

NESCO FAQ

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



What is NESCO?

The National Electric Sector Cybersecurity Organization (or NESCO) is the first public-private partnership of its kind in the electric sector. NESCO serves as a focal point bringing together utilities, federal agencies, regulators, researchers, and academics. This group, along with domestic and international experts, developers, and users help to focus cyber security research and development priorities, to identify and disseminate effective common practices, and organize the collection, analysis and dissemination of infrastructure vulnerabilities and threats. NESCO works to identify and support efforts to enhance the cyber security of the electric infrastructure.

How did NESCO start?

H.R. 3183 required the establishment of an independent national energy sector cyber security organization. In response to this legislation the Department of Energy issued a funding opportunity announcement in early 2010. Two organizations were given awards as part of this project and EnergySec was one of them. According to DOE the purpose of the NESCO award was to *“establish a National Electric Sector Cyber Security Organization that has the knowledge, capabilities, and experience to protect the electric grid and enhance integration of smart grid technologies that are adequately protected against cyber attacks.”* EnergySec accepted the award and began developing the NESCO program in late 2010.

What are the mission and goals of NESCO?

It is our mission to *“Lead a broad-based, public-private partnership to improve electric sector energy systems cyber security and become the security voice of the electric industry.”*

These are some of the goals of NESCO:

- Identify and disseminate common, effective cyber security practices
- Analyze, monitor and relay infrastructure threat information
- Focus cyber security research and development priorities
- Work with federal agencies to improve electric sector cyber security
- Encourage key electric sector supplier and vendor support / interaction

Is EnergySec going away?

No, EnergySec is stronger than ever. NESCO is a program under the EnergySec umbrella. The grass roots strength and wisdom that built EnergySec will be a valuable resource for NESCO. In turn, as NESCO develops it will also become a valuable resource to the EnergySec members.

I heard someone mention “NESCOR” is that you?

Under the original DOE funding opportunity two organizations received awards, EnergySec and Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI). EnergySec was tasked with forming the NESCO organization and EPRI was selected to serve as a research and analysis resource to the NESCO program.

The NESCOR, as it is called, is one of many resources that NESCO relies on for targeted project support. NESCOR (the “R” stands for resource) is really a collaborative of 17 organizations that are lead by EPRI. The collaborative includes national labs, academic institutions and private firms among its participants. This group brings together tremendous expertise from across the industry.

What is the difference between NESCO and the NERC ES-ISAC?

The NERC ES-ISAC is attached to the Electric Reliability Organization (ERO) a regulator, with mandatory participation and reporting requirements. It is also statutorily funded. NESCO has zero regulatory attachment with participation and reporting done on a voluntary basis. This structure allows for agility in information dissemination. However, NESCO is supportive the work done by the ES-ISAC.

What makes NESCO different than the DHS ICS-CERT?

The DHS ICS-CERT covers control systems in all sectors. Information is classified and then released formally, which takes time. NESCO on the other hand has an electric sector focus. The information sharing is informal which also allows it to be nearly real-time.

Is NESCO a government agency?

No, NESCO is funded by a DOE grant but managed by EnergySec, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

Is NESCO involved in creating regulation?

No, NESCO has no regulatory capacity or authority.

Is NESCO another National Energy Lab?

No, however NESCO works closely with all of the National Labs and the National SCADA Test Bed. There is a lot of good work happening at the national labs. We anticipate that this work will be a valuable resource to the NESCO program.

Is NESCO duplicating efforts that are already underway?

NESCO makes every effort to avoid duplicating already existing successful programs. We try to stay well informed about what is going on in the electric sector and learn from what is working. We reach out to utilities, government, academia, researchers, vendors and independent experts to leverage the strengths of each in reaching our common goals.

How does the NESCO funding model work?

The NESCO grant award from DOE contains a cost-share requirement. In the first year the EnergySec cost share is 20%. That rises to 40% in year two and 60% in year three. DOE has an expectation that industry will be supporting NESCO fully by the end of three years.

The cost share comes from sponsorships, partnerships, donations of time, equipment and expertise, along with numerous other sources. Click [here](#) to learn more.

More questions? Contact us at info@energysec.org