

# FY 23 SWOCA CIP Narrative

## July 20, 2022

### 1. Status and Progress\*

**What is the status and progress of your continuous improvement plan for this past year? Briefly describe your goals, current status, and an overview of your ITC's efforts towards completion of your plan and activities.**

*All SWOCA team goals are developed by each team and submitted to our LOCAL staff leadership team, for alignment and inclusion in the annual CIP update.*

SWOCA maintains a CIP grid format, for ease of use and tracking. The CIP goals and updates document for SWOCA outlines the goals for only the five CORE service areas required of all ITCs, as defined by ODE. These service areas include Fiscal Services; Student Records Management; State-Mandated Reporting (EMIS); Library Automation; and Internet Access & Networking Services.

Although we complete the CIP for core services, SWOCA also has in place a broader, strategic plan, adopted by the SWOCA Executive Committee, which guides organizational goals and is aligned with and inclusive of the CIP for core services.

See summary of strategic plan below:

<b><u>Our Vision</u></b>	Ohio's Premier Technology Solutions Partner	
<b><u>Our Mission</u></b>	We provide trusted IT solutions for Government and Education	
<b><u>Our Focus</u></b>	Communication	We keep our internal and external Stakeholders informed
	Accountability	We keep our strategic plan front and center
	Motivation	We keep our stakeholders actively involved in our planning
	Progress	We report regularly on progress toward our goals

### **Our Core Values**

*We are guided in our decision-making by our core values*

*Integrity   Innovation   Empowerment   Trusted   Dependable   Customer-Focused*

**Strategic Priorities**

<b><i>Expanded Markets</i></b>	Identify and serve, as appropriate, new markets
<b><i>Communications</i></b>	Develop and implement a comprehensive marketing and stakeholder outreach plan
<b><i>Organization</i></b>	Enhance SWOCA’s organizational development and effectiveness
<b><i>Enhance Portfolio</i></b>	Diversify SWOCA’s service portfolio to meet clients’ changing needs
<b><i>Statewide Leadership</i></b>	Through advocacy, positively promote legislative changes which impact SWOCA and our stakeholders

All goals on the CIP grid will show the status and progress of each of the five core service areas, as well as our efforts toward completion (see attachments). All SWOCA goals are developed by the individual support teams, not management. This keeps the progress and ownership of achieving the goals within each SWOCA team. Progress is reported twice annually to the SWOCA Management team, at mid-year and yearend, for inclusion in the annual CIP update.

We continue to make steady progress in all five of our targeted areas/goals of the SWOCA strategic plan:

**1. Expanded Markets: Identify and serve as appropriate new markets.**

- a. We have expanded our service offerings to the following agencies, outside of K12
  - Mental Health Recovery Services - County Agency
  - Townships
  - Municipalities
  - We have partnerships with County Commissioners and Municipalities to discuss fiber builds in FY23 and will be aiding with this effort in two of our counties

**2. Develop and implement a comprehensive and stakeholder outreach plan.**

Digital marketing initiatives, as follows:

- a. SWOCA’s current website was updated in FY22 (stakeholders were included in the design/requirements phase of the website to better meet their needs)

- b. Regular newsletters are sent by all software services departments to end-users. This effort is made to keep our users informed of software changes, trainings, service updates, new services, and related items, such as important security information. These updates are copied to district Superintendents and Treasurers, as well as Techs and other stakeholder groups, as appropriate.

