

# NB/PEI EDUCATIONAL COMPUTER NETWORK

*Over **45** Years of Inter-Institutional Collaboration*



NB PEI Educational Computer Network

Strategic Plan

**2018-19 to 2020-21**

### **MISSION**

To ensure high quality Information and Communication Technology (ICT) services to all member institutions in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island

### **VISION**

To apply our collective skills and resources to the betterment of the New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island higher education communities through the deployment of state of the art technology while saving money for our provinces and institutions

### **VALUES**

Honesty  
Collaboration  
Collegiality  
Openness  
Trust

## Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary .....	4
2. Key Strategic priority: Shared IT services.....	5
3. Corporate Challenges/Priorities .....	6
Appendix – Summary of activities .....	7

## 1. Executive Summary

For over 45 years, the ECN has worked collaboratively to provide member institutions with the best networking technologies and other shared services at the lowest possible cost.

In recent years, our focus has been on implementing a coherent strategy to advance shared IT services among our members. We maintain ECN's multi-year strategic plan, of which this is the latest iteration; we've deployed federated identity among all our institutions; we've acquired SharePoint, a collaboration platform that all members can deploy and use freely, yet not worry about service support and maintenance as it is hosted and supported at UNB. Finally, with the completion of the UNB data center renovation project, we are hosting IT infrastructure, data backups, and disaster recovery equipment for many members. In recognition of its pioneering shared IT services model, ECN was given the inaugural CUCCIO Collaboration Award in 2015, and is nationally known for its collegial and cooperative approach to solving common problems.

In 2016, ECN merged with the New Brunswick Research and Education Network, a direct result of expanding ECN's membership to include the NB college systems, NBCC and CCNB. With the addition of these institutions, it no longer made sense to maintain a separate organization to operate the NB advanced network. The colleges are active members of ECN, and are fully committed to ECN's values and mission.

With an overall budget of approximately \$1.3 million annually, the consortium's **priority** for the upcoming planning period is to **continue offering shared technical service offerings to members, including new initiatives in IT security**, as further detailed in section 2 on the next page. Additional priorities relating to scope, value and visibility are summarized in section 3.

## 2. Key Strategic priority: Shared IT services

The key shared service of the ECN is connecting member institutions via a high-speed, high-capacity research and education network. Members also jointly purchase and deploy IT products and services, with anti-virus, SharePoint, firewalls, and anti-spam software being recent examples of successful collaborations.

Building on recent successes such as data center consolidation and disaster recovery, ECN is updating its strategic plan to focus on the following areas:

Communication and collaboration tools: The ECN will continue to grow the use of SharePoint (a Microsoft software platform used for file sharing and co-editing, document and records management, and collaboration projects) at individual ECN sites, providing centralized SharePoint support with a dedicated employee at the host site (to develop and manage the SharePoint site for all). As almost all members use Microsoft's Office365 cloud services for email, calendaring, individual file storage, and others, we will increasingly take a consortia view when evaluating and deploying services via O365, for example video-conferencing via Skype for Business, and telephony (Voice over IP (VoIP)).

Consortium Security: A common requirement among all of us is to keep our IT networks, equipment, and data secure from a host of external and internal threats. The 24/7, highly volatile nature of IT security strains the resources of all our members, and we are pressed to keep up with even minimal standards. As a consortium, we recently tendered for next generation firewall technology, which is now being deployed at several sites. Furthermore, several other initiatives have come to our attention which we will participate in as they come to readiness; for instance, CANARIE, the federal partner in the national research and education network, is sponsoring a project to procure and support security incident and event management (SIEM) software at institutions across the country. ECN feels it can vastly benefit by deploying these critical monitoring and alerting tools at all our member sites at a cost that makes sense yet will include the expert support required to ensure successful deployment and use. It is recognized that end-user cybersecurity awareness and education is a key gap at many institutions, and ECN will seek out tools and processes to help us all meet this need. Finally, we will be sharing cybersecurity incident response plans and templates as they are developed.

Network sustainability and improvement: Hundreds of kilometers of dedicated fibre-optic cables, combined with millions of dollars of sophisticated network equipment, are our biggest and most important assets, and provide the main platform upon which ECN operates. To ensure the network continues to perform efficiently and economically in a time of ever increasing demand by members and their use of cloud based solutions, ECN will focus on network development, extending it where needed, while building in resiliency and redundancy wherever possible. Equipment renewal is a perennial challenge, and ECN will thoughtfully yet creatively manage its resources to ensure future reliability, stability, and capacity.

### 3. Corporate Challenges/Priorities

The ECN will face challenges in the period ahead which will be addressed through careful management and priority-setting as noted below:

- Financial Constraints: The total budget for the ECN is approximately \$1.3 million annually. The main source of this funding is Restricted operating assistance from the provinces. The universities in both Provinces have dedicated a portion of their Restricted operating assistance to fund the ECN each year. As with many publicly-funded entities, the ECN faces resource constraints which force us to find cost-savings and set priorities. Opportunities to leverage external sources of funding (CANARIE, ACOA, RDC, etc.) are explored for expansion projects, as required. We have benefited in recent years from significant reductions on internet costs, which provide savings to be applied to strategic projects.
- Scope: The ECN currently includes Mount Allison University, l'Université de Moncton, the University of New Brunswick, St. Thomas University, the University of Prince Edward Island, Holland College, the Maritime College of Forest Technology, the MPHEC, and most recently the New Brunswick Community College (NBCC), and le Collège Communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick (CCNB).
- Visibility, Value and Communications: The ECN will continue to explore new ways of improving its visibility and communication with stakeholders. Those who have worked with the ECN are aware of its work; however, few are aware of the value it adds to the higher education system in the region. A dedicated communications group comprised of volunteers from our members has developed a communications plan, resulting in more news releases, briefing notes, and background information to educate and inform our various stakeholders.

## Appendix – Summary of activities

ECN Service Area / Project	Objectives 2018/19	Objectives 2019/20	Objectives 2020/21
Connectivity	<p>Improve bandwidth in southern NB</p> <p>Internet services RFP</p> <p>Review Campus Connect with Firewalls/Fortinet</p>		
Shared Services	<p>Analysis of O365 tools</p> <p>SharePoint opportunities</p> <p>Cybersecurity projects: SIEM, user education and awareness</p>		
Joint Purchasing	<p>Anti-SPAM contract renewal (expires: Sept 2018)</p>		
Professional Development	<p>AUCTC</p> <p>ECN Workshop</p>	<p>AUCTC</p> <p>ECN Workshop</p>	<p>AUCTC</p> <p>ECN Workshop</p>
National Representation and Sharing of Information and Best Practices	<p>NREN GC</p> <p>CIO Advisory Committee</p>	<p>NREN GC</p> <p>CIO Advisory Committee</p>	<p>NREN GC</p> <p>CIO Advisory Committee</p>
Organizational	<p>Implement communications plan</p>	<p>Communications plan</p>	<p>Communications plan</p>