



Editorial Contacts

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MCNC begins Round 2 of Golden LEAF Rural Broadband Initiative *Historic event showcases NCREN's capabilities with virtual groundbreaking in four locations*

KANNAPOLIS, N.C. (Aug. 12, 2011) – [MCNC](http://www.mcnc.org), the private, not-for-profit operator of the North Carolina Research and Education Network (NCREN), hosted a Statewide Virtual Groundbreaking Ceremony today in four locations throughout the state to highlight the start of construction on Round 2 of the Golden LEAF Rural Broadband Initiative (GLRBI).

The GLRBI is funded through grants from U.S. Department of Commerce's Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) and significant matching funds from private donations and investments including a \$24 million investment from the Golden LEAF Foundation. The GLRBI will greatly expand the reach and capacity of NCREN in northeastern, north central, western and south central North Carolina.

The high-definition simulcast event was hosted at Asheville-Buncombe Tech Community College, Elizabeth City State University, the North Carolina Research Campus in Kannapolis, and UNC Pembroke. The event leveraged the existing video capabilities of NCREN. These video capabilities and capacity for HD video use among NCREN connectors will greatly expand as a result of the GLRBI.

"Thanks to the Recovery Act, this project is creating jobs and will support continued innovation and expanded economic and educational opportunities in North Carolina," said Lawrence E. Strickling, Administrator of the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

MCNC received federal approval to begin GLRBI phase 2 construction in late June. Since that time, MCNC has mobilized efforts and worked to finalize all necessary permits and materials to begin construction.

The Round 2 project is three-times the size of MCNC's BTOP Round 1 project. Those areas of construction for Round 2 include 1,200 miles of broadband infrastructure through 79 counties in North Carolina. Sixty-nine of these counties include significant areas that meet the federal definition of "underserved" for access to affordable broadband services.

The total second phase project cost of \$104 million was funded by two sources. The first was a federal BTOP grant of \$75.75 million awarded in August 2010 through the NTIA. The BTOP investment was matched by \$28.25 million in private donations including the \$24 million investment from the Golden LEAF Foundation.

The total investment for both Round 1 and Round 2 of the broadband infrastructure build is \$144 million and includes an investment of \$8 million in funds from the MCNC endowment that was used as matching funds for the Round 1 project. This level of investment represents one of the largest in broadband infrastructure in North Carolina history. The majority of the project funds have been spent with private-sector engineering, construction, materials, and technology companies who will assist with the build. No direct funding from the State of North Carolina was required, and MCNC estimates the expansion of NCREN will create or save 2,500 engineering, construction, and manufacturing jobs in the state.

"MCNC is excited to begin the second phase of building North Carolina's highway to the future. We want to thank our state and federal leaders for their continued support for the Golden LEAF Rural Broadband Initiative," said Joe Freddoso, president and CEO of MCNC. "Today, we can link several sites via HD video for a one-time event. The GLRBI expansion, when complete, will allow us to host hundreds of these sessions simultaneously across the state. It will impact all facilities and institutions connected to NCREN. It will broaden the way teachers teach, students learn, doctors provide care, and for citizens at a local library searching to find a job."



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To date, MCNC has awarded contracts for Round 2 to the following firms: CommScope for fiber-optic cable and materials; Edwards Telecommunications, Fiber Technologies, and Globe Communications for construction and fiber installation, and Kimley-Horn & Associates for engineering design, project planning, and related services.

All construction is to be complete by 2013.

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About MCNC

MCNC is an independent, non-profit organization that employs advanced Internet networking technologies and systems to continuously improve learning and collaboration throughout North Carolina's K-20 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 more than a quarter century 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.

About NCREN Community

NCREN, operated by the non-profit organization MCNC, 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 NCREN 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. In addition to all public school districts in North Carolina, the NCREN user-community now includes: 17 institutions of the UNC System and General Administration; 19 North Carolina Charter Schools, 27 of the 36 North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities; 58 North Carolina Community Colleges; research institutions and foundations; and, along with the N.C. Office of Information Technology Services and other partners, MCNC will provide broadband services for the Public Health and Non-Profit Hospitals Phases of the N.C. Telehealth Network in 2011 and beyond.

About The 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 1,110 grants worth over \$511 million since its inception. To learn more about applying for a grant, visit www.goldenleaf.org or call (888) 684.8404.

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About Golden LEAF Rural Broadband Initiative

MCNC currently is working on a \$144 million expansion of the North Carolina Research and Education Network (NCREN) scheduled to be completed by 2013. This initiative has been labeled the Golden LEAF Rural Broadband Initiative.

To fund this expansion, MCNC applied for and received two U.S. Department of Commerce Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) awards totaling \$104 million. In addition, MCNC raised \$40 million in private matching funds as required by the BTOP program. MCNC's sources of matching funds included \$24 million from the Golden LEAF Foundation, \$8 million from the MCNC Endowment, \$4 million from private-sector wholesale telecommunications company FRC, and an estimated \$4 million through donations of land and existing conduit from individual community colleges, universities, and others including the Albemarle Pamlico Economic Development Corporation. No direct funding from the State of North Carolina was required. MCNC estimates the expansion of NCREN will create or save 2,500 engineering, construction, and manufacturing jobs in the state.

Both MCNC awards are part of a coordinated strategy developed by the Office of North Carolina Governor Bev Perdue, the N.C. Office of Economic Recovery & Investment, and e-NC Authority to improve broadband access for businesses and residents in underserved areas. Once all work is complete, the two rounds of BTOP infrastructure have the potential to serve directly, or through MCNC partnerships with private-sector service providers, more than 1,500 community anchor institutions, 180,000 businesses, and reach more than 300,000 underserved families.

Online Resources

For more information regarding all of MCNC's BTOP activities, visit [MCNC's BTOP Central Web Space](#) online. You also can follow the progress of the GLRBI at www.twitter.com/GLRBI or www.facebook.com/GLRBI. Questions? Please see our [FAQ](#) section regarding Round 2 construction questions, or [contact](#) us for more details.

Keywords and Tags

MCNC, NCREN, BTOP, ARRA, NTIA, Golden LEAF, GLRBI, distance learning, community anchor institutions, North Carolina, NC, RTP, Research Triangle Park, education, telehealth, telecom, broadband, Internet, web, NC events