

InCommon, MCNC Conclude Proof of Concept; Continue with Steward Program Development

MCNC and InCommon have concluded a six-month proof of concept of the [InCommon Steward Program](#), which allows K-12 school districts and community colleges to take advantage of federated identity. This is a summary of the findings; the full report is [available on the wiki](#).

Under this program, the Steward (in this case [MCNC](#)) manages the onboarding of its K-12 and community college constituents, a role typically performed by InCommon staff. InCommon provides training for the Steward, as well as the infrastructure and operational experience of operating a national federation.

The proof of concept validated the virtual team approach and found no significant impacts on the trust model. The organizations found, however, that the mid-year start did not allow for full engagement of the K-12 school districts, and agreed to continue with a six-month business development phase.

MCNC and InCommon operated the proof of concept from December 2016 through June 2017 to develop and test the onboarding and operational processes. Key findings include:

- Operational issues were minimal and communication within the “virtual team” (InCommon and MCNC staff) that managed the onboarding and identity proofing worked well without over-taxing either organization’s resources. A two-day in-person training session involving InCommon and MCNC staff contributed significantly to successful operation.
- There were no significant impacts on InCommon’s trust model during the proof of concept, largely due to prior community outreach and consultation. In fact, the presence of a knowledgeable Steward has improved alignment with recommended operational practices. There was only one operational confusion related to trust that was quickly resolved; training for future Stewards will be improved in this area.
- In general, impacts (positive or negative) of the Steward Program on K-12 have been difficult to observe, due to the timing of the proof of concept late in the school year.

To address the last item above, InCommon and MCNC have initiated a six-month business development phase to further develop the program’s value for K-12 and community colleges, as well as to further develop the program’s business and legal model. MCNC and InCommon will also develop a case study of the Steward Program, including recommendations for other regional networks interested in participating.