

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING THE ILLINOIS CENTURY NETWORK



### **What is the Illinois Century Network?**

A telecommunications backbone providing high-speed access to data, video, and audio communications in schools and libraries, at colleges and universities, to public libraries and museums, hospitals, and for local government and state agencies.

### **Where did the idea for the Illinois Century Network come from?**

The Higher Education Technology Task Force, leaders from higher education, state agencies, and public schools, recommended creation of the Network to serve the needs of Illinoisans for education, training, and information technologies. The Illinois State Board of Education was building a network for K-12 schools prior to the creation of the Illinois Century Network and in fact, the Illinois Century Network built upon those efforts previously referred to as the LincOn Network.

### **What can this network do that the "Internet" cannot?**

The Internet has become commercialized and crowded and now less resembles a superhighway than a congested two-lane road riddled with potholes. The Illinois Century Network replaces outdated technology with state-of-the-art technology to improve the quality, reliability, usability and access to a truly high-speed information artery providing direct links to institutions, particularly those in rural areas.

### **What benefits have been realized from creating this new Network?**

From expanding educational opportunity to strengthening economic development, the Illinois Century Network is able to:

- Provide a full range of educational opportunities anytime, anywhere. Colleges and universities can share faculty, their most expensive and valuable asset, among themselves and with students beyond the campus environment, thus extending opportunities into the home, the workplace, to other states, and to international students.
- Provide access to Internet2 for Illinois Education, libraries and museums.
- Facilitate the critical connection between K-12 schools and Higher Education. K-12 schools continue to have high bandwidth access to the Internet and are now connected to Illinois institutions of higher education on an Illinois Intranet, facilitating college and university courses, advanced placement courses, and other educational programming and training.
- Provide learning enhancement in existing classrooms through increased student-to-student and student-to-instructor interaction.
- Libraries and museums have the opportunity to share unique content.
- Provide services and educational programming to municipal government.
- Smooth the path between school and college and between school and work to encourage life-long learning at home and in the workplace.
- Increase the number of high school students taking college course work and thus reduce the time and cost of a college education.
- Provide access to college admissions requirements and financial aid information to high school guidance counselors and students throughout the state making it possible for students to apply on-line to Illinois colleges and universities.
- Enable Illinois to sustain its competitive advantage in academic computing and networking. Illinois is one of only two states with supercomputing centers. The Illinois Century Network can build on the infrastructure and expertise that produced Mosaic and other Internet tools used throughout the world.
- Deliver state-of-the-art education and training for business and industry.
- Allow Illinois to compete with other states by creating an attractive environment for rapidly growing network and information related businesses.

**Doesn't this duplicate existing technology?**

The Network builds on previous investments in technology, including the Illinois Higher Education Video Network, the Illinois State Board of Education's Internet initiative, the Illinois State Library's work to connect libraries with learners, and efforts of the Department of Central Management Services to provide statewide telecommunications links.

**Why is there a need for public sector investment?**

Much like our highway system, this infrastructure investment is essential to meet a major public need which would not be profitable for the private sector at this point in time. As the network matures, it is likely that the private sector will fund an increasing share of the cost. More importantly, the public investment will democratize access to knowledge. The gap between information rich and information poor will be greatly reduced as access to the new learning technologies is provided to all Illinoisans regardless of where they live, work, or learn.

**Is the ICN the same network as the K-12 LincOn network?**

The ICN was formed by PA 91-21 and signed into law on June 8, 1999. One of the design goals for the ICN was to build on existing state networks. LincOn was operated by the Illinois State Board of Education for four years prior to the creation of the ICN and is the foundation upon which the ICN is built. The LincOn network had a potential of about 4,200 constituents and was designed to provide Internet connectivity to K-12 schools. The ICN has expanded this network and is now intending to serve over 8,000 potential constituents including K-12 schools, colleges and universities, museums and libraries, hospitals, and municipal governments.

**How does my institution connect to the ICN?**

By completing and submitting an application form. You can download the form from [www.illinois.net/connect](http://www.illinois.net/connect). You can request help in filling out the form by calling 877.844.2724. The completed form may be mailed or faxed for processing.

**What forms do I need to fill out? What if there are other organizations connected to the ICN in my building, do I still fill out both forms? I was a member of LincOn, do I need to fill out all of the forms again?**

The ICN Participation Agreement and Participation Application are required of all fiscal organizations whether connecting directly or indirectly to the ICN. If a building houses multiple entities from the same organization or from different organizations, each entity must submit an ICN Participation Application. LincOn members will only need to sign the Participation Agreement. All forms can be downloaded from the ICN web site [www.illinois.net](http://www.illinois.net).

**Once the application is turned in, how long does it take for connection?**

This varies depending on the availability of telecommunications services in your area. Four to six weeks is common, however, the time is longer in some areas depending on available circuits, your institution's connection to the local telephone company, and whether any new construction is required.

**Is an on-site visit required?**

Every institution is different and has different needs. An on-site visit may be required and can be scheduled by contacting the ICN office toll free at 877.844.2724.

**What will it cost to connect?**

The Illinois Century Network provides the backbone network, point of presence equipment (central equipment necessary to connect to the network), and a predetermined baseline amount of Internet access at no cost to eligible primary constituents (education, museums, libraries). Participants are responsible for the Customer Premise Equipment (CPE) and access circuits.

**Who determines the size of circuit to connect my institution?**

The institution makes the determination at the local level. However, ICN staff will work with constituents to help them determine the bandwidth necessary to carry current traffic to the institution. A constituent may request a quote for additional bandwidth. Requests for additional bandwidth will be honored provided they are affordable for the constituent and allowed by the ICN.

**What about fees for access to the Internet?**

On an annual basis the ICN establishes a baseline amount of Internet access bandwidth (transit) for education, libraries, and museums. This baseline transit is provided at no charge to the institution. Additional transit may be purchased at an established rate that is also reviewed annually. The current cost of additional transit can be found on the ICN web site at [www.illinois.net/cost recovery](http://www.illinois.net/cost recovery).

**What is the long-term pricing policy for the ICN?**

It is the goal of the ICN to remain highly competitive and always represent the best possible value for high speed Internet and Illinois Intranet connectivity<sup>1</sup>. In order to ensure long-term scalability and sustainability the Policy Committee will continue to review funding options, including public/private partnerships and external funding opportunities.

**My institution currently has a contract with an Internet Service Provider. Should we cancel this contract?**

You should review the existing contract and consider any penalties for early cancellation. In most cases, the money saved by connecting to the ICN will recoup these costs in 3-6 months.

**When should I discontinue using my existing Internet Service Provider?**

It is always best to allow the ICN connection to be installed and thoroughly tested prior to issuing a disconnect order to your current provider.

**How does the ICN compare to the Internet service currently used by my institution?**

The ICN backbone provides multiple diverse routes to the Internet in different parts of the state to ensure reliability and redundancy. In the words of several Internet Service Providers, who desire to gain access to the Internet via the ICN for their customers, "the Illinois Century Network is the best network in the state." Internet access through the ICN is the most robust available.

**Does my institution have to sign a multi-year contract when connecting to the ICN?**

The ICN does not require any contracts. However in order to take advantage of discounted access circuit pricing, most telecommunication providers require a 3 or 5 year contract.

**What about network monitoring? Who do we call in the event of network problems?**

The ICN is monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Contact numbers are provided to ICN constituents at the time of connection and assistance is available 24 x 7, 365 days a year in the event of network outages. These numbers are also available at our web site at [www.illinois.net/support](http://www.illinois.net/support).

**What if something goes wrong with the equipment located at our institution? Are local personnel available to assist us?**

Yes. The ICN has Regional Technology Centers staffed with network specialists strategically located throughout the state to provide regional service as needed. For information on the Regional Technology Center in your area visit our web site at [www.illinois.net/rtc](http://www.illinois.net/rtc).

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<sup>1</sup> The ICN is not simply a high-speed connection to the Internet. By connecting to the ICN an institution has available a high speed ATM network capable of handling multimedia applications between any of the member institutions, hence the term, Illinois Intranet. Currently, the ICN offers TCP/IP over ATM to most participants.

### **Can we use our existing router?**

Using your existing router may be possible depending on the make and model. The ICN monitors the network up to your premise equipment. If the equipment allows network monitoring and remote diagnostics, it can be utilized. If not, new premise equipment is required and you will be provided a quote for this equipment when you submit your application.

### **How does my institution interface with the ICN?**

The ICN will work with each institution individually to provide the proper connection between the facility infrastructure and the ICN premise equipment. Your local Regional Technology Center is your first point of contact for questions regarding connections to the ICN. The staff is available to assist in completing the ICN Application, recommending appropriate bandwidth and hardware, coordinating circuit and hardware installation, and ongoing circuit monitoring. Regional Technology Center contact information can be found at [www.illinois.net/rtc](http://www.illinois.net/rtc).

### **We do not have fiber running into our campus and need the telephone company's connection point extended. Is this something ICN funds will pay for?**

Possibly. Each situation is different and costs have ranged from \$10,000 to \$150,000. ICN personnel will work with you to evaluate your needs and do whatever is feasible to bring adequate service to your campus within the limits of available funds.

### **Does the ICN provide domain name services (DNS)?**

Yes. The ICN can act as a primary or secondary DNS service for your facility.

### **What is the difference between the ICN Regional Technology Centers and the ISBE Learning Technology Centers?**

The Learning Technology Centers provide K-12 institutions with LAN consultations, building surveys, e-mail addresses, and web page hosting