebraska Council of Regions (NCOR)

2009 Annual Report

February, 2010

2009 NCOR Members

Harold "Pete" Peterson – North Central (Chair)

Mark Conrey – Tri-County

Patrick Foust – Northeast

Pat Gerdes – Southwest

Jim Gerweck – Southeast

Tim Hofbauer – East Central

Darrin Lewis – South Central

Ray Richards – Panhandle

Thomas Schwarten – N-WIN (NSP)

Dave Webb – N-WIN (NPPD)

Nebraska Council of Regions (NCOR) 2009 Annual Report

Executive Order No. 08-04 (December 17, 2008) established the Nebraska Council of Regions (NCOR), its membership, and key activities (see Attachment A). NCOR was created to provide oversight and integration for the eight local public safety communications regions of Nebraska and to coordinate with the Nebraska Wireless Interoperable Network (N-WIN). The Executive Order charged NCOR with providing an annual report containing a current assessment of the Nebraska regional wireless communication network that included recommendations for further development and operation of the system. This report fulfills that requirement.

Background

The 10-member NCOR board consists of one appointee each from the eight local communications regions, the Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD), and the N-WIN Council. Meetings are also regularly attended by representatives of the state agencies charged with providing support to the group – Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, Nebraska State Patrol, and the Office of the Chief Information Officer.

The primary purpose of NCOR is to complete the charges listed in Executive Order No. 08-04. Accordingly, the Nebraska Council of Regions will:

- Provide policy level direction and coordination related to the planning and decisions regarding regional integration with the Nebraska Wireless Interoperable Network (N-WIN).
- Adopt bylaws for the operation of the NCOR.
- Develop strategies and recommendations to improve operations of the Nebraska wireless communication network, including the use of new technology as it becomes available.
- Promote interoperability for public safety communications within Nebraska.
- Provide for the development of protocols, standard operating procedures and guidelines for use of the local Nebraska wireless communication network.
- Establish the terms of agreements and enter into agreements for public safety entities to operate with the Nebraska Wireless Interoperability Network (N-WIN), in conjunction with the Office of Chief Information Officer (OCIO), when such arrangements are practical and in the best interests of the State and the regions.

A work plan to accomplish these charges was established at the April 2009 NCOR meeting. Five major activities were identified and prioritized as:

1. NCOR Governance
2. Equipment (identification and procurement)
3. Standard operating procedures & protocols (development for use with equipment)
4. Proficiency Standards (for personnel and equipment)

5. Training (on procedures, protocols and equipment) to meet proficiency standards

Actions required for each of the major activities were outlined and assigned a priority level of high, medium, or low. Actions within each priority level were further prioritized to set activities for 2009. Actions are presented in the table below.

High	Medium	Low
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. State mutual aid overlay in place (June/July 2009) 2. Broadband point to point network (June/ July 2009) 3. Interoperability switches admin software installed (June/ July 2009) 4. Frequency use agreements 5. Channel allocation 6. Procedural usage 7. Preplanning 8. COM-L Training (is scheduled already) 9. Set required timeframe intervals for testing 10. Sustainment Plan and Resources 11. By May 15: NWIN and NCOR will be fully established 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Establishing local & regional working groups 13. Reconcile the CASM regional and state databases 14. Common radio programming set 15. Minimum Standards (channel sharing, dispatch center, training, etc.) 16. Contingency Plans 17. SOP training 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 18. Testing equipment 19. Exercising of Personnel 20. Integration of NRF 21. NIMS Training (ICS 100, etc.)

Cooperation with Nebraska Wireless Interoperable Network (N-WIN) Council members was instrumental in the first year of NCOR. In addition to strong N-WIN Council support and participation, three state groups provided support to NCOR in 2009.

The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) provided administrative support to NCOR as needed and served the logistical needs of the group including: 1) Arranging for adequate space and a location for meetings; and 2) Providing copies of meeting materials and sign in sheets. In addition, staff were assigned to assist regions assess technical requirements for the Request for Proposals (RFP).

The Office of the State Information Officer (OCIO) in conjunction with State Purchasing led the process for securing bids to establish the statewide point-to-point wireless network. It also provided administrative support to NCOR by publishing meeting agendas and minutes. Technical support was offered at NCOR meetings through the OCIO's office representatives via regular reporting about the development of interoperable communication infrastructure and implementation of the statewide radio network in coordination with the Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD). OCIO is also responsible for coordinating the statewide interoperability strategy with NEMA, NOCR and regional leadership groups.

The University of Nebraska Public Policy Center provided planning assistance to NCOR over the past year through agenda development, meeting facilitation, note taking and establishing a website to centralize communication related to NCOR and regional activities (<http://www.homelandplanning.nebraska.edu>).

2009 Project Milestones

NCOR Bylaws were drafted in February 2009. NCOR leadership was elected, and bylaws were officially adopted, on March 27, 2009. NCOR decided in April 2009 that Dave Webb, Nebraska Public Power District Representative to NCOR, would act as NCOR's liaison with the Office of the Chief Information Officer as a way to keep NCOR informed of the details of the development of the infrastructure for Nebraska's Wireless Interoperable Network (specifically the timeline and action steps for network installation and operation).

