

NB/PEI EDUCATIONAL COMPUTER NETWORK

Over 50 Years of Inter-Institutional Collaboration



NB PEI Educational Computer Network

Strategic Plan

2021 to 2023

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
Social Responsibility

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1. Executive Summary

For over 50 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 continued to build our SharePoint and MS Teams services, both collaboration platforms that all members can deploy and use freely, yet not worry about service support and maintenance as it is hosted and supported at UNB. Implemented a Password Manager solution, accessible for all members. Built additional firewalls and expanded our fibre links in both NB and PEI to strengthen the Network. Deployed QRadar Security and Event Management platform for the ECN member sites.

With an overall budget of approximately \$1.5 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 Cybersecurity**, 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 SIEM (Security Information and Event Management) being recent examples of successful collaborations.

ECN is updating its strategic plan to focus on the following areas:

Communication and collaboration: ECN continues to expand the use of M365 (Microsoft's software platform used for file sharing and co-editing, document and records management, and collaboration), by launching a project to implement Teams telephony as a service; ultimately, this will significantly reduce telephony costs for participating institutions. In addition, the ECN focuses on identifying and improving communications among its members, its Board and external stakeholders.

Consortium Security: Security risk issues continue to be a high priority the ECN. The second phase of the national security incident and event management (SIEM) project is nearing completion; we've extended the SIEM to all individual institutions, and logs are now flowing through the tool for analysis and assessment. Most ECN institutions are participating in the CANARIE-led and funded Cybersecurity Initiatives Program (CIP), which to date has made intrusion detection, benchmarking, and other tools available to all at no cost.

Network sustainability and improvement: ECN has focused on network development, extending it where needed, while building in resiliency and redundancy wherever possible. Expansion of UPEI's network to Saint Peters Bay was begun, and renewal of equipment throughout the network was also started.

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 \$1.5 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) are explored for expansion projects, as required. Savings in reductions on internet costs, have been applied to strategic collaborative 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 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 – ECN Service Areas/Projects

	Objectives 2021	Objectives 2022	Objectives 2023
Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UPEI network extension to Saint Peters Bay site • Reconfigure PEI provincial network for redundancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial network redundancy • Fiber IRU renewal for Fredericton-Saint John-Moncton connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network equipment renewal
Shared Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SIEM 1b data collection • M365 expansion continued • VOIP-as-a-service assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VOIP-as-a-service implementation • Complete SIEM 1b • SIEM monitoring service planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business case for MS A5 licensing
Joint Purchasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deploy password manager to students, staff, and faculty across ECN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquire and deploy cybersecurity tools via CIP • Continue Canadian Access Federation (CAF) membership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Minitab options
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atlantic Net 2021 (delayed due to Covid) • ECN 50th (delayed due to Covid) • AUCTC (delayed due to Covid) • ECN workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AUCTC • ECN Workshop • ECN 5x celebration • Canheit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AUCTC • ECN Workshop • Canheit
National Representation and Sharing of Information and Best Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRENGC • NDRIO/Alliance • CUCCIO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NREN GC • Alliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NREN GC • Alliance
Organizational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate NB and PEI budgets (not needed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic plan renewal • Participate in National Cybersecurity Assessment via CIP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget reset (assess ongoing operating budget commitments)