### 3. Enhance SWOCA's organizational development and effectiveness.

Using our strategic plan as our guide to improve organizational effectiveness, we continue to make progress. The plan has served as a roadmap for the direction of SWOCA, and continues to help us to focus on our strategic initiatives, as follows:

#### a. **Communication**

We keep our internal and external stakeholders informed

- Consistent communication with all stakeholders
- Improving existing and developing new methods of communication with stakeholders
  - Progress support has included the creation of podcasts and “You Tube” type videos, easily accessible for end-users
  - ZOOM conferencing tools utilized for meetings and trainings
    - Sessions are recorded so users may access them when convenient
- Regular/consistent and timely updates and newsletters are sent to stakeholders from all SWOCA departments
- Trainings were expanded into a virtual format in 2021 due to the COVID outbreak, using Zoom and Teams and have continued throughout FY22. This effort will continue in FY23, if based upon stakeholder feedback, the trainings are widely acceptable by our users
- Regular/consistent user group meetings with various stakeholder groups, including users of the Fiscal, Student, Library, EMIS and Technical groups

#### b. **Accountability**

Being accountable to our member districts for keeping our strategic plan front and center

- Timely updates are provided to all SWOCA committees and Boards
- Our Executive Committee approves services/fees
- Consistently providing stakeholders with mechanisms for feedback and decision-making related to services and service delivery

- Information and feedback have historically been gathered by an annual stakeholder survey, as well as weekly training session evaluation forms and general user feedback; this effort will continue in FY23

c. **Motivation**

We will keep our stakeholders actively involved in our planning

- Member participation in SWOCA's Governance
- Member participation on SWOCA Committees (Personnel/Policy; Finance; Planning)
- Member participation in user group meetings
- Member participation in service reviews and major purchases

d. **Progress**

We will report regularly on progress toward our goals to stakeholders

- Regular communications, newsletters and updates are being sent to stakeholders, as well as SWOCA hosting a yearend stakeholder/BOD meeting, inclusive of representatives from every member district

4. **Diversify SWOCA's service portfolio to meet clients' changing needs.**

Since inception of the Strategic plan, our service portfolio has expanded to offer the following diverse services:

- Adopted Strategic Solutions for document management software
- Cyber Security training tools:
  - TechGuard
  - Lightspeed
  - Social Sentinel
  - Securly
- Implemented and offered Tech Searches as a service for districts
- Implemented server monitoring as a service
- Implemented Technology consulting as a service
- Implemented "Rent-a-Tech" and rent an "EMIS Coordinator" as a district service offering
- State Software Redesign
  - SWOCA is on-track to have all districts migrate off Classic state software by August 30, 2022
  - SWOCA Fiscal Team Lead, and Executive Director Emeritus (Chair) participate on the State Software Advisory Committee to represent and guide development related to the needs of SWOCA districts
- Offering co-location as a service

- i. Five districts utilizing the PowerSchool eFinance software application, which is fully supported and hosted by SWOCA

5. Through advocacy, positively promote legislative changes which impact SWOCA.

- a. Participation in meetings with Department of Administrative Services; promoting better alliance/partnership
- b. Continually seeking better alignment with State initiatives, to utilize and leverage existing infrastructure
  - The 18 ITCs may be equipped to help ODE or other State agencies, through leveraging existing staff and infrastructure, examples of success are below:
    - ITC efforts to gather data for the P-EBT/ODJFS project for free and reduced lunch students
    - Surveying districts for technology needs of students and other State survey efforts, related to EMIS or other
- c. Dialog with local legislators
  - Continue contacting and meeting with key local legislators in SWOCA's territory
    - Met with local Senators in FY22 at SWOCA
    - Participated in legislative day at the Statehouse; met with 5 State Senators to discuss broadband efforts and funding in Ohio
  - Have met and continue to meet with local legislators in FY23, as well as other State Representatives
    - Our goal in meeting with legislators is to make them aware of the current and valuable services and infrastructure available by the ITCs
    - Help legislators to understand an ITC and the services/infrastructure that the ITCs may be able to make available to them, to achieve their own goals, related to aiding Ohio School District students
  - SWOCA has joined a group called Broadband Access Ohio (BAO) to promote broadband access across Ohio for ALL students/All Ohioans
    - SWOCA Executive Director Emeritus is a Board member and treasurer of this group and is actively engaged in promoting broadband in Ohio, for all families

2. **What are the key areas of improvement you plan to address this coming this year? Why were these key areas included? Were any needs identified in your ITC's results from the common customer satisfaction survey or your local survey? Provide an overview of the activities and professional development**

