



ICN's Vision in Action

ICN Vision: Represent the public network investment while partnered with the private sector to benefit the citizens of Iowa.

(ICN Executive Director, David Lingren was appointed by the Iowa Telecommunications and Technology Commission in January 2010 to serve as Interim Executive Director upon the resignation of John Gillispie. Lingren was appointed to the position in a permanent role in September 2010.

The 2010 legislative session was set to begin within a week after Dave Lingren's appointment as Interim Executive Director. In his prior ICN position as Manager of the Service Delivery Bureau, he had not worked within the legislative process. Over the years, ICN had been working with legislators for several years to develop a way to provide leased circuits for K-12 schools, Area Education Agencies (AEAs), libraries and state agencies with state-funded connections in a more cost effective method. Statute required that these connections had to be leased from the private sector and had to have DS-3 capacity. As leases expired, it became apparent that some of the incumbent providers no longer had the desire to retain the lease or maintain the connections. Several years ago, the capacity requirement was considered extremely robust, but within today's market, this capacity level has been greatly exceeded, limiting the bidding options. At that time, the providers did not want to allow the State any opportunities to own additional fiber, and the ICN had not developed the relationships required to form a united public-private telecom team that could find solutions that would benefit all Iowans. As a Qwest employee for over two decades, Director Lingren understood the mindset of the Telco representatives at the Capitol and also knew that collaboration was necessary if the statute change was to be realized.

During the 2010 session, the legislature did not provide all of the changes that ICN believed were needed to maximize the efficiencies, however, great strides were made that included changes to the Code of Iowa, which permitted the necessary capacity to the K-12 schools, AEAs and state agencies to be 'technology neutral' (no limitations on bandwidth or the type of technology). This will allow for more competitive bidding, and should improve the cost efficiencies for these leased connections. The changes were made because ICN reached out and worked with private sector lobbyists and associations to find options that could benefit both parties as well as Iowans.

Executive Director Lingren and the management team are convinced that the ICN needs to continue the development of partnering relationships with the private sector telecommunications companies. Lingren said in an e-mail to all employees, "this concept is critical for the long term survival of the ICN and opens the door for ICN to become more than what the agency is today."

Background

As the ICN was being established, private industry telecommunications entities viewed the Network as a threat, but could not make the business case to build the infrastructure needed to provide the advanced telecommunications services, including video conferencing for distance education and data transfer. At

that time, the Internet was just being developed as a commercial business. The initial thought by the decision makers was that the infrastructure would be owned by a private sector entity and the State would be able to obtain the required telecommunication services from them.

As it became apparent that the State was going to build the infrastructure to meet their needs, there was fear that the state government would become a competitor. Due to this mindset, an unhealthy “Us against Them” relationship grew. Over the years, further legislation has been put into place that constrained the partnerships between the ICN and others private entities.

- Code of Iowa, Chapter 8D.11(2) the ITTC may not provide or resell communications services to anyone but authorized users. Authorized users include State and Federal Government Agencies, Hospitals and Physician Clinics, preK-20 public and private education entities, and libraries.
- Code of Iowa, Chapter 8D.13 (5) requires the State to lease all connections to K-12 schools, AEAs, libraries, and state agency connections paid for with state funds to be leased from qualified providers.

Future Partnerships

Executive Director Lingren’s management style is one of being a change agent. “I believe that ‘staying put’ leads to stagnation, and stagnation is one step away from death,” recently told ICN employees. The ICN needs to aggressively move towards partnering relationships with the private sector telecommunications companies. This concept is critical for the long-term survival of the ICN and opens the door for the agency to fully realize the asset it manages.

Lingren does not want to limit future partnerships to ICN’s Telco peers. Recently, ICN began partnering with the Department of Administrative Services’ Information Technology Enterprise to provide integrated telecom, and information technology to state agency authorized users. The agency expects this to be the first of many such arrangements.

Another example of this collaboration is recognizing that ICN will not be able to hold monopolistic control of distance learning for the education customers or the state agencies. As an ideal partner, employees and management will need to change the perception from being a provider of services to authorized users to becoming a broker of services to not only the authorized base, but to all citizens as deemed valuable by the telecommunications providers. As ICN moves to IP (Internet Protocol) Video, new ventures with the Telcos and other providers will give them access to important revenues for their growth while securing the validity of the state-owned network. Executive Director Lingren has met with several important leaders of the private sector telephone industry, and they have received this concept with great enthusiasm. A future model connecting their networks to the ICN and an exchange of services for the benefit of Iowans is becoming a sustainable concept in their minds. If the ICN can be recreated as a network that is a public asset to be used by our private sector partners to benefit Iowans, Telcos, the State, and authorized users as well as all Iowans are winners.