In July 2009, members for two working subcommittees were selected. NCOR members worked with N-WIN Council members on a Joint Operational Workgroup charged with developing standard operating procedures. The NCOR Technical Subcommittee was formed to monitor and address technical aspects of regional interoperability and integration with the state network.

Development of the RFP for the statewide wireless communication network dominated NCOR activities in 2009. NCOR worked with representatives of the OCIO and NEMA to shape the RFP with local and regional requirements from April through October. NEMA added two technical staff dedicated to assisting local areas with the work required to craft the RFP. NCOR asked each region to contribute to support these positions with grant funding allocated for interoperable communication work. The assistance of NEMA in this endeavor was invaluable.

NCOR members and other regional representatives participated in an RFP pre-proposal conference held in late September, with 17 vendors in attendance. At the October 2009 meeting NCOR appointed regional and technical representatives to serve as part of the RFP technical and cost evaluation teams. The bids were evaluated in November and December 2009.

Progress toward goals

NCOR governance (bylaws, electing leadership) was identified as the top priority activity for 2009. Bylaws were officially adopted, and leadership was elected on March 27, 2009.

The second priority activity for NCOR was equipment identification and procurement. Three high priority action items related to this activity were targeted for 2009: 1)

establish the state mutual aid overlay base stations; 2) establish the broadband point-to-point network; and 3) have administrative software installed for interoperability switches.

The mutual aid overlay/base station project has moved forward with the assistance of NEMA technical personnel. Regions and local areas assessed their needs related to upgrading public safety answering point equipment and connections to work with the statewide network for the purpose of achieving interoperability. It is anticipated that this work will continue in 2010. The second half of 2009 was spent crafting the RFP for the regional wireless communication network, which included work done to identify equipment and infrastructure needs for the mutual aid overlay/base station project.

The third high priority item for 2009, installation of administrative software for interoperability switches, has been delayed until 2010 due to the RFP process taking longer than expected.

Current status of the Nebraska regional wireless communications networks

The RFP for a vendor to complete the technical build out of the regional wireless communications network has been issued by State Purchasing. The OCIO worked closely with NCOR to coordinate development of the RFP to ensure regional and local needs were incorporated. Tower sites have been identified by local areas and potential end points for installation of base stations in public safety answering points have also been tentatively identified. The technical and financial feasibility for installation must be verified by the selected vendor once the contract has been awarded by State Purchasing for development of the physical network capabilities. Each potential installation site must undergo a review for environmental impact prior to installation of any equipment. NEMA has agreed to coordinate this effort across the state to ensure each site is promptly submitted for review.

Planning for mutual aid agreements and standard operating procedures for use on the network is in progress. Close coordination with the N-WIN Council resulted in a shared work group to begin drafting standard operating procedures to ensure communication on the state radio system and mutual aid channels follow similar rules.

Challenges

NCOR is a newly formalized collaboration so it has taken some time for local and state agencies to understand the charge and role of NCOR in interoperable communications for Nebraska. This has required a shift in the way local entities coordinate within their communications region, among regions, and with the state.

One challenge related to this has been the evolving need for close coordination with the official support agencies for NCOR (NEMA and OCIO). The NCOR Board needs information from NEMA and OCIO in order to set priorities, understand needs across the state, and manage grant funding. The flow of information between NCOR and its support agencies has improved over the course of the year but at times has been seen

by members as inconsistent. This challenge was improved dramatically when NEMA assigned personnel to directly work with the technical aspects of planning for interoperability.

A second challenge related to information flow has been the tight deadlines for completion of goals that are tied to funding such as the public safety interoperable communications grant (PSIC). The need for transparency and information sharing between the state and regions increases as grant deadlines loom. At this point, no deadlines have been missed, and the board remains focused on goals to ensure timely completion of activities related to the PSIC grant and homeland security funding dedicated to achieving interoperable communication capabilities across the state.

Recommendations

NCOR plans to continue with current projects, monitoring and ensuring that they are smoothly underway before moving on to other identified priorities in 2010. The highest priority is achieving the build out of the statewide wireless communication network. When the contract is awarded for this work, Regions will coordinate with the contractor to determine which local sites will be connected to the network. Ongoing coordination with NEMA and the OCIO will also continue to ensure equipment is purchased and installed for base stations. NCOR recommends that the state support agencies work with Regions in 2010 to create common training and exercise expectations for users of the wireless networks.

The NCOR membership would like to have an increased role in the development and maintenance of the state Mutual Aid Plan in 2010. At the November 2009 NCOR meeting the board formally made a motion to ask for this responsibility. This was viewed as a natural fit with the work NCOR has taken on to ensure local entities are able to communicate via mutual aid radio frequencies across the state.

NCOR anticipates its members will again participate in an update of the 2010 Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP). This collaborative effort with state agencies forms the basis for local tactical interoperable communications planning (TICP).

A number of the medium priority actions will be revisited in 2010 after the major goals are met. In addition, it is anticipated that all priorities will be examined and additional actions identified to move the mission of NCOR forward in the coming year.