**planned to address these key areas and describe what you hope to accomplish this year with those activities.**

*What are the key areas of improvement you plan to address this coming year?*

- **Cyber Security training and awareness**
  - SWOCA has, to date, completed and is compliant with 145 of the controls listed in the NST 800-53, with 100% of the priority 1 controls being met and 85% of the priority 2 controls being met
  - Our next targets are to complete the remaining controls by the timelines listed below:
    - 100% of Priority 2 by 07/01/23
    - 100% of Priority 3 by 07/01/24
- **Fiscal Software Training/Empowerment of stakeholder/users**
  - The SWOCA Fiscal Department staff will transition all districts from the current Classic software to the Redesign software by August 30, 2022
    - An archive plan has been created by the SWOCA Fiscal and Technical teams for the districts using the VMS system; this plan will be implemented in FY23, with the goal of having all districts off the current VMS system and provide users with the ability to access historical data, via archived reports
      - Currently, forty districts have completed transition to new fiscal software; three districts remain to convert by August 30, 2022
    - In FY23 training and user-group meetings will be more frequent and will be focused on utilization of the Redesign software application

*Why were these key areas included?*

**Cyber Security** efforts continue as our stakeholders have strongly indicated the need for training and initiative-taking efforts from SWOCA, to help them to obtain needed knowledge on how to avoid ransomware and cyberattacks, of all sorts. During the COVID pandemic, we saw a rise in the number of attempted attacks and have found training to be our best weapon against such attacks.

Cyber Security training, insurance and policy work will remain a high priority goal for SWOCA in FY23, as staff and districts continue to request this from SWOCA, for the following reasons:

- Breaches are rampant and have made many headlines; we want to help our districts to avoid a breach through pro-active & thorough cyber training, as well as create policies related to vendors and their permitted use of our districts' data, as well as ensuring FERPA and other compliance issues are effectively met.
- Hackers are improving their skills; we and our districts must improve our knowledge to ensure we impede the success of every attempted breach
  - The average cost of a breach has been quoted to be as much as \$200-\$300, or more, ***per stolen record***.
  - Through pro-active training and increasing policy work, we may help districts avoid such costs
- Insurance will help to mitigate any legal and other costs, should a breach occur.
  - Encouraging our districts to purchase Cyber Insurance will help them to lessen their own liability, but the cost must be affordable for our districts to participate. We will help with the effort to find affordable insurance for our districts.
    - One of our most important goals for FY23 and beyond will be to obtain affordable pricing for Cyber Insurance. ***(Note: In FY20 insurance rates climbed significantly, in SWOCA's case from \$10,000 annually, for \$5M in coverage, to an FY21 rate of approximately \$40,000 for only \$3M in coverage); we have recently learned costs are expected to continue to increase, as availability decreases for FY23 and beyond***
    - For FY23 the early feedback received from SWOCA districts is that districts are required to have MFA (multi-factor authentication) in place, as well as other safety precautions, or the potential exists for the inability of a district to obtain a cyber-policy, or rates will be too cost-prohibitive
      - In April 2022, SWOCA hosted a Cyber Insurance session for our members, with an insurance expert to go over the cyber application process and the newer cyber insurance application forms, including new changes/requirements for FY23

Overall, and as a part of our continued efforts, new application security changes are being implemented, with an extended focus on student safety. Our current web-filtering solution, Securly, has provided protection for students on the web, as well

as clearer information on potential dangers and weaknesses, via a more enhanced reporting mechanism.

We have spent FY22 participating in evaluations of new solutions for FY23, so that we remain in front of the needs of those we serve and protecting all students

- In FY22 our technical staff worked with our districts to pilot a new filtering software called Lightspeed. This option was chosen for purchase and continue as a service in FY23
  - Lightspeed offers more granular control over categories and filtering settings
- It also has better reporting functionality and device support

In April of 2023, we began migrating to a consolidated firewall platform from Fortinet which will both enhance our overall security posture, global web filtering, malware prevention, additional bandwidth capacity, and additional firewall features for segmentation between members. This migration is expected to be completed in October of 2022.

