

# **ARKANSAS RESEARCH AND EDUCATION OPTICAL NETWORK**

## **Steven Fulkerson, Executive Director**

### **INSTITUTIONAL GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES AS RELATED TO THE 2017-19 APPROPRIATION REQUESTS**

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#### **ENABLING LAW**

Act 209 of 2016

#### **INSTITUTION HISTORY AND ORGANIZATION**

The Arkansas Research and Education Optical Network (ARE-ON) organization and its members comprise a community of thought leaders focused on collaborative learning and innovation through advanced networking, technology, and research in Arkansas. ARE-ON is a consortium of all public degree-granting institutions in Arkansas and other select higher education organizations.

ARE-ON provides a high-speed fiber optic backbone network throughout the state with connections to its members, affiliates, national research and education networks, regional optical networks, and commercial service providers. The network consists of approximately 2,200 miles of long haul fiber optic cable and about 100 miles of metro fiber in twenty-four cities and four neighboring states. ARE-ON's extensive reach allows institutions to connect, collaborate, and innovate within the organization's core agenda: education, telemedicine, research, and emergency preparedness.

The initial planning for a statewide optical network connecting the 4-year colleges and universities began in 2005. This effort was supported with \$6.4 million in one-time funds from Governor Mike Huckabee and an additional \$9.4 million from higher education general obligation bonds (Act 1282 of 2005). Upon completion of the first phase in 2010, all but one 4-year institution had been connected.

In 2010, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration awarded ARE-ON \$42 million as part of the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program to connect the remaining higher education institutions. The second phase was completed in late 2013 and connected the remaining 4-year institution along with 18 of 2-year colleges directly with dark fiber. This project also created the state-wide telehealth backbone for UAMS known as the Arkansas e-Link Network.

Today, ARE-ON provides its members unlimited internet bandwidth, connectivity to the national research network – Internet2, and direct peering connections to multiple cloud and commodity internet providers.

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Map of the Arkansas Research and Education Network



Map of the National Research Network Internet2 and ARE-ON

## MISSION STATEMENT

To promote, develop, and apply advanced application and communication technologies to support and enhance education, research, healthcare, and economic development in the state of Arkansas.

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**GOALS**

- 1) Research - Advance the research mission and agenda of our member institutions.
- 2) Shared Services – Facilitate the use of shared services and resources among our members.
- 3) Cybersecurity – Create a network environment for our members that follows cybersecurity best practices.
- 4) Information Technology – Enable the use of next generation technology by providing a platform for innovation.
- 5) Sustainability – Position the organization to meet ongoing financial needs for operations and capital refresh.

**GOVERNANCE**

ARE-ON is governed by the presidents and chancellors of participating institutions in cooperation with the Arkansas Department of Higher Education. ARE-ON's governing structure contains two levels:

- 1) Board of Directors (presidents and chancellors of participating institutions) which serves as the strategic governing body
- 2) Steering Committee which serves as the technical advisory body

**ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION**

ARE-ON is a non-formula entity and is not currently receiving any general revenue. As a common resource for all of Arkansas higher education, we enable our member institutions to innovate, collaborate, and share services. Much like the administrative support that the ASU and UA System offices provide their member campuses, we are well positioned to address some common information technology needs of our members. Our ability to meet the current and future requirements of our members depends on adequate funding.

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**PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS / ONGOING OPERATIONAL EXPENSES**

- 1) \$1,200,000 for increased annual operating expenses as well as new service offerings

The general revenue request for new funding for fiscal years 2017-18 is \$1,200,000 and for fiscal year 2018-19 is \$1,200,000. These funds would be applied to the day-to-day maintenance and operation of the existing network facilities. The current membership consists of two-year and four-year institutions for which their annual membership fees are the principal source of dedicated revenue for day-to-day operations. With the increased budgetary constraints of our membership, increases to these fees are not feasible. General revenues can supplement our organization's revenues without overburdening all of the institutions of higher education.