Bylaws of the Nebraska Council of Regions

Article I. Name

The name of the Council is the Nebraska Council of Regions (hereinafter "NCOR"). NCOR shall report to the Lt. Governor as Nebraska Homeland Security Director and to the Governor's Homeland Security Policy Group as established by Executive Order No. 08-04.

Article II. Purpose

NCOR is created to provide oversight and integration for the eight local public safety communications regions of Nebraska and to coordinate with the Nebraska Wireless Interoperable Network. NCOR is responsible for developing and implementing the State Communications Interoperability Plan.

NCOR shall foster collaboration among stakeholders at the local, federal and state level. The Nebraska Council of Regions shall:

- Provide policy level direction and coordination related to the planning and decisions regarding regional integration with the Nebraska Wireless Interoperable Network (N-WIN).
- Adopt bylaws for the operation of NCOR.
- Develop strategies and recommendations to improve operations of the Nebraska wireless communication network, including the use of new technology as it becomes available.
- Promote interoperability for public safety communications within Nebraska.
- Provide for the development of protocols, standard operating procedures and guidelines for use of the local Nebraska wireless communication network.
- Establish the terms of agreements and enter into agreements for public safety entities to operate with the Nebraska Wireless Interoperability Network (N-WIN), in conjunction with the Office of Chief Information Officer (OCIO), when such arrangements are practical and in the best interests of the State and the regions.

NCOR shall prepare an annual report for the Governor and the Governor's Homeland Security Policy Group. Such report shall contain a current assessment of the Nebraska Regional wireless communication networks, including recommendations regarding the further development and operation of the system.

Article III. Membership

Section 1. The ten-member Council shall be comprised of one member of each of the eight local communications regions, who shall be appointed by each region; one representative of the Nebraska Public Power District, who shall be appointed by the NPPD Chief Executive Officer; and one member of the Nebraska Wireless Interoperable Network, who shall be appointed by the Chairman of the Nebraska Wireless Interoperability Network.

Section 2. Representatives appointed by local regions to serve on NCOR shall serve for a term of two calendar years at a time.

Section 3. Representatives, in consultation with their regions, may resign their appointment. Regions may terminate the service of their appointee in accordance with region bylaws as appropriate. Resignation or termination requires written notice from either the member (in the case of resignation) or an authorized leader in the region (in the case of termination).

Section 4. Vacancies are filled by the region or organization represented by the individual leaving NCOR.

Article IV. Officers

Section 1. Candidates for the positions of chairperson and vice-chairperson shall be nominated by a voting member of NCOR and elected by simple majority of the quorum.

Section 2. The term of office for each position will be 18 months.

Section 3. Election may be by secret ballot or roll call vote as determined.

Section 4. The chairperson shall open meetings at the appointed time, determine quorum present, announce proper sequence of business before the assembly, recognize members entitled to the floor, state and put to a vote all legitimate motions before the assembly, announce the results of each vote, protect the assembly from frivolous motions, expedite business while recognizing the rights and duties of members, decide all questions of order, authenticate his/her signature as necessary and adjourn the meeting.

Section 5. The vice-chairperson shall serve as meeting chair during the absence of the chairperson and perform other governance duties as assigned by the chairperson.

Section 6. NCOR will be administratively and technically supported by the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency ("NEMA") and the Office of the Chief Information Officer.

Article V. Voting

Section 1. Only appointed members of NCOR present in meetings either in-person or, as authorized, by videoconference have the right to vote on any question which has been moved, seconded and called for vote.

Section 2. Members may abstain from voting or vote aye or nay. All votes for action items will be recorded by roll call vote.

Section 3. A 2/3 majority of appointed members (7 of 10) is required for a motion to be pass.

Article VI. Meetings

Section 1. NCOR meetings will be conducted in accordance with provisions in the Nebraska "Open Meetings Law", § 84-1408 through 84-1414.

Section 2. Agendas will be established 15 days prior to the meeting date when possible to allow regional representatives ample time to circulate action items among their stakeholders. Publication of agendas will follow guidelines set forth in the Open Meetings Law as referenced in Article VI, Section 1.

Section 3. NCOR will meet as often as needed to accomplish the goals set forth in Executive Order No. 08-04.

Section 4. A quorum for conducting business shall be 2/3 of the appointed membership (7 of 10 members).

Section 5. Public participants at NCOR meetings may speak on agenda items outside the public comment period when determined appropriate to assist in resolving the agenda item or when properly identified and recognized by the chairperson.

Section 6. Meeting notes will be provided to all NCOR members and posted according to the Open Meetings Law.

Article VII. Committees

NCOR may establish sub-committees and temporary working groups to address operating procedures and special projects.

Article VIII. Amendments of Bylaws

These bylaws may be amended at any meeting of NCOR by an affirmative roll call vote of 2/3 of the membership (7 of 10 members), provided the amendment has been placed on the agenda as an action item.

Article IX. Adoption of Bylaws

Adopted by the Nebraska Council of Regions by affirmative roll call vote this 23 day of April, 2009:

By: Harold "Pete" Peterson, Chairperson

By: Ray Richards, Vice-chairperson