SWOCA staff believes that education is the best method to empower stakeholders and education will continue to be our focus at all Tech meetings, trainings and in weekly/other updates to districts.

- Our Technical Services team will continue to expand our cybersecurity awareness programs
- In FY23, a dedicated Security Analyst will be added to the Technical Services Team
  - Existing and future monthly trainings will feature specific focus on cybersecurity education for district technical staff
- SWOCA's current Technical Services staff have been given security focused PD goals and our network engineers will focus on mastering the features of our new consolidated firewall platform and Fortinet NSE Certification

*Provide an overview of the activities and professional development planned to address these key areas and describe what you hope to accomplish this year with those activities.*

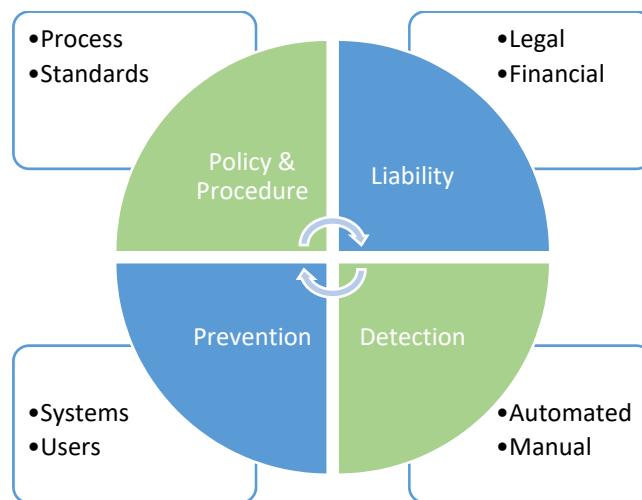
Our Systems and Networking teams are working diligently on expansion of our cybersecurity awareness program. We have had several districts fall victim to ransomware attacks and payroll scams. We believe that education is the best



method to empower stakeholders, and this will continue to be our focus at all Tech meetings, trainings and in weekly/other updates to districts.

Internally, our staff will also be regularly instructed/trained on Cyber Security weaknesses, threats, and protections. Monthly, we dedicate one staff meeting to Cyber Security training for all SWOCA staff. We also run phishing campaigns on a regular basis, to help improve awareness and caution, as well as, to provide needed training. Both have proven to be successful in creating more of an awareness of attempted attacks/breaches. Staff now question emails more often and are not quick to click on included links.

Our Cybersecurity focus remains as follows:



Our overall goal with all professional development at SWOCA is to empower our internal and external stakeholders with knowledge.

Some of SWOCA’s cybersecurity efforts include the following:

- The use of TechGuard for Security Awareness Training and Phishing Simulator
- The Executive Committee of SWOCA, adopted the security framework for NIST
  - Our Technical Team has made great progress on implementing NIST standard security policies (SWOCA is compliant with 145 of the recommended 159 NST 800-53 standards; with 100% of the priority 1 controls being met)
- NIST standard security policies will guide our Cyber Security efforts in FY23, as an effort to continue lessening SWOCA’s cyber liability
  - SWOCA recently implemented the following:
    - Secure account maintenance policies

- Regularly scheduled vulnerability scanning
- Refined incident response planning
- Formed an Incident Response Team
- Secured security auditing software
- Improved malicious code protection

A key goal for SWOCA is to instill its' cybersecurity policy across the organization, so that security becomes an essential and equal component in all aspects of SWOCA's planning and business operations. SWOCA has made significant progress in the adoption and implementation of the NIST 800-53 Cybersecurity standards.

A product of our analysis is a "Plan of Actions & Milestones Report" that outlines the remaining steps that SWOCA needs to take to achieve full compliance with the NIST standards. SWOCA is now compliant with 145 of the 159 controls listed in the NST 800-53 standard.

