

Ask a Leader
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Mark Schoenbaum

Mark Schoenbaum is the director of the Minnesota Office of Rural Health and Primary Care, a position he has held since 2005. He has been with the MN SORH since 1996.

What are the most significant things you've done with and for NOSORH--and how has it helped you as a SORH director?

It's tough to narrow it down. Two themes that come to mind are:

- Watching and being part of NOSORH's growth and development into a leading national organization has helped inspire me to be entrepreneurial in my state office.
- NOSORH has given me the opportunity to get experience analyzing national health policy issues, and that has helped me better understand and contribute to policy discussions in my state.

What do you mean by being "entrepreneurial" in your Office?

In addition to learning from my colleagues around the country how to make the most effective use of the core state grants that we have available as SORHs, we are always looking for opportunities to add complementary activities to our work. In addition to being the PCO for our state, we have a portfolio of state workforce development programs, and manage the state's trauma system and medical education subsidy. We've been inspired to keep our eyes open for such opportunities both by the entrepreneurial spirit of Teryl and the NOSORH Board leadership, and by our colleagues in other states who have been creative in expanding their reach.

How have you analyzed health policy with NOSORH--and how this was applied in your state?

I think my first policy activity with NOSORH was after passage of the 2003 Medicare Modernization Act. CMS published regulations and asked for comments. Since I had an interest in looking at these issues, I approached the NOSORH leadership at the time--and they encouraged me to draft something up. Those comments ended up being submitted by NOSORH. It whet my appetite for joining the Policy Committee and continuing that kind of work. In addition to that committee, I've also rotated through the Executive Committee as NOSORH President-Elect, President and Past President, and have served on other committees including the Flex Committee.

NOSORH has certainly given me more than I have given it. I'd encourage everyone to get involved!