

**STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES**  
**Contract and Allocation to Support Rural College Broadband Access**  
**FY 2020-21**

**Request:** The State Board of Community Colleges is requested to approve a contract of up to \$800,000 and an additional allocation of up to \$200,000 from federal COVID-19 Recovery Act funds to deliver critical, college specific IT infrastructure and network security improvements for 20 colleges serving students at campuses in our system's most rural and economically challenged regions. Combined with the \$9,000,000 approved in July 2020 (FC 09 - Allocation to Support Rural College Broadband Access), this will bring the total amount for this initiative to \$10,000,000 from the COVID-19 Recovery Act funds.

**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:** Federal coronavirus relief funds are available to help respond to COVID-19 impacts by enhancing capacity for online learning and helping address the costs and expenses for expanded demands on information technology at our campuses in rural areas.

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 20 colleges serving students at campuses in our System's most rural and economically challenged regions.

As would be expected, the impacts of COVID-19 on colleges serving students in our System's rural and economically challenged areas are impacted the most by the increased demand to deliver learning in a flexible, online, and secure digital environment.

The implementation of new or modernized Workforce Development IT and ERP solutions migrates our colleges from an "IT on campus" model to an "IT in the cloud" environment. All our colleges have at least one access point to broadband internet at their main campus. However, many of our colleges and especially those in our rural regions of the state lack the local infrastructure needed to effectively leverage or fully extend their broadband internet access across their campuses and to the student populations they serve.

**Rationale:** In July 2020, the State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC) approved an allocation of up to \$9,000,000 from federal COVID-19 Recovery Act funds to deliver critical, college specific IT infrastructure and network security improvements for 20 colleges serving students at campuses in our system's most rural and economically challenged regions. This additional \$1,000,000 will be utilized as follows:

- \$800,000 will be allocated for a contract for third-party security assessments at each of the 20 targeted colleges under State Term Contract 918A. This will help ensure the secure access to broadband at the rural colleges by students, faculty, and staff.
- \$200,000 will be allocated with the other funds approved for allocation to the colleges (FC 09 - Allocation to Support Rural College Broadband Access approved by the SBCC in July 2020).

The third-party security assessments will provide assurance that all student, and staff information gaps are identified, prioritized, and remediated. The additional allocation could be used to help address any security vulnerabilities.

**Method of Allocation:** The System Office is partnering with MCNC and the NC State University's 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 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 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 Department of Information Technology 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 to support the college procurement process and asset management guidance throughout the process.

**Method of Procurement:** Approval of the contract by the State Board of Community Colleges is contingent upon the final approval of the contract utilizing the Statewide Term Contract 918A – Security Assessment Services.

**Time Period:** The 2020 COVID-19 Recovery Act funds are available through December 30, 2020.

**Fund Source and Availability:** Funding is available through the COVID-19 coronavirus relief funds transferred to the NC Community College System from the Office of State Budget and Management from Session Law 2020-32.

**Contact(s):**

Jim Parker  
Senior Vice President & Chief Information Officer