

**CONTENTS**

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- Background ..... 2
- Vision and Mission ..... 2
  - Vision..... 2
  - Mission ..... 2
- Strategic Goals and Objectives ..... 3
  - Strategic Goal #1: Attract, develop, sustain, and expand the TSMO workforce ..... 3
  - Strategic Goal #2: Accelerate deployment of current and emerging TSMO practices (technology and strategies) ..... 3
  - Strategic Goal #3: Mainstream TSMO as a core function of providing transportation system solutions for all ..... 3
- Work Planning Considerations..... 4
  - Priorities and Resources ..... 4
  - Serving NOCoE Audiences..... 4
  - Equity and Access..... 4
- Performance Metrics and Milestones..... 5
  - Output measures: indicating how much work is done and defining what programs and services are being delivered, as well as the demand for those services ..... 5
  - Quality measures: determining whether customer expectations are being met (via surveys) ..... 5
  - Outcome measures: determining the extent to which a core function, activity, product, or service has had the intended impact and shows progress towards achieving the mission or goals of NOCoE..... 5
- Program Development and Implementation..... 6

## BACKGROUND

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The National Operations Center of Excellence (NOCoE) Strategic Advisory Council (Council) met in February 2020 to set the strategic direction expressed in this NOCoE 2021–2025 Strategic Plan. NOCoE’s first strategic plan was developed shortly after its inception and covered the period of 2016–2019. This first strategic plan ably guided NOCoE to execute its mission, and the plan’s goals and objectives guided NOCoE’s services and products to effectively serve the Transportation System Management and Operations (TSMO) community.

Council members reviewed the NOCoE’s mission and vision and previous strategic goals and objectives. To identify any new strategic direction for NOCoE, the Council considered the progress TSMO has made as an institution, program, and practice among transportation organizations, as well as how industry trends and the needs of the TSMO community have evolved since NOCoE’s inception. The Council updated the Vision and Mission of the organization and devised a new set of strategic goals and objectives to leverage the good work of NOCoE to date and to continue to advance the services and programs for the TSMO community.

This five-year strategic plan will guide the work planning activities of the NOCoE Technical Advisory Committee and staff as they select services, activities, and products that best achieve the strategic goals and objectives and fulfill the NOCoE mission. This plan recommitments NOCoE to serving its core constituency of state departments of transportation (DOTs), while recognizing the opportunity to serve a broader audience of local public agencies and the private sector. The continued integration of transportation services and partnerships among state, local, and private entities in delivering TSMO solutions suggests it is sensible to consider this audience expansion. The plan recommends a two-year review cycle for NOCoE and the Strategic Advisory Council to assess the progress toward achieving the strategic goals and whether evolving industry trends or NOCoE resource availability indicate adjustments are warranted.

## VISION AND MISSION

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NOCoE is now a well-established and well understood entity within the TSMO community. At the same time, TSMO itself is becoming more widely recognized as a core function of transportation agencies—one that is increasingly applied to address the need to improve mobility, accessibility, and system reliability. Accordingly, the strategic plan introduces a revised NOCoE vision and mission that reflect alignment with these industry developments and NOCoE’s intent to achieve a refined set of strategic goals and objectives.

### Vision

NOCoE’s exceptional services to the transportation systems management and operations community saves lives, improves travel times, and enhances economic vitality.

### Mission

NOCoE provides centralized services to support the transportation industry through workforce readiness, deployment of technology and practices, and mainstreaming of TSMO solutions through education, networking, communication, and knowledge transfer.

## STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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The Council concluded that the best way for NOCoE to achieve its mission and strive to realize its vision is to organize strategic goals and objectives focused on people, practices, and institutions. People encompasses the TSMO community itself—the audiences that NOCoE serves and aims to empower through growth in knowledge, skills, and abilities. Practices include the strategies and technologies required to implement TSMO. Institutions are the organizations implementing TSMO, characterized by their cultures, policies, and philosophy in applying TSMO and their progress in mainstreaming TSMO across their agency. To this end, the following three strategic goals and corresponding objectives form the heart of the strategic plan. Each strategic goal is intended as an equal priority for both how NOCoE will achieve its mission and how NOCOE will select the development of specific products and services.

