

National Interagency Resource Order and Status Project

Staffing Plan



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Executive Summary

The National Interagency Resource Ordering and Status System (ROSS) project is a successful example of interagency cooperative efforts in information system development. Implementation of the administration module was completed in 2003. Implementation of the Dispatch Module began in late 2002 and will continue through 2005.

This plan presents the current status of the ROSS Project Team organization and the staffing plan for the short and long-term phases of the project. The success of this project is dependent on financial and resource commitments from NWCG agencies.

Current staffing levels are acceptable but become strained through the summer and fall due to field season commitments, fire season, and participating agency needs that are external to the project. The National Wildfire Coordinating Group needs to maintain their commitment to keep the ROSS organization stable and populated with qualified, skilled, self-starting, and energetic individuals.

As the Build and Implementation Phases continue, the ROSS Team will continue to need help in the form of trainers, agency network specialists and computer specialists. This group will be key in assuring the project's continued success.

For the long-term, it is vital that the National Wildfire Coordinating Group plans and implements an interagency approach to Information Systems maintenance and support. ROSS will serve as a data repository for all resource order and status data. Systems such as Incident Based Automation, Incident Qualifications, Incident Cache System, and Incident Accounting Systems rely on ROSS for data. These systems also share common data structures. It is key that any support function created includes: leadership, end-user and system support, network (telecommunications), client hardware and application maintenance.

The ROSS Team Leadership needs the continuing support of all National Wildfire Coordinating Group agencies. This project's success thus far is directly related to good financial, staffing and leadership decisions on the part of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group.

Introduction

The ROSS Project was established in 1997. Many objectives were established and agreed upon through an Interagency Charter, which was signed in June 1998. The agreed upon objectives focused the items listed below.

- Automation of the current manual processes associated with documenting the status, mobilization, and demobilization of wildland resources (crews, overhead, aircraft, equipment, and supplies)
- Enabling dispatch offices to electronically exchange and track information related to the resource ordering process, including availability, request, order placement, assignment, reassignment, release, and transport
- Exchanging (read, write, update, delete) data with current and future dispatch and incident information systems through live transmittal processes, periodic copy, import/export, and through the use of either an Application Program Interface (API) library or Object Class Library
- Eliminating the need to manually (re)enter resource orders received from other dispatch offices
- Obtaining near real-time status of resources throughout the nation
- Sharing resource order and status information between participating offices on a near real-time basis
- Providing accurate information to management on a near real-time basis
- Providing information that will allow local, geographic, and national coordination and dispatch centers to prioritize pending resource orders.

In order to accomplish a project of this magnitude successfully, many different types of skills are needed. These skills are based in the following areas: business community (dispatch and incident management), information systems (computer and networking specialties), education (training), public affairs (business community relations), and most importantly that of project management.

This plan outlines both short and long-term staffing needs, which will provide the foundation for ROSS to continue to be successful.

The goal of this paper is to maintain stability (from a staffing perspective) both short and long term to the ROSS project.

Current Situation

Since October 1997, the ROSS Project Team has been expanding to meet the project needs, which were identified and reported to the National Wildfire Coordinating Group at their June 1998 meeting in Shephardstown, West Virginia. The team is currently divided into 7 emphasis areas or task teams. These include Business Requirements, Infrastructure Requirements, Contracting, National Information Technology Center, Implementation, ROSS Partners, and Administration (see Organization Chart – Appendix A). Maintaining appropriate staffing levels has been a challenge since the project's inception in early 1998.

There are a variety of personnel appointments existing on the ROSS Team. These include: 120-day renewable details, 1 year (extendible) details (NTE), contract, agency labor contribution and volunteer. It is important to recognize that the part time commitments range from periodic attendance at business requirements sessions to more lengthy commitments, which range up to several months in length. Full-time commitments are for a year or more. The only positions for which there is a classified (by Agency Human resources Staff) position description are the 1 year extendible details and the project team leader.

From a funding perspective, many team members are paid by the project (regardless of agency), while others are paid fully or partially by their host agency with travel financed by the project.

In the beginning, a major concern with the staffing methodology was that there was little or no commitment by agencies to permit employees to be involved because of other commitments. . . . During the past few years of the project, several key team members have been allowed by their agencies to participate in long-term details that span fiscal years. While there will always be a risk in maintaining staffing using this method, it has been advantageous to the project to have the continuity that these type details provide.

Staffing Strategies

Staffing for the ROSS Project Team is broken up into two areas; short and long term. Short-term is defined as that time when the ROSS Application is being designed, built and implemented. This is expected to end in late FY 2005. Long-term is defined as the period of time beginning when the implementation phase ends through the life cycle of the ROSS application. Long-term strategies are focused on putting in place an organization that will support ROSS for the system's production life-cycle (September 2004 through October 2010). There is an overlap of approx. 8-14 months of the short and long-term phases.

Short Term

The team has enjoyed a relatively low turnover rate since October 1997, but due to agency personnel needs, constraints on hiring, and budget constraints, continued success in this area remains a concern. A significant change to the existing situation could be detrimental to the successful implementation of ROSS.

During each phase of the project, the team staff will be organized to maximize efficient operations in the most cost-effective manner. When team members are not needed, they will be returned to their home units and placed in a "call when needed" status so that they may be reactivated if needed.

All team positions will be filled with qualified, energetic, self-starting employees.

For the project to remain successful, many key leadership and support positions on the team must remain filled through the completion of implementation. A major emphasis has been made on recruiting and retaining trainers. This is because there is a need to train a minimum of 3000 dispatchers spanning 400 offices. A ratio of 1 trainer to each 5 trainees is required to assure that proper skills are achieved in the training. Each trainer will assist in at least 5 courses spanning a minimum of 5 days.

The Project organization is currently fully staffed (see Appendix A) as of 4/27/2004.

The strategy for filling Project Team positions is through the following actions:

1. Unless contributed by a participating agency, positions that are vacant or potentially may become vacant will be classified and advertised as "1 year extendable details (NTE)". It will be important that the incumbents of these positions have experience in the fire organization and be a strong supporter of interagency philosophy. For those positions, that are agency contributed, we will encourage long duration (1 year or more) appointments. If necessary, we will encourage agencies to classify and advertise positions for the team.
2. Trainers must be contributed by field units. The ROSS Team will attempt to minimize travel to be within the geographic area where the trainer resides. Travel outside a

trainer's geographic area shall be financed by the ROSS Project when possible or by the geographic area hosting the training.

3. Specialist positions are primarily technical in nature. These skills are typically needed on a short-term basis and must be filled by well-qualified individuals. Unless contributed by participating agencies, these positions will be classified and advertised using a 120 detail or 1 year NTE appointment.
4. Contracted positions will be filled from within the participating agencies through requests for contract-action, which generate a contracting event or agreement. Currently, the Forest Service Region-2 Contracting Team (RMAST) is providing all contracting and agreement services. This service is expected to continue.
5. Business Community Representatives for this project come from the field level of the fire management and dispatch community. These people are typically volunteered by their unit because of their interest in validating the business functionality of the ROSS project deliverables. Duration of involvement in this area is periodic and generally does not exceed 2 weeks per commitment. Recruitment for this activity will be done through informal advertisement in dispatch and fire management community.

Long Term

The long-term staffing phase of the ROSS project focuses on developing and implementing a support organization that will serve the needs of the user community and the application throughout the application lifecycle (October 2010). Minimal budget provisions were accounted for in the development budget for ROSS on the pretence that support would be provided at NIFC for the application.

System and application support requirements for ROSS are divided up into 6 key areas: Leadership, User Help Desk, System Support, Application Support, Network Support, and Client Hardware/Software Support. Each of these key areas has requirements which are discussed below.

ROSS Support Team Leader General Requirements

The ROSS Support Team Leader is responsible for all tasks completed by the ROSS Support Team. These tasks include: help desk services, application maintenance and update, system support coordination with the host computer center, coordination with agency IRM personnel, coordination with corporate telecommunications personnel and coordination with stakeholders of the ROSS System.

The skills and knowledge required by this position include:

- Interagency leadership skills and experience
- Interagency information systems experience
- Knowledge and experience in key areas
 - Systems support

- Systems programming
- Help desk operations
- Project Management
- Information Systems management
- Human Relations management

Recommended operating level: GS-401-13/14

Help Desk General Requirements

The ROSS Help Desk serves as the key point of contact for support to the ROSS Application. The help desk will be staffed with a team leader and several help desk team members. In addition, data and business stewards will be available to assist as needed. The ROSS Partners may provide first line field assistance. The hours of staffing for the help desk will vary dependent on the level of activity.

The skills and knowledge required by help desk positions include:

- Interagency leadership skills and experience (help desk team leader)
- Interagency information systems experience
- Knowledge and experience in key areas
 - Systems support
 - In depth knowledge of ROSS Operations
 - Help desk operations
- Information systems management

Recommended operating level: GS-401-12 (Help Desk Team Leader)
GS-334-11 (Help desk personnel)
Or Contract

System Support General Requirements

The ROSS System hardware, software and connectivity must be available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Planned downtime is permitted only after approval from the National Coordinator. The main ROSS/DMS system servers are located at the National Information Technology Center (NITC) in Kansas City, Missouri. All system support is provided by NITC through inter-agency agreement.

The skills and knowledge required for system support generally include:

- Interagency information systems knowledge
- Knowledge and experience in key areas
 - Systems support specific to:
 - AIX and Windows NT / 2000 Enterprise Operating Environments
 - Administration of ORACLE 9I Enterprise with Parallel and Spatial options
 - Systems programming
 - Telecommunications

- Project Management
- Server management and administration specific to the server software utilized by ROSS and DMS.
- Information systems management

Recommended operating level: Contract

ROSS Application Support and Maintenance General Requirements

Application support for ROSS provides the following services:

- Responsible for production of application updates
- Focal point for the application and related IRM technical issues
- Participates in impact analysis, feasibility studies, and cost benefit analysis for proposed change requests
- Participates in identifying and resolving integration issues
- Preserves application and related business data and process models in an accurate, current, and complete state
- System model (Business, Data, Physical) maintenance
- System enhancements (minor)
- Maintenance of the configuration management automated tracking system software.
- Providing assistance to System Support personnel with Application Update or System Software Update installation
- Assisting Help Desk personnel with resolving difficult user problems

The skills and knowledge required for this task generally include:

- Interagency information systems knowledge
- Knowledge and experience in key areas
 - Systems support and administration including skills in:
 - AIX, LINUX, Unix development and administration
 - Windows XP, NT, 2000 Enterprise (Client and Server)
 - Server configuration and administration for such products as: IBM WebSphere, Apache, Versata, ORACLE, ESRI ARCIMS, BRIO and others.
 - Systems programming with journeyman (or better) level skill and experience in:
 - C/C++
 - SQL, PL*SQL, SQL Procedures, SQL Functions, SQL Packages
 - JAVA Bean and Enterprise JAVA Bean development and maintenance
 - Business logic server development and operating environments
 - Versata Business Logic Suite Use
 - ORACLE 9I Enterprise and RAC Development and Administration
 - Web development using applet, java bean and enterprise java bean technology
 - CORBA

- Geographic Information Systems skills sufficient to perform advanced programming and administration of ESRI ARCIMS and the ESRI Spatial Data Engine (SDE).
- BRIO Technology Report Development Suite and Broadcast Server Technology
 - Systems modeling using CASE Technology
 - Project Management
- Help desk operations

Recommended operating level: Contract or GS-334-13/14 (5-7 positions)

Client Hardware/Software Support General Requirements

Support for Client hardware and software will be provided by local (local office) IRM support personnel. The requirements included are:

- Configuration and maintenance of the client hardware platform and the associated operating system software and corporate applications.
- Assuring availability of an Internet World Wide Web browser application on each client platform that will host the ROSS client application.
- Assuring access to the Internet (via LAN/WAN, ISP, and/or Dial-in) for each client platform that will host the ROSS client application.

The skills and knowledge required by this position include:

- Interagency knowledge
- Knowledge and experience in key areas
 - Systems support
 - Telecommunications support
 - Information systems management

Recommended operating level: Agency provided.

Telecommunications Access Support General Requirements

Access to telecommunications facilities (network, dial-up modem) support is provided by local, Agency, or Department IRM support personnel.

The requirements generally included are:

- Support and maintenance of Local Area Network and Wide Area Network
- Assuring access to the Internet
- Support and maintenance for access points to Internet Service Providers if applicable
- Support and maintenance for dial-in access to the ROSS/DMS system if applicable

The skills and knowledge required by this position include:

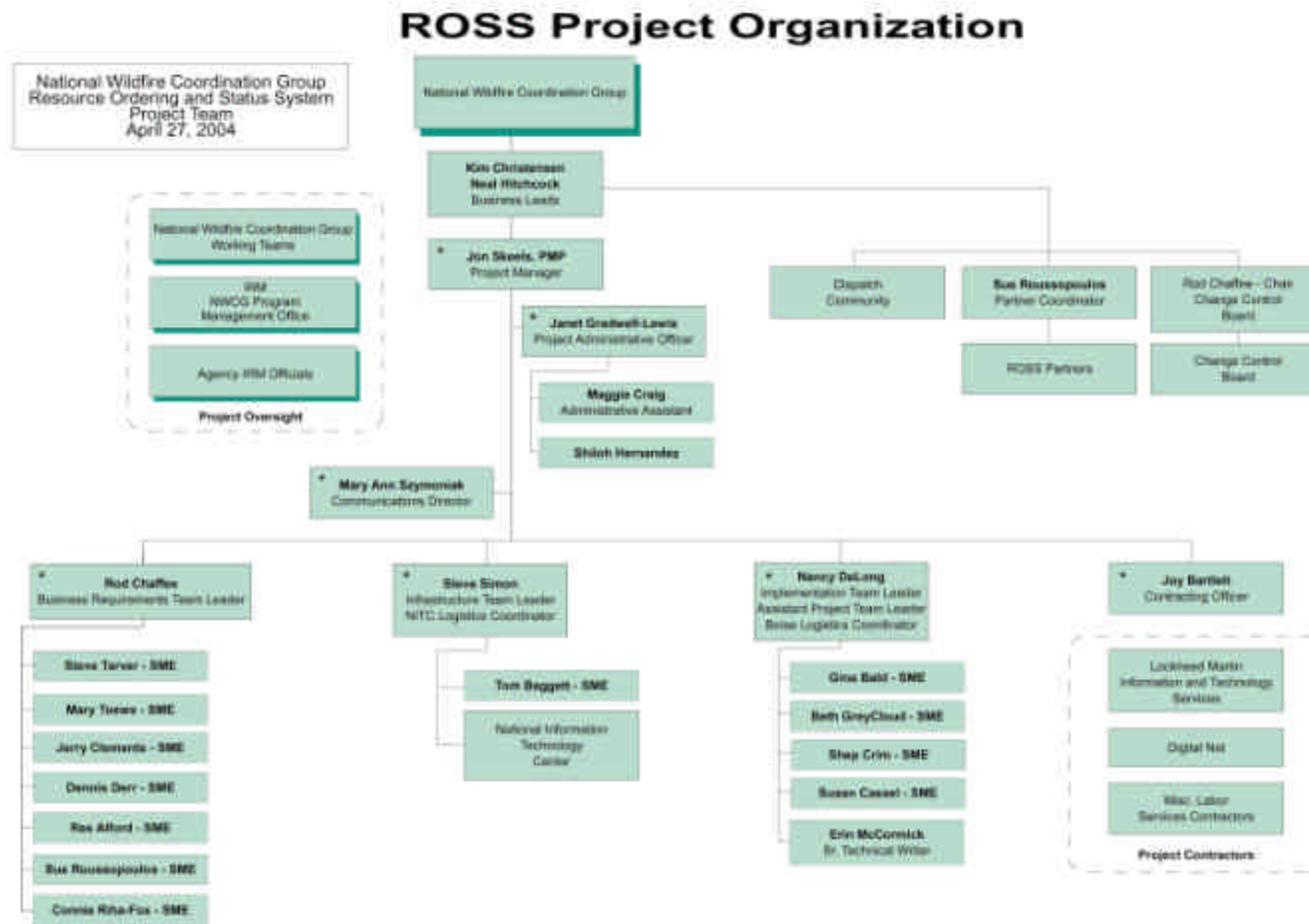
- Interagency knowledge

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- Knowledge and experience in key areas
 - Systems support
 - Telecommunications support
- Information systems management

Recommended operating level: Agency provided

Appendix A - Current Organization Chart



* Project Core Management Team Members



