North Dakota

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North Dakota Statewide Communication Network

Information Communications Technology Category

"Unifying Voices: North Dakota's Journey with the Statewide Communications Network"

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Executive Summary:

The Statewide Communications Network (SCN) exemplifies North Dakota's commitment to empowering people, improving lives, and inspiring success. Aligned with the values of gratitude, humility, curiosity, and courage, SCN supports Team ND's cultural aspirations of working as one and remaining citizen-focused. By supporting statewide collaborative communication efforts and utilizing platforms like Team ND Connect with the IT One Stop Shop resources, SCN has transformed how state agencies collaborate, share knowledge, and engage with team members. The project, driven by a diverse steering committee and high-level communicators from seven state agencies, has enhanced communication flow, reduced inefficiencies, and fostered a collaborative environment. The SCN's ongoing efforts to provide new trainings, improve IT resources, and promote a cohesive strategy demonstrate its lasting value and the significant impact on state governance and service delivery.

IDEA:

What problem or opportunity does the project address?

The North Dakota Statewide Communications Network addresses the evolving landscape of service delivery and government operations. With rising expectations from citizens and team members, there's a pressing need for fast, accurate information and robust platforms for idea-sharing and engagement. This project aims to bridge the gap caused by technology and skill limitations, lack of resources, and communication barriers, thereby enhancing crisis communications and fostering a cohesive government communicators' network.

Why does it matter?

This project is crucial for improving government efficiency, transparency, and citizen engagement. By providing a platform for skilled communicators to collaborate seamlessly and share resources, the project ensures better-informed citizens and well-connected team members. Not addressing these communication challenges could lead to missed opportunities, reduced transparency, and ineffective crisis management, ultimately impacting citizen satisfaction and trust in government services.

Service delivery and government operations have changed. With the unprecedented rise in citizen and team member expectations, fast, robust accurate information needs to be readily available at their fingertips. The Statewide Communications Network was formed to help North Dakota state government communicators who face barriers such as technology and skill gaps, access to resources, and a lack of support.

Members of the ND Statewide Communicators Network includes agencies from:

Office of Management and Budget	Department of Corrections and Rehabilitations
Department of Transportation	Department of Information Technology
Governor's Office	Secretary of State
State Auditor's Office	Attorney General
Department of Health and Human Services	Job Service

State Library	Public Instruction
State Tax Commissioner	ND Public Retirement System
School for the Blind	Environmental Quality
Insurance Department	Dept. Of Mineral Resources
Workforce Safety and Insurance	Highway Patrol
Department of Commerce	Department of Agriculture
Historical Society	Game and Fish
Parks and Rec	Council of the Arts
Historical Society	Bank of North Dakota
Adjutant General	Public Finance Authority
Department of Trust Lands	Retirement and Investment Office
Industrial Commission	

What makes it different?

What sets the North Dakota Statewide Communications Network apart is its comprehensive approach to addressing communication challenges. By fostering cross-agency collaboration, providing education and resources to bridge skill gaps, and promoting unified communication strategies, this project creates a robust network of skilled communicators.

In addition to the Statewide Communications Network (SCN), the creation of Team ND Connect, the statewide intranet, has played a pivotal role in enhancing communication and collaboration across various state agencies. Team ND Connect serves as a central hub for funneling and prioritizing information that needs to reach a majority of team members, thereby addressing communication shortfalls. By improving communication flow and management, facilitating knowledge and document sharing, and promoting team member inclusion and a sense of well-being, Team ND Connect has transformed the organizational culture at Team ND. With contributors from diverse state agencies, Team ND Connect has fostered a culture of empowerment and collaboration, enabling team members to find efficiencies and work together seamlessly. Additionally, the IT One Stop Shop initiative has further streamlined processes by providing a centralized resource for IT support and services, ensuring that agencies have access to the necessary technical assistance and resources to support the SCN and other initiatives effectively.
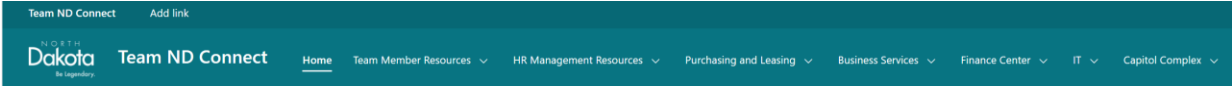
What makes it universal?

The project aligns with the State CIO Top Ten Priorities, particularly #7 Consolidation/Optimization. By combining communication efforts, consolidating resources, and promoting an "enterprise" approach to thinking, the project embodies the goal of optimizing government operations. The need for effective communication and collaboration is universal across all states, making this project relevant and applicable beyond North Dakota.

Implementation

What was the roadmap?

The roadmap for the Statewide Communications Network (SCN) project was developed in alignment with the strategic goals and values of Team ND, focusing on empowering people, improving lives, and inspiring success. Grounded in values such as gratitude, humility, curiosity, and courage, the SCN aimed to foster a culture of collaboration and innovation across state agencies. The project fits into an enterprise view by serving as a centralized platform for communication and collaboration, enabling agencies to work together seamlessly and remain citizen-focused.

The project management approach involved a steering/project team comprised of high-level communicators from seven different state agencies. This team led the vision and mission of the SCN, prioritizing agency collaboration and ensuring alignment with strategic objectives. Strategy sessions involving members from various agencies were conducted to produce a new team charter, redirect objectives, and refine the overall mission of the SCN, reflecting a collaborative and inclusive approach to project management.