### Strategic Goal #1: Attract, develop, sustain, and expand the TSMO workforce

- a. Increase the knowledge and capabilities of the TSMO workforce along their career paths, from students to executives
- b. Articulate an inclusive and understandable approach to TSMO (e.g. urban, rural, large, small – agency TSMO practices)
- c. Leverage all available resources (e.g. partner agencies, universities, federal, private sector) to expand the reach of workforce development
- d. Broaden workforce development to TSMO paraprofessionals, other agency disciplines (e.g. planning, design, etc.), local agencies, etc.
- e. Facilitate connections among members of the TSMO workforce to learn from one another

### Strategic Goal #2: Accelerate deployment of current and emerging TSMO practices (technology and strategies)

- a. Monitor, synthesize, and share TSMO best practices, lessons learned, and deployment activities  
*Examples of potential activities include, but not limited to:*
  - Synthesize and highlight emerging trends
  - Identify topical needs or gaps in deployment and practices
- b. Provide and facilitate forums for exchanges on TSMO experiences and challenges
- c. Provide a real-time or on-demand platform to respond to user requests

### Strategic Goal #3: Mainstream TSMO as a core function of providing transportation system solutions for all

- a. Use knowledge management and strategic communication processes
- b. Empower and support champions
- c. Continue demonstrating the benefits and value of TSMO
- d. Highlight and demonstrate the path for agencies to mainstream TSMO  
*The Council discussed the following activity to be included, but not limited to:*
  - Applying available tools such as capability maturity model resources

- e. Demonstrate value to broaden technical services’ reach to include other audiences (e.g. local agencies, MPOs, etc.)

## **WORK PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

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Several broad considerations should apply to work planning activities that support the goals and objectives.

### **Priorities and Resources**

While each strategic goal is of equal importance, NOCoE’s work planning will calibrate specific activities, services, and products to documented audience needs over the five-year timeframe of the plan. Therefore, the focus of achieving individual objectives may vary over time, based on criticality or demand. NOCoE leadership, the Technical Advisory Committee, and staff will determine this level of priority as they conduct business planning activities.

The magnitude and timing of financial and staff resource availability will also determine the priority and most effective sequencing of actions. One objective in Strategic Goal #1 and in Strategic Goal #3 contemplate an extension of NOCoE’s reach to new audiences. This initiative will require a resource commitment to execute, while also presenting an opportunity to secure new sources of technical services contributions. How this balance can be struck, and potential new sources of funding will play a role in activity prioritization.

### **Serving NOCoE Audiences**

While NOCoE may grow its audiences during the strategic plan timeframe, empowering the core audience of state DOTs will remain the primary indicator of its success. However, to achieve the needs of this core audience, NOCoE may need to evolve in how it delivers knowledge and executes its services. As a knowledge sharing organization, NOCoE should be a leader in the industry in continuously improving its methods and creatively transferring knowledge, especially through digital media. In this manner, NOCoE should evaluate the benefits of traditional “push” services alongside “pull” activities such as interactive and exchange-type forums. As one example, NOCoE may consider offering curated information or targeted assistance directly to audience members who request it. The two-year review cycle of the strategic plan will help NOCoE understand the mechanisms that best serve its audiences, and what may or may not be effective once deployed.

### **Equity and Access**

In deciding how to structure its services and activities, NOCoE should consider the incorporation of transportation equity and providing basic access to everyone. NOCoE also should ensure its activities and services are aligned with AASHTO, ITE, ITS America, and FHWA’s ongoing leadership in these areas. Transportation equity, the concept of fairly distributing the costs and benefits of transportation services, is an important idea for both system users and system operators, while the concept of basic access to essential goods, services, and activities (e.g. food, health care, or employment) is inherent in NOCoE’s vision of a transportation system that works to save lives, time, and money. TSMO can and must be part of a concerted and inclusive effort to address ongoing deficiencies in transportation equity and providing basic access to certain population segments, particularly the financially disadvantaged, disabled, and elderly. In addition, with the rapid deployment of more advanced technologies and forms of mobility (e.g. cooperative automated transportation), it may not always be clear what the impacts on disadvantaged populations will be.

## PERFORMANCE METRICS AND MILESTONES

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The strategic plan's vision, mission, goals, and objectives are the basis for the performance management of NOCoE. The Council identified the focus for measuring the effectiveness of the services offered and how TSMO progressing as a core practice in transportation agencies might be indicated. Careful consideration should be given to limiting overly burdensome (resource-heavy) processes for measuring progress towards the goals and objectives, while achieving the intent to determine key indicators of the effectiveness of NOCoE's programs and services. Over the life of the strategic plan, it is expected NOCoE will achieve a growth in participation in its programs and make a positive contribution in support of TSMO practices in public agencies and across the industry.

Key performance measures will be developed to reflect NOCoE's progress toward fulfilling its mission and the three strategic goals:

- Strategic Goal #1: Attract, develop, sustain, and expand the TSMO workforce
- Strategic Goal #2: Accelerate deployment of current and emerging TSMO practices (technology and strategies)
- Strategic Goal #3: Mainstream TSMO as a core function of providing transportation system solutions for all

Three types of performance measures will be used to support this strategic plan, and they will be reported annually, by staff, to demonstrate NOCoE's performance. Sample measures for each type are included, but not limited to:

### **Output measures: indicating how much work is done and defining what programs and services are being delivered, as well as the demand for those services**

- Number of state DOTs (public agencies) participating in NOCoE technical services
- Number of state DOTs (public agencies) contributing funding to the NOCoE Technical Services Program
- Number of participants in NOCoE programs (peer exchanges, awards, trainings, challenges, etc.)
- Number of communication outreaches and audience (newsletters, social media, articles, website participation)

### **Quality measures: determining whether customer expectations are being met (via surveys)**

- Level of awareness of NOCoE services and products
- Percent satisfaction of program offerings of NOCoE
- Accessibility of information for NOCoE audience members
- Level of satisfaction of individual events (after-action survey)

### **Outcome measures: determining the extent to which a core function, activity, product, or service has had the intended impact and shows progress towards achieving the mission or goals of NOCoE**

- Number of state DOTs (public agencies) with core TSMO practices (or TSMO identified in agency strategic plan)

- Evidence of nexus between NOCoE programs/services and states' capability maturity model progression
- Increase in TSMO practitioner positions in state DOTs (public agencies)

NOCOe will develop performance measures and data needs in tandem. NOCoE will mostly collect data for output measures in-house and translate the information to report on the occurrence and reach of its services and programs. NOCoE will use customer or industry surveys to measure both the satisfaction and awareness of NOCoE programs, but also to identify how well the goals and objectives are being met. NOCoE staff will work with partner organizations and the Technical Advisory Committee to determine data availability for outcome measures that illustrate the effectiveness of program offerings and those that serve as leading indicators on the advancement of TSMO in the industry.

## **PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION**

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NOCOe leadership and staff will implement the strategic plan with input from the Technical Advisory Committee. The strategic plan informs annual business planning and selection of services, activities, and products NOCoE offers to the TSMO community, as well as resource allocation and organizational decisions that support that work.

The 2019–2020 business plan that predates this strategic plan guides NOCoE activities through October 2020. NOCoE intends to begin ramp-up of the strategic plan in Q3 and Q4 2020, looking for alignment opportunities with the current business plan, then fully implement the strategic plan for 2021 and use it to inform future business planning beginning with the 2020–2021 period.