

STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
Allocation to Support Rural College Broadband Access
July 1, 2021 through December 31, 2024

Request: The State Board of Community Colleges is requested to approve an allocation of up to \$14,250,000 from federal State Fiscal Recovery Funds received by North Carolina from the American Rescue Plan Act to deliver critical, college specific IT infrastructure and network security improvements for 25 colleges serving students at campuses in our System’s most rural and economically challenged regions. This allocation would be for costs allowed within the 2021 Appropriations Act and federal American Rescue Plan Act timeframe.

Strategic Plan Reference(s):

Theme: System Effectiveness

Goal 4: To advance organizational effectiveness, operations and decision-making in order to support a cohesive system of nimble, empowered and community-driven colleges.

Background: In July 2020, the State Board of Community Colleges authorized the rural college broadband access initiative with the approval of \$9.5 million from federal COVID-19 coronavirus relief funds (CRF) that were appropriated to NCCCS. An additional \$1 million was approved by the State Board in September 2020, and \$1.3 million was reallocated from unused federal COVID-19 CRF funds by the System President for this initiative. The purpose of the rural college broadband access initiative was to enhance capacity for online learning and help address the costs and expenses for expanded demands on information technology at 20 of our campuses in rural areas. The System Office estimated a baseline capability improvement for 20 of our 45 colleges classified as rural. In the 2021 Appropriations Act (Session Law 2021-180), the legislature provided a one-time allocation of \$15,000,000 titled “Broadband Access for Rural Community Colleges.” These funds were appropriated to improve broadband access for 25 rural community colleges, thus enabling the rural college broadband access initiative to now reach all 45 colleges classified as rural.

Many rural colleges, especially those serving our economically challenged regions operate on dated infrastructure or lack systems needed to fully extend broadband across their campuses and to their students. The combined allocation of these appropriated resources will result in the design and implementation of critical, college specific IT infrastructure and network security improvements for the remaining 25 colleges serving students at campuses in our system’s most rural and economically challenged regions.

In December 2021, the State Board approved a contract amendment of up to \$750,000 with the Friday Institute to provide support services for the “Broadband Access for Rural Community Colleges.” The purpose of the agreement is to support the System Office with the data collection, analysis, and needs assessments required to maximize the impact and sustainability of these infrastructure investments.

Rationale: The System Office estimated a substantive, baseline capability improvement could be achieved at the remaining 25 of our 45 colleges classified as rural. The estimate was based on the results of annual assessments performed by MCNC, a non-profit networking solutions company, and a detailed analysis by NC State University Friday Institute, as well as from information gathered through daily System Office IT service management support.

Using county population density, the following 25 colleges were identified for participation in the program:

Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College
Beaufort County Community College
Blue Ridge Community College
Brunswick Community College
Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute
Carteret Community College
Central Carolina Community College
Cleveland Community College
Coastal Carolina Community College
Craven Community College
Davidson-Davie Community College
Halifax Community College
Haywood Community College
Isothermal Community College
Johnston Community College
Mayland Community College
Nash Community College
Randolph Community College
Richmond Community College
Sandhills Community College
Southwestern Community College
Surry Community College
Wayne Community College
Wilkes Community College
Wilson Community College

Method of Allocation: The System Office is continuing to partner with MCNC and the NCSU Friday Institute to perform the analysis and engineering required to develop a plan to include a technical needs assessment and design for each college. The technical solution will include a bill of materials (BOM) with implementation cost and life-cycle management costs to maintain the solution proposed for each college. The ongoing life-cycle maintenance costs provide the college with the out-year budget expectations for each component of the proposed solution. The plan will then be reviewed and agreed to by both the College and the System Office prior to acquisition

and implementation of goods and services. The System President will review and approve an allocation memo that identifies the specific allocation amount for each college since the costs for each college are not known until the analysis and bill of materials is complete.

The System Office will work with the colleges to allocate the funds required to acquire, install, configure, and implement the agreed upon solution using our existing contract with MCNC and one or more of the appropriate NC DIT State Term Contracts for technical hardware and implementation services. Colleges will acquire and own any assets for the agreed to solution using transferred funds. College IT staff will also primarily direct the onsite implementation of the agreed upon solution. The System Office will provide the colleges with technical program and quality management support throughout the process. The System Office will also provide college business staff with a Business Systems Analyst (BSA) to support the college procurement process and asset management guidance throughout the process.

Time Period: The State Fiscal Recovery Act funds are available through December 31, 2024.

Fund Source and Availability: Funding is available through an appropriation of State Fiscal Recovery Funding in the 2021 Appropriations Act (Session Law 2021-180).

Contact(s):

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