Successful implementation of the SCN project will be assessed based on several factors, including improved communication flow and management, enhanced knowledge sharing, and increased team member inclusion and well-being. Key metrics will include the efficiency of information dissemination, user engagement with the statewide intranet (Team ND Connect), and satisfaction with the IT One Stop Shop initiative. Successful implementation will ultimately lead to a more cohesive and empowered Team ND, characterized by a commitment to working as one, maintaining a citizen-focused approach, embracing a growth mindset, making a difference, and exhibiting leadership everywhere.

Who was involved?

A Statewide Communications Network scope of work and business case were written. Key individuals and sponsors were identified and buy in was obtained by presenting the business case. Once buy in was obtained by key individuals from the Office of the Governor and the Office of Management, the steering committee/project team was formed to work through preliminary objectives, communications plan and additional groundwork to launch a network.

The steering committee/project team laid the foundation to obtain buy in from the greater Statewide Communications Network membership, gathering communicators from agencies across the state. Buy in

came quickly as communicators are typically naturally prone to a growth mindset and crave a collaborative setting. By offering monthly, useful microlearnings, and quarterly in-person meetings, the Statewide Communications Network quickly became a well-known, go-to support for communicators.

How did you do it?

Launching the Statewide Communications Network with a budget of zero was a challenge. Human time became the main resource needed to successfully launch the group, utilizing platforms, people and technology that the state already had at its disposal.

Microsoft Teams' emergence during the COVID-19 pandemic was well-timed for the Statewide Communications Network to launch in the years to follow. The platform has allowed for increased discussion, file sharing and virtual meetings to allow communications to work and grow together in a more efficient manner. IT was additionally able to help create a dynamic Statewide Communications Network email list that is generated from our human resources management system, and updated daily, so there is no manual maintenance on the email list or Team.

Impact

What did the project make better?

Communications provides vital information and transparency in government. With crucial functions such as transparency, crisis communications, public safety and risk reduction, messaging strategy, leadership connections, outreach and education and consistency, creating a network of communicators was vital. Since the launch of the Statewide Communications Network, agencies have been collaborating on various projects and communications. The state is much better poised to tackle emergency

communications as there is a ready-to-go group to tap for assistance. This benefits the citizens in a variety of ways.

How do you know?

The success of the Statewide Communications Network (SCN) is supported by a blend of quantitative and qualitative data that illustrate its positive impact.

Quantitative Data:

The SCN boasts over 90 active members, with approximately half attending each quarterly in-person meeting and monthly microlearning sessions. The centralization of communication efforts through the IT One Stop Shop has streamlined processes, leading to significant cost savings in terms of time and resources. While specific figures are continuously being assessed, the reduction in redundancy and improved efficiency across state agencies are evident outcomes of this initiative. High adoption rates of Team ND by state employees further indicate widespread acceptance and reliance on the network for fulfilling communication needs.

Qualitative Data:

Customer feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the SCN's role in improving communication flow and fostering a collaborative environment. Satisfaction surveys and informal feedback sessions reveal a high level of contentment with the resources and support provided by the SCN. The enhanced communication and collaboration facilitated by the SCN have led to a more cohesive and efficient state government, directly benefiting citizens through improved service delivery.

Testimonials:

Jeremy Fettig from NDIT praises the SCN, saying, "The Statewide Communications Network has been transformative. It's not just about better communication; it's about creating a cohesive strategy that aligns our efforts and maximizes our impact. The quarterly meetings and monthly microlearning sessions are invaluable." Nicole Peske from the Department of Transportation shares a similar sentiment, stating, "Being a part of the SCN has significantly improved how we coordinate and communicate across departments. The resources and support we receive have made our work more effective and streamlined." Rhea Beto from the Arts Council adds, "The SCN has brought a new level of collaboration and innovation to my job. It's empowering to be part of a network that prioritizes growth, learning, and effective communication."

What now?

Moving forward, the Statewide Communications Network (SCN) project will focus on long-term sustainability and expansion to further enhance communication and collaboration across state agencies. The project's maintenance plan includes expanding the IT One Stop Shop to provide state employees with additional IT resources, ensuring comprehensive support for technology-related needs. Additionally, the SCN will introduce new trainings and resources for its members, fostering continuous learning and skill development in communication strategies and technologies.

This project is worthy of both initial and ongoing investment due to its critical role in promoting effective communication, collaboration, and efficiency within state agencies. By facilitating information sharing and knowledge exchange, the SCN enhances productivity and decision-making processes across the government. Furthermore, the expansion of the IT One Stop Shop and introduction of new trainings demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement and innovation, ensuring that the project remains relevant and beneficial in the ever-evolving landscape of government communication and technology.

Conclusion

The Statewide Communications Network has fundamentally transformed communication and collaboration across North Dakota's state agencies. By aligning with Team ND's mission and cultural values, the SCN has created a unified platform that empowers employees, enhances communication flow, and promotes a collaborative environment. The implementation of Team ND Connect and the IT One Stop Shop has streamlined information sharing, improved resource access, and fostered a culture of continuous learning and growth. This initiative is a testament to the power of strategic collaboration and digital transformation in enhancing public service and achieving long-term success.