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

Request: The State Board of Community Colleges is requested to approve 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. In addition, the State Board of Community Colleges is requested to approve using up to $500,000 of State appropriation to provide additional network and engineering services for these colleges using the current MCNC contract.

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: SL 2020-4 (HB 1043) included federal funds 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.

In February 2020, the State Board approved the expenditure of $480,000 of State funds to enter into an agreement with NC State University (NCSU) Friday Institute. 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 improvements.
investments.

**Rationale:** The System Office estimated a substantive, baseline capability improvement could be achieved at approximately 20 of the 45 colleges classified as rural. The estimate was based on the results of annual assessments performed by MCNC, 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 a needs-based approach factoring *regional economy, student assistance, percentage of population served, and demand for technical assistance*, the following 20 colleges were identified for participation in the program:

- Bladen CC
- College of the Albermarle
- Edgecombe CC
- James Sprunt CC
- Lenoir CC
- Martin CC
- McDowell TCC
- Montgomery CC
- Pamlico CC
- Piedmont CC
- Roanoke-Chowan CC
- Robeson CC
- Rockingham CC
- Sampson CC
- South Piedmont CC
- Southeastern CC
- Stanly CC
- Tri-County CC
- Vance-Granville CC
- Western Piedmont CC

**Method of Allocation:** The System Office is partnering 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 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.

Fund Source and Availability: Funding ($9,000,000) is available through the 2020 COVID-19 Recovery Act (SL 2020-4) and $500,000 is available from State appropriation.

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