

# **Proposal – Regional Distance Learning / Wide Area Network Conversion**

For services being provided in the Northeastern Joint Management Group (JMG)

**Revised August 28, 2007**

## ***BACKGROUND***

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Since the early 1990's, regional BOCES have been offering distance learning services to their component districts. Over the years, distance learning has experienced significant growth. In 2007-2008, 43 sites are connected to the regional DL Network, with over 1,100 students enrolled in 104 course sections.

At the same time the distance learning program demands grew, so too did the demand for data capacity. In fact, the regional distance learning program began before commercial and instructional use of the Internet exploded. Over the course of the past 14+ years, the telecommunications technology supporting the distance learning systems has been through two (2) significant technology platform upgrades while maintaining a virtually seamless transition for the end-users.

## ***PROPOSAL***

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The proposal in this document is **for the regional BOCES', school districts, and NERIC to develop and implement a "next-generation" regional network to replace the existing Distance Learning network and many of the legacy WAN connections.** Distance Learning platform conversions have traditionally occurred every five (5) years (the last one was in 2003), and there are a number of compelling reasons to move forward with another conversion at this time, as noted below:

1. Contracts with Telecom Service Providers for WAN service have already begun to expire, and contracts for service to DL sites begin to expire in 2007.
2. Demand for higher data bandwidth is growing at a rapid pace.
3. There is a clear industry, regional, and statewide trend toward Ethernet (IP) on the WAN, with the video being treated as data - the network becomes data-centric, not video-centric.
4. The telecom environment in most areas has become more competitive.
5. An initial investigation by The Myers Group with vendors in the region found that a next-generation network is both technically and fiscally feasible.

Based on the reasons noted above, we believe the next-generation network will be Ethernet-based.

## ***PLANNED APPROACH***

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The planned approach would be for the regional stakeholders to use a similar strategy to that used in the previous Distance Learning conversion in 2002-2003, as outlined below:

1. A Steering Committee with members from each of the regional BOCES and NERIC constructs general project guidelines, develops cost estimates, and provides oversight of the project.
2. A Technical Planning Team develops technical specifications, design, & standards of the next-generation network.
3. Release an RFP in September 2007 based on the technical specifications and standards developed by the Technical Planning Team.
4. Culminate all activities with a Distance Learning Network conversion in the summer 2008, with new WAN connections implemented on an ongoing basis as requested by customers.