CIP Narrative Online Reporting (FY2021)

LOGIN

Lisa Smith

SERVICE YEAR

SY2021

ITC NAME

ACCESS

IRN

085563

ITC DIRECTOR

Lisa Smith

EMAIL

smith@access-k12.org

1. STATUS AND PROGRESS

As an organization, our focus is to provide exemplary services to our customers in Mahoning and Columbiana counties. Our customers include K12 public and non-public schools, the Youngstown and Mahoning County library system, the Columbiana County Port Authority and a number of other entities.   We make every effort to accommodate customer needs as best we can, instituting new offerings and tweaking existing ones.

ACCESS continues to serve customers with an efficient staff of 12. Conscientious individuals support all areas of our services (network, student, EMIS, fiscal and library), with the goal to educate, support and lighten the burden for our school personnel and general customers. We understand the importance of each position held. Cross training is ongoing to prepare for the loss of a needed skill set and sustain the level of operation we require. During FY20, two employees left employment and two new individuals were hired to ensure service levels remain constant.

ACCESS participated in an ODE ITC Site Review November 2019. The results provided feedback to assist in measuring our services to our customers.

With the onset of the Coronavirus Pandemic and its impact on Ohio businesses and schools, ACCESS adjusted our business model. ACCESS was able to maintain its level of service, adjusting training and meeting requirements by going virtual. Using Zoom, we are able to provide some personal face-to-face communication with our customers and conduct important trainings and operational meetings safely. ACCESS continues to adhere to ODH orders and recommendations and remains operational supporting and protecting the customers and staff. As our K-12 customers' transition from traditional instruction to digital, or both, staff is prepared to continue our support.

Network Services including Library Automation Support

ACCESS prides itself on remaining on the cutting-edge with technology implementation. Network infrastructure is critical and maintained daily with monitoring occurring 24x7. The 325+ miles of privately owned ACCESS fiber connect our member districts in both Mahoning and Columbiana counties. We manage and maintain the ACCESS Fiber Network daily. Communication is ongoing with ODOT, local construction companies, the Ohio Utilities Protection agency (OUPs), AT&T, Ohio Edison, AEP and many other utility-focused organizations that affect the ACCESS fiber network.   All new fiber builds, pole transfers, and new construction needs are the responsibility of ACCESS.

ACCESS provides data, voice, video and wireless services seamlessly across the ACCESS fiber network.

- VoIP services are available to our customers. Two (2) new school districts joined our managed services this summer. Eighteen (18) customer entities currently receive voice and messaging services daily.   Through our

partnership with *The Education Connection (TEC)*, ACCESS provides voicemail, on-call services, bully tip lines, and integration with bell schedules, security and intercom systems, among other things. Leveraging our VoIP infrastructure to integrate with customer needs remains a focus.

• Network maintenance, hosting, and support services are available to our customers to help lower their costs.

• *Securly* Internet filtering is in use as the primary CIPA-compliant Internet filter for all of our K-12 customers. We continue to evaluate new filtering products in preparation for migration, if necessary, prior to contract expiration.

• Cisco Meraki managed wireless services are available to our customers. ACCESS remains competitive offering products (consortium options) that our customers request. Many times, we source product to leverage cost without offering managed services to accommodate customer needs.

• Security remains an ongoing focus. ACCESS, in conjunction with the Management Council CISO, develop security policies aligned with NIST Standards to protect infrastructure, data and technical assets we maintain. We monitor and utilize appropriate tools to safeguard our investment.

• ACCESS provides Google email and G-suite educational offerings to our districts/schools

• Participation in consortium offerings through ITCs and the Management Council is also beneficial for our customers.

In January 2020, ACCESS contracted directly with INFOhio for library service support for our K-12 schools. Our successful partnership is allowing us to free up a staff person to assist in other areas. In July 2020, a consortium offering facilitated by INFOhio with SORA/Overdrive, began for our schools. EBooks will enhance digital and traditional learning.

Student & EMIS Services

Frontline - Progressbook Suite is the sole student package utilized at ACCESS. All public K12 schools use StudentInformation and GradeBook. In addition, a few schools have purchased Data Map. SameGoal's IEP Anywhere is the special education application in use by schools. Third-party products, such as Illuminate, Schoology, Canvas, eSchoolview, etc., are supported from a data-integration standpoint. If a district engages in a relationship with a third-party vendor, ACCESS makes every effort possible to assist with data integration needs, per the parameters of the engagement and upon school authorization. Assistance is also provided for data needs to support grant proposals and submission requirements.   In FY20, the student and EMIS services team provided data for grant opportunities and/or requests originating out of ODE, ODJFS, and the governor's office.

In the midst of the Pandemic, year-end processing and new school year preparation is critical as schools try to determine schedules and teaching methodologies to cover in-person and/or remote learning. Typical methods used for school opening and reporting are constantly being re-evaluated based on day-to-day decisions and changes made by the district/school or ODE.

Continuous training occurs in all areas of student services and EMIS to educate users on new procedures and methods required by ODE and our core service providers.   EMIS changes and reporting periods are monitored closely by ACCESS staff. District administrators and support personnel constantly receive updates to EMIS requirements and changes. We strive to maintain data integrity and ensure that reporting goes well.

Our staff has remained flexible and works diligently with our schools to adjust to the rapid changes that are occurring in a moment's notice. We have successfully conducted trainings in both student services areas and EMIS virtually.

Fiscal Services

All fiscal customers intend to use the Fiscal Redesign application. Migrations are currently underway and we anticipate full completion by June 2021.   Fiscal Redesign application servers are hosted in our virtual environment. Fiscal and network staff work closely to ensure data migration and new hosted implementations are functioning as designed. ACCESS has 18 districts using the Fiscal Redesign application in production, six more preparing to go live by the end of 2020 and the remaining districts in subsequent waves. ACCESS continues to work with the Management Council and SSDT to acquire knowledge necessary to train our users and to keep our staff informed. Feedback from districts/schools who have been on production for some time has been positive.

Fiscal services staff continues to support district treasurers and fiscal support staff with day-to-day operational needs on both the Fiscal Classic (USAS & USPS) application and Fiscal Redesign in production. Third-party integrated applications (KIOSK, RAM, SC-View, etc.) are also supported on a varied basis. During both calendar and fiscal year-end periods, support is provided covering a myriad of areas. Jointly, the ACCESS fiscal and EMIS staff work together to facilitate proper reporting of district financial data to ODE via EMIS.

During the Pandemic, the fiscal services team has conducted some trainings virtually while maintaining some in-house trainings (as needed) observing safety precautions.

The ACCESS Treasurer oversees the organizations day-to-day fiscal operation as well as supervises the fiscal support team.

2. AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

The ODE ITC site review, in-house customer surveys, and adjusted business model (due to the pandemic) provide insight into areas for consideration and modification.

In FY21,

• We will continue to work on time management practices. Many times, there are not enough hours in the day to tackle new endeavors with such a small number of staff. Although many areas could use additional staff support, we remain vigilant in keeping our personnel costs down for our members.
• We will continue to work on developing electronic training materials for all support areas. We have made great strides in using Zoom for trainings and meetings, making recordings whenever appropriate for future use. Feedback has been positive and we will continue to tweak methods to improve delivery.
• We will continue to engage in more professional development for staff (in-person or on-line) to refresh their skills and develop knowledge of new skills that can benefit all.
• We will utilize more inter-personal techniques and skills (on-site visits, phone calls, etc.) with customers instead of relying solely on help desk tickets and email. Doing so provides instant feedback from face-to-face discussions.
• We will conduct user-group meetings in all service areas as well as ensure advisory committees meet regularly to plan ahead.
• Security policy development is time consuming and without a full-time resource to tackle these needs, extremely difficult. We will continue to move forward as best we can to get to a satisfactory level. We will use the MCOECN CISO to guide us.
• We will continue to participate in EMIS Alliance to support districts and new employees working within EMIS.
• We will undertake moving additional members to the Fiscal Redesign application following the timeline established.
• We will attempt to establish a Marketplace for products and services at consortium pricing to assist our schools reduce costs.

3. INPUT FROM STAKEHOLDERS

As a member of the Ohio Education Computer Network (OECN), we will continue to collaborate with ITCs across the state to provide the best services possible to our customers.

The Executive Director and leadership team (department directors) visit with district administrators on an annual basis to discuss issues and seek personal feedback. The Executive Director attends monthly county Superintendent meetings, while the Treasurer attends monthly county meetings for Treasurers.   Any school needs or concerns we discuss at these meetings. The Director of Student Services and State Reporting attends county principal and curriculum director meetings. All relevant staff members attend ODE and state level meetings. The Director of Technology is engaged in security group meetings with colleagues across all ITCs as well as vendors in our area that support our infrastructure needs as well as customers. The Director of Technology also oversees the ACCESS Fiber Network along with the Executive Director. Feedback is encouraged at all times.

The ACCESS helpdesk system is automatically set to send and require the ticket requestor to complete a survey at

the time the ticket is closed. The Executive director reviews survey results daily, and any negative comment is addressed via a direct phone call from the Executive Director.

ACCESS participates in the MCOECN Customer Satisfaction Survey and randomly provides its own survey to its customers. All results from survey tools are reviewed and used as guidelines for making modifications to support and services.

Feedback is solicited after every meeting and training session provided. This permits staff to identify issues quickly and move toward developing remediation tactics, if required.

Feedback about ACCESS services is also received directly from the Board of Directors at regular monthly meetings and by the Assembly at the fall and spring meeting.

4. COLLABORATION EXAMPLES

ACCESS utilizes Harmony, developed at NOACSC, to provide reports through its integration with the ProgressBook suite. Our districts are fond of this application and utilize it frequently.

ACCESS contracts with LACA for their RAM application used by school fiscal departments.

ACCESS Executive Director serves as a Trustee of the Management Council.

ACCESS contracts with INFOhio for full support services for our customers.

ACCESS leadership personnel interact with respective counterparts across ITCs for guidance and sharing of information and resources.

ACCESS directors continue to participate in meetings and workshops across the state provided by ODE, the Management Council, independent ITCs, vendors, etc.   Some examples include, EMIS Alliance, Security Network Group, Fiscal Redesign committee, among others.

ACCESS staff participates in specific statewide meetings and training opportunities to further their knowledge in their respective areas.

ACCESS works closely with our Educational Service Centers and SSTR5

SUBMITTED ON

08/24/2020