

**For Immediate Release:**

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## **ERC Broadband sub recipient of BTOP award**

**ASHEVILLE, N.C. (August 25, 2010)** – ERC Broadband is honored to announce its role as a subrecipient of stimulus grant funds awarded to MCNC by the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) of the Department of Commerce’s National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA). A lot of hard work went into this application and many thanks are to be given; especially, the management team at MCNC, the Golden LEAF foundation for their matching funds award, Congressman Heath Shuler, Senator Kay Hagan, and Governor Beverly Perdue.

As a sub-recipient, ERC Broadband will construct and own approximately 105 miles of fiber optic cabling in five western counties: Buncombe, Madison, Mitchell, McDowell and Avery. This “middle-mile” network can be viewed as the Interstate highway of connectivity that gives local cable and Internet companies an on-ramp for providing individual customers with broadband services.

Significant portions of these counties have historically lacked middle mile infrastructure. Community Anchor Institutions including K12 Schools, libraries, public health facilities, community colleges, public safety facilities, Federal Facilities such as the National Climatic Data Center and four-year colleges and universities have had to constrain their Internet use as a result of this undersupply of middle mile bandwidth. In addition, private sector companies that supply broadband services to consumers and small businesses in these counties have had to pay high costs to access the few existing middle mile facilities. The BTOP award will help Community Anchor Institutions make more use of Internet based resources and will assist private sector broadband providers reach more customers with faster service at more attractive pricing.

“This BTOP award will allow us to take constraints off the number of students who access classes from the North Carolina Virtual Public Schools (NCVPS),” said Brock Womble, PhD, superintendent of Mitchell County Schools. “Historically we have had to use NCVPS classes to offer certain classes that we cannot offer due to staffing constraints. Having greater access to the Internet will allow us to fill more gaps in our class offerings and accommodate more students who want to access NCVPS.”

Congressman Heath Shuler, an advocate of the ERC Broadband mission, says, "I look forward to seeing the tremendous impact this funding will have on MCNC, ERC

Broadband, and Balsam West's efforts to expand Broadband in Western North Carolina. This funding will make huge strides in establishing connectivity from Marion to Boone, as well as ensure that fire stations in Buncombe have smooth communication, improving public safety. Additionally, I am very pleased that Broadband connectivity will now link Western North Carolina with Knoxville and Oak Ridge. Connecting our area with the larger region will aid in job creation, and connect us to Oakridge National Laboratories, which will greatly benefit Asheville's National Climatic Data Center and our entire region once we can access Oakridge's supercomputing capabilities."

Here's what the funding means to the individual counties:

**Buncombe County:** Construction of fiber optic cabling to twelve fire stations for the City of Asheville's Public Safety network and for fiber to the Arboretum.

**Madison County:** The construction of the fiber optic cable will create an opportunity for providers of cable and Internet service to expand operations in Madison County. This competition is a catalyst for decreasing the price of services for the rural county's residents and businesses.

**Mitchell County/McDowell County:** Connect McDowell County to Mitchell County with fiber optic cabling. This provides each County an additional geographic route to support high-speed Internet and data services. These counties will now be able to compete in economic development responses for placement of call centers, data centers, and other employers who need redundant connectivity.

**Avery County:** This rural county could be impacted the most by the awarded funds because of the limited access to high-speed Internet services at present. ERC Broadband will be building through Avery County to reach Appalachian State University in Boone. The construction will also include some schools, hospital, and government offices. Although the fiber will not directly be built into businesses and homes, it will be available for local cable and Internet companies to connect and serve individual customers.

"We are proud to continue our partnership with ERC Broadband," said Joe Freddoso, President and CEO of MCNC. "For seven years we have worked together to serve the broadband needs of the K12 schools, community colleges and four-year colleges and universities in western North Carolina. The BTOP allows us to fix our costs of service for the foreseeable future even as the users greatly expand their use of Internet based curriculum and conduct more web based research."

#### **Additional Quotes and Reactions:**

##### **Scott Hausman, Acting Director, National Climatic Data Center**

"ERC provides NCDC with its broadband connectivity, so it is a critical partner in our efforts to archive the Nation's weather and climate data. ERC's participation in BTOP will ensure that NCDC has access to the expanded broadband infrastructure necessary to

ingest the enormous amount of data anticipated from the soon to be launched next generation of space-based observing systems."

**Dan Lunsford, ERC Board Chairman**

"The ERC Board and I are very pleased and grateful for this award by the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program for the expansion of broadband connectivity, which is an investment in the economic development of western North Carolina. This enhancement will also benefit education services of the region at the K-12 and collegiate levels. The goal of ERC from its inception has been to provide a network of low-cost broadband connectivity to the greater community."