Completion of several large projects has helped meet many of our control objectives and will help us to further meet control requirements, as it has provided us cybersecurity functionality, which prior to this effort, we did not have. This includes the SIEM deployment (including its many auditing subcomponents), Nessus, KnowBe4, NSX and others. Activities focused on account maintenance, vulnerability scanning and incident response, have all improved our security posture and are reflected in the list of compliant controls.

A key area of improvement for the coming year is to meet compliance with the remaining controls. Success is determined by reducing the total number of non-compliant controls. Areas of focus includes efforts to promote improved abidance of the control families: CM (Configuration Management), SI (System and Information Integrity), PM (Program Management), PL (Security Planning) PE (Physical Environment Protection), AC (Access Control).

SWOCA has been working closely with the MCOECN CISO to analyze our current security practices, as well as determine courses of action to correct deficiencies. This collaboration has been productive and has helped with our internal cybersecurity efforts.

**3. How do you obtain input from customers, governing board, and staff in identifying the key areas identified in question #2? Did you do anything new or different in developing your new plan?**

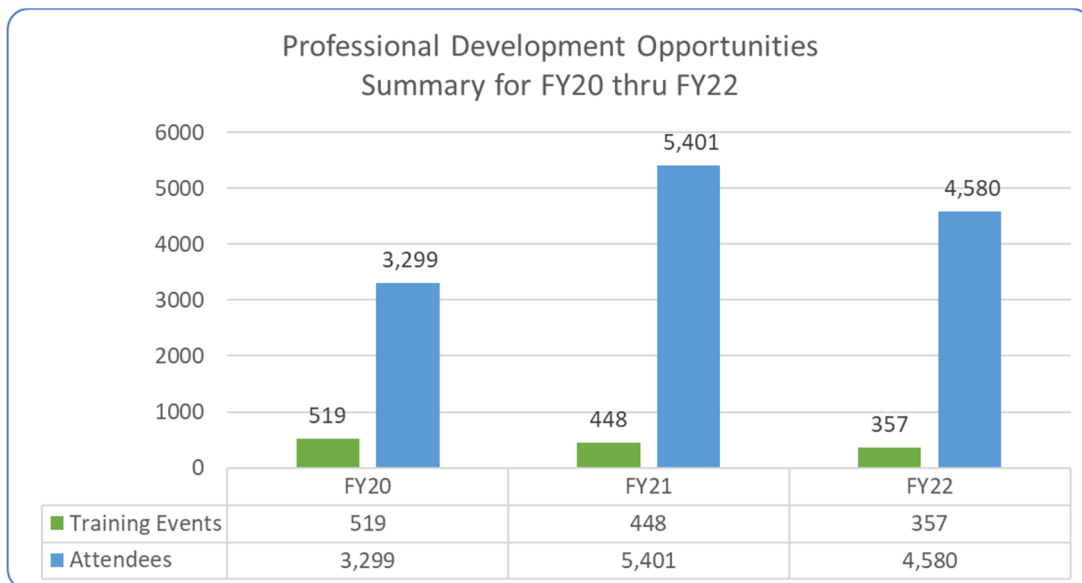
*How do you obtain input from customers, governing board, and staff in identifying the key areas identified in question #2?*

We obtain input from all stakeholders via face-to-face meetings, an annual survey, as well as specific surveys related to projects, applications, and training

- Every 5 years the SWOCA ITC is required to undergo a peer site review. A review team visits SWOCA and meets with SWOCA stakeholders/staff over a two-day period. A full written report of stakeholder feedback is provided to ODE, the SWOCA Executive Director, and the SWOCA Executive Committee. The data from the site review is used to assess and improve services for all stakeholders.
- Another practice at SWOCA is for our staff to send, at the end of all training sessions, an electronic evaluation form to all training attendees. These completed evaluation forms help us to make immediate improvements on any indicated or perceived weaknesses. Our goal is always to evaluate the quality of training and relevance of the event to job responsibilities.

