

# NASCIO Awards Submission

State of Connecticut: Bureau of Information  
Technology Solutions (BITS)



# Cyber Nutmeg

Strengthening Cybersecurity  
Through Statewide Collaboration

2025



**Category:** Cross-Boundary Collaboration

**Project Dates:** Initiated 2020; Substantial changes 2024

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# Executive Summary

**Cyber Nutmeg is Connecticut's premier cybersecurity event, fostering collaboration among state, municipal, educational, and military entities to enhance the state's cybersecurity posture.** Initiated in 2020, this annual event now brings together over 300 participants, including IT professionals, municipal leaders, and educators, to engage in threat briefings, cybersecurity workshops, and National Guard-led tabletop exercises. The expanded partnership with CEN expanded the reach and audience of the event. The initiative exemplifies cross-boundary collaboration, uniting diverse sectors to address common cybersecurity challenges and strengthen the state's digital resilience.



# Idea

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**Connecticut’s municipalities and educational institutions often lack the resources and expertise to effectively combat evolving cyber threats.**

Sometimes they even lack the recognition that cybersecurity is a critical risk. For many locally elected officials, it is a surprise that their entity is a target for cyber criminals. Disparate efforts and limited communication among entities have hindered the development of a cohesive cybersecurity strategy.

Cybersecurity threats do not respect organizational boundaries. A breach in one municipality can have cascading effects statewide. Therefore, a unified approach is essential to protect sensitive data and critical infrastructure across all sectors.

*“Cyber Nutmeg exemplifies the power of collaboration in addressing complex cybersecurity challenges. By bringing together diverse stakeholders, we’ve created a united front to protect our state’s digital infrastructure.”*

— Mark Raymond, Chief Information Officer, State of Connecticut

# What Makes it Different?

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*This immersive approach fosters trust, encourages knowledge sharing, and builds lasting partnerships across sectors.*

**Cyber Nutmeg stands out by facilitating direct collaboration among diverse entities, including the Connecticut National Guard, Connecticut Education Network, CT Intelligence Center, Department of Administrative Services, Bureau of Enterprise Systems and Technology, FBI, and Federal Department of Homeland Security.** While there are regional and even national events of a similar nature, this CT-specific event allows more participants to be focused on the needs of the state in a way that is relevant to our local leaders and practitioners.

**The event's structure combines threat briefings, hands-on workshops, and interactive exercises to ensure participants not only receive information but also actively engage in developing practical solutions.** This immersive approach fosters trust, encourages knowledge sharing, and builds lasting partnerships across sectors. We have found the relationships built in this setting enable faster critical response when incidents occur.

# What Makes it Universal?

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**The challenges addressed by Cyber Nutmeg are not unique to Connecticut.** Municipalities and educational institutions nationwide face similar cybersecurity threats and resource constraints. The event's collaborative model serves as a replicable framework for other states aiming to unify their cybersecurity efforts across various sectors and government levels.

States are being asked to take a more active role in leading our country's cybersecurity efforts. There is no single entity in CT that can take on this responsibility. It is only through convening, sharing, building trust and sharing best practices that CT has a chance at lowering cyber risk.



# Implementation

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**Cyber Nutmeg is organized through a partnership between CEN and the Connecticut National Guard, with support from CTIC and other federal agencies.** The planning committee includes representatives from state agencies, municipalities, and educational institutions, ensuring the event addresses the specific needs of each sector.

The event features:

- **Threat briefings from FBI, Homeland Security, and CTIC**
- **Cybersecurity awareness training and workshops**
- **State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program review and discussion**
- **National Guard-led tabletop exercises**
- **Networking opportunities for participants**

This collaborative planning and execution model ensures relevance, engagement, and practical outcomes for all attendees.

# Impact

Since its inception, Cyber Nutmeg has significantly enhanced Connecticut's cybersecurity landscape:

- **Increased Awareness:** Participants report a heightened understanding of cybersecurity threats and best practices.
- **Improved Preparedness:** Municipalities and educational institutions have developed or refined their incident response plans based on insights gained.
- **Strengthened Relationships:** The event has fostered ongoing communication and collaboration among entities that previously operated in silos.
- **Policy Development:** Discussions during the event have informed state-level cybersecurity policies and initiatives.



## How Do You Know?

Post-event surveys and feedback indicate that participants find Cyber Nutmeg highly valuable for practical learning and networking. The increasing attendance each year reflects the event's growing reputation and the recognized need for such collaborative efforts. Additionally, the implementation of strategies discussed during the event in various municipalities and institutions demonstrates its tangible impact.

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# Was it Better?

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**Prior to Cyber Nutmeg, cybersecurity training and collaboration were fragmented across Connecticut's public sectors.** This event has centralized efforts, providing a consistent platform for education, strategy development, and partnership building. The result is a more cohesive and proactive approach to cybersecurity statewide. The partnership with CEN has grown event participation six-fold; which is a critical change to further the reach to CT's 169 local governments.

## Long-term Plan

**The organizers plan to expand Cyber Nutmeg's reach by:**

- Increasing participation from private sector partners
- Developing year-round training programs
- Creating a centralized repository of resources and best practices
- Establishing regional sub-events to address localized concerns

These initiatives aim to sustain and deepen the collaborative spirit fostered by Cyber Nutmeg.

## Return on Investment

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**Cyber Nutmeg's collaborative model has led to more efficient use of resources, reduced duplication of efforts, and enhanced cybersecurity readiness across sectors. By proactively addressing threats through shared knowledge and coordinated strategies, Connecticut is mitigating potential costs associated with cyber incidents, thereby safeguarding public trust and services.**