**Jane Patterson, Executive Director, The e-NC Authority**

"This is a great day for rural North Carolinians. The National Telecommunications Information Administration has once again provided our state with a fantastic opportunity to extend broadband – through this award to MCNC. The partnership with the Golden Leaf Foundation enabled MCNC to make this broadband stimulus application to NTIA of the US Department of Commerce. People in this state have been screaming for broadband and I'm thrilled with yet another demonstration that the volume has been heard by our federal leaders. With ERC, a partner of MCNC, now stretching middle-mile access further into the state, our citizens, businesses and institutions in western North Carolina will be that much closer to the last-mile broadband connections they so desperately need."

**About ERC Broadband**

ERC Broadband is a regional, community-focused broadband network based in Asheville, NC, that serves to expand technology in western North Carolina. ERC Broadband's regional network connects groups including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Climatic Data Center, regional colleges and universities, local and regional government, and regional healthcare facilities. In addition to local and wide-area networking, ERC Broadband provides data center services and community consulting to implement networks and grow infrastructure, and to increase technological awareness. Visit [www.ercbroadband.org](http://www.ercbroadband.org).

**About MCNC**

MCNC is an independent, non-profit organization that employs advanced networking technologies and systems to continuously improve learning and collaboration throughout North Carolina's K20 education community. MCNC provides advanced communications technologies and support services that enable access to 21st century learning applications and offers the opportunity to improve teaching, learning, research and collaboration among North Carolina's education community. For a quarter century, the 501c3 non-profit organization, MCNC, has operated a robust, secure, exclusive communications network that has connected the institutions of the University of North Carolina System, Duke University and Wake Forest University to each other and through advanced research networks such as Internet2 and National Lambda Rail, to the world. Visit [www.mcnc.org](http://www.mcnc.org).

## **About NCREN**

The North Carolina Research and Education Network (NCREN) is one of the nation's first statewide education and research networks. It provides broadband communications technology services and support to K-12 school districts, higher education campuses and academic research institutions across North Carolina. MCNC offers the NCREN network, technology tools and services to guarantee equal access to 21st century learning by providing a future-proof technology network that is the foundation for change and innovation in our educational systems. It creates possibility and provides an equitable educational experience throughout the state.

## **Golden LEAF Rural Broadband Initiative Fact Sheet**

This 69-county service area encompasses approximately:

- 32,597 square miles (67% of North Carolina's total square miles)
- 5.93 million total population (66% of North Carolina's population)
- 2.32 million households (66% of North Carolina's households)
- 160,000 businesses (68% of North Carolina's businesses)
- 4,066 community anchor institutions (68% of North Carolina's CAIs)
- Approximately 709,500 households without access to broadband (31% of households)

Total Project Value:

- \$105 million
- \$75.75 million requested from National Telecommunications and Information Administration BTOP
- \$29.25 million in matching funds raised in N.C., including \$24 million from Golden LEAF Foundation

Estimated Jobs Created:

- More than 1,000 temporary engineering and construction jobs (average period 1.5 years)

Sixty-nine BTOP2 counties:

- Alleghany, Anson, Ashe, Avery, Beaufort, Bertie, Brunswick, Buncombe, Cabarrus, Caldwell, Camden, Carteret, Caswell, Chatham, Chowan, Cleveland, Columbus, Craven, Cumberland, Currituck, Dare, Edgecombe, Franklin, Gaston, Gates, Graham, Granville, Halifax, Harnett, Haywood, Henderson, Hertford, Hyde, Jackson, Lee, Lincoln, Madison, Martin, McDowell, Mecklenburg, Mitchell, Moore, Nash, New Hanover, Northampton, Onslow, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Person, Pitt, Polk, Richmond, Robeson, Rockingham, Rutherford, Scotland, Stokes, Surry, Swain, Transylvania, Tyrrell, Union, Vance, Wake, Warren, Washington, Watauga, Wilson, and Yancey

### **About Golden LEAF Foundation**

The Golden LEAF Foundation is a nonprofit organization established in 1999 to help transform North Carolina's economy. The foundation receives one-half of North Carolina's funds from the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement with cigarette manufacturers and places special emphasis on assisting tobacco-dependent, economically distressed and/or rural communities across the state. The Golden LEAF Foundation works in partnership with governmental entities, educational institutions, economic development organizations and nonprofits to achieve its mission. The foundation has awarded 971 grants worth over \$459 million since its inception. To learn more about applying for a grant, visit [www.goldenleaf.org](http://www.goldenleaf.org) or call (888) 684-8404.