In FY22 SWOCA hosted 357 training sessions for our members and reached 4,580 stakeholders. FY22 shows our training events were down, mostly due to this year being a major software migration for most districts. Our staff have transitioned most of our districts from Classic Fiscal Software to the new Redesign application. Training opportunities will very likely increase significantly in FY23.

*(See three-year training history below)*



All SWOCA customer surveys are read by the department team members and administrative staff, to assess any needed improvements. Action will be taken by staff, if improvements are indicated and changes are considered positive for all SWOCA staff/stakeholders.

Through monthly and other meetings during the year with Superintendents and Treasurers, who serve on the SWOCA Executive, Planning, and Finance Committees, as well as others, we can hear directly from district leadership as to the needs, desires and quality of services provided to our members. Our members have been supportive of our efforts toward improvement and do provide us with constructive input. We evaluate all input received for any needed improvements.

Internally, the SLT (staff leadership team) meets each Wednesday. Members each contribute to developing the agenda. Discussions range from planning for services and operations, to updates on project and other initiatives. Team members are responsible for keeping their teams informed related to the outcomes of these meetings and needed changes.

Additionally, we have staff meetings weekly, every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. All SWOCA staff are required to attend meetings, and the team leads report in for each department. These meetings are for discussion of any real or perceived problems/issues, needs, or updates. These meetings have proven to be a great vehicle for keeping our staff informed and being in front of any issues facing our districts or those internal to our staff.

*Did you do anything new or different in developing your new plan?*

We did not change our process in developing our new plan. SWOCA staff will continue to utilize proven and reliable processes and methods, which includes feedback from all internal/external stakeholders.

**4. Highlight examples of new or recent collaboration with other entities, or new products or services where collaboration could be valuable. Do you anticipate these efforts will directly contribute to your ITC's service improvement? If so, explain.**

*Examples of current collaborative efforts between SWOCA and other entities:*

- Collaboration efforts include our partnership with the OECN and MCOECN, which includes the following joint efforts:
  - Standardized pricing of services
  - Support relationships
  - Shared services

- The exploration of fiber and/or other projects, where there are mutual interests, and projects are predicated upon positive outcomes for all stakeholders
- Broadband projects/partnerships
  - Partnering with local municipalities to plan for and build fiber infrastructure (project management and oversight included)
  - Partnering with local townships to plan for and build fiber infrastructure, leveraging available funding
- BAO (Broadband Access Ohio)
  - Working in partnership with entities across the State to enhance fiber infrastructure and partnering on existing infrastructure, when there is an opportunity
- Ohio Distance Learning Association
- Ohio Education Jobs Board
  - This is a partnership with the MCOECN/ODE to provide a “jobs board” to all ITCs and their districts
- RiskSource/Seminars
  - This partnership allows SWOCA to partner with our insurance carrier to bring education and additional risk management capabilities to our member districts
- Stonefly Backup (proposed collaboration with the MCOECN)
  - This will reduce operational backup costs and will enhance SWOCA’s backup and recovery profile
  - This partnership could result in a cost savings and additional shared service between ITCs

***Do you anticipate these efforts will directly contribute to your ITC’s service improvement? If so, explain.***

Any collaboration with another entity, to improve the quality of services or to share expense or other, is core to SWOCA’s business values. SWOCA’s goal is to be on the path of continuous improvement and expansion of services and cost-sharing, to better support the stakeholders we serve. Our philosophy remains, when it makes sense, provides a better service for our members and dollars will be saved, sharing services for the benefit of all stakeholders will be a consideration.

SWOCA's goal and expectation are always that the services we share/provide meet the standard of quality SWOCA demands for its' stakeholders.

NOTE \*\*\*(Attached are department goal tracking sheets for all core service areas)

**FY23 Updated core services goals:**



FY23 SWOCA CIP  
Library Goals.pdf



FY23 EMIS CIP  
Matrix.pdf



FY23 Student  
Services CIP Matrix.p



FY23 CIP fiscal.pdf



FY23 TSS  
Continuous Improve