

SCORE Assessment Executive Summary

In a joint effort between the Secretary of State and the Governor's Office, an independent assessment was completed to understand the best options for deploying the Statewide Colorado Voter Registration and Election (SCORE) system. In order to fully comply with the Federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA), SCORE is designed to:

- Protect the voter information of all registered citizens
- Maintain the integrity of the electoral process
- Enable county election officials to administer efficient, fair, and impartial elections
- Provide an audit capability; and
- Establish stronger coordination inherent in a centralized system

SCORE transforms the way elections are conducted in Colorado by providing a centralized system for counties to use for voter registration and execution of the election process. This is a significant change from the current model in which counties manage these functions on their own legacy systems. SCORE is currently being deployed and has been deployed to 35 counties to date.

In a collaborative effort between the Secretary of State and the Governor's Office, they contracted with the North Highland Company to conduct a 2 week assessment of the SCORE deployment that focused primarily on identifying key risks and issues with the current architecture and within the deployment plan.

Specifically, the assessment addressed:

- What are the feasible options for the 2008 elections that meet HAVA compliance?
- What is the most feasible deployment of the SCORE system to meet HAVA compliance?
- What is the best option for deploying election management system functionality?
- What are the technical and operational risks for the options?
- How would this deployment option be organized?
- How much will this deployment option cost?
- What are the key contingency strategies and when should these strategies be implemented?

To date, the SCORE management team planned to roll out seven additional individuals to provide support and training for county election officials. Additionally, in response to county feedback, the team also built greater support around the help desk feature. These current and future endeavors were considered as part of the assessment.

Also, the assessment identified various options for meeting HAVA compliance and concluded the most feasible option was to continue with the full deployment as planned by the Secretary of State. The assessment identified that the project is fundamentally sound and deployment should continue with some recommended changes in how the project is managed, staffed, and executed.

Using existing data available, the assessment reported:

- The assessment outlined the need for additional field support and did recognize the Secretary of State has been in discussions with implementing additional field support with Saber. There is agreement that additional field presence this year is a necessary component for project success.

- The assessment recommended having staff within the SOS Elections Division dedicated to SCORE support. The SOS has been planning this activity and key resources within the SOS Elections Division may meet some of the identified needs for SCORE deployment.
- The SOS and SCORE team recognize that the mock election activities planned just after statewide deployment could significantly impact SCORE project delivery. At the November 2007 Steering Committee meeting, the decision was to defer devoting considerable resources to changing architectural directions. The SOS is prepared to update contingency plans if the Mock Election or other events indicate a major deployment issue with SCORE.
- The SCORE system architecture should support the needs for the election but further testing and validation, which is planned, needs to be completed.
- SCORE deployment is the only viable option for at least 12 counties.
- SCORE is working in other states with similar volume and functionality. SCORE also worked well for the 2007 elections in Colorado, albeit with a smaller number of counties.
- Many of the issues facing the deployment are related to inadequate communication and change management for the counties. Counties are not sufficiently informed or supported for this level of deployment.
- Addressing the issue above, additional resources need to be allocated to the project to help the counties learn how to use the system and to help resolve outstanding functional and technical issues.
- A strategy for resolving remaining network issues needs to be implemented.
- While adoption of the full functionality of the SCORE system is the objective, there should be accommodation for counties that may not be able to fully implement this solution. Qualified counties would be allowed to use their existing legacy systems for the election management functions but would use SCORE for voter registration and verification – thus meeting the requirements for HAVA compliance.
- Efforts to finalize contingency scenarios for the Primary and Fall elections need to be fully developed and tested in the next few months.