

Interim Network Steering Group DRAFT Charter (02/01/01 - v2)

I. Background Summary

At its October 2000 meeting, the State/EPA Information Management Workgroup (IMWG) endorsed the “Blueprint for a National Environmental Information Exchange Network.” This Blueprint, prepared by the IMWG’s Network Blueprint Team, outlined the potential benefits of an Environmental Information Exchange Network, the major components of such a Network, and the need for some level of Network Administration for the Network to operate. Also at its October 2000 meeting, the IMWG charged the Network Blueprint Team with further defining necessary Network Administration functions and identifying who might fulfill specific roles and responsibilities. The Network Blueprint Team reported out to the IMWG at its December 2000 conference call on the following major Network Administration functions:

- Creation of a registrar/repository of Network data exchange templates (DETs), trading partner agreements (TPAs), and Network membership
- Development of DETs
- Encouragement of data standards use in DETs
- Development of Network technical infrastructure
- Development of readiness assessment and quick start kit for becoming a Network node
- Development of general security policies and tools
- Communications and outreach
- Promotion of Network membership
- Policy alignment of Network with other agency operations and agreements
- Oversight of operational management of the Network through a **Network Steering Group**

As described in the Network Blueprint Team’s report prepared for the February IMWG meeting, the Network Steering Group would provide a venue in which Network policies and practices can be developed in a forum that is distinct from the individual participating agencies. The Network Steering Group would also coordinate the activities of Network sub-teams, as necessary, and provide direct oversight to contractors or third parties acting on the Network’s behalf.

The Network Blueprint Team recommended that the Network Steering Group function be fulfilled in the short term by an Interim Network Steering Group. The Team further recommended that the Interim Network Steering Group be composed of members of the existing Network Blueprint Team (and potentially other new members), focus on the minimum steering functions necessary in the near term to get Network implementation and pilot flows underway, and plan for a December 2001 sunset, after which the IMWG would reassess the Network steering function and permanently charter a Network Steering Group.

This charter defines the mission, objectives, scope, assumptions and risks for an Interim Network Steering Group.

II. Mission

The mission of the Interim Network Steering Group is to provide an oversight and steering capacity in near-term Network implementation and administration.

III. Objectives

The Interim Network Steering Group has the following objectives:

- Oversee the development of a test registry of Network DETs, TPAs, and other documents
- Coordinate with the IMWG's Central Data Exchange and Facility Data Action Teams on pilot data flows and the development of associated DETs and TPAs
- Draft an approach for harmonization of DETs and use of data standards in DETs (requires coordination with the Environmental Data Standards Council)
- Develop a Network implementation plan
- Further research the opportunities for third party involvement in Network Administration, including the preparation of a request for information from third parties
- Develop a proposal to formally institute the Network Steering Group function

IV. Scope

The Interim Network Steering Group will limit its work to the following initial scope:

- The minimal network administration functions needed for "node-to-node" exchanges. The Group will not become involved in the operation of any node (i.e., behind a given state's firewall or within the EPA's CDX).
- Coordination with, not duplication of, work/projects undertaken by the CDX Action Team.

The Interim Network Steering Group will consider the following areas as out of scope:

- Bi-lateral disputes concerning data flows between any individual state and EPA.
- Policy or programmatic issues associated with the content or use of specific exchanged data. While the IMWG may elect to pursue the broader issue of what data is collected and exchanged, this Interim Network Steering Group will focus on the issue of how that data is exchanged over the Network.

V. Assumptions, and Risks

In developing this charter, the Network Blueprint Team assumes the following:

- The IMWG is prepared to provide material support to the operation of such an Interim Network Steering Group.
- Until states and EPA have some joint experience, a lean Interim Network Steering Group is advisable and will allow for flexibility in developing flows and processes.
- An Interim Network Steering Group should be a separate entity from other IMWG teams and the coordinative costs of doing so are commensurate with the clarity of purpose it provides.
- This Interim Network Steering Group will be an official liaison to the EPA XML Technical Advisory Group (XML-TAG).
- A Network Steering Group will still be needed if a third party is selected to provide some Network administration functions.
- Given the costs of supporting the Group and the evolving nature of its charge, this Interim Steering Group will take its December 2001 sunset provision seriously.

The Network Blueprint Team also identifies the following risks of this approach:

- The Interim Network Steering Group will be continuing its work in the midst of a significant transition of leadership at EPA.
- Many of the areas of Interim Network Steering Group responsibility are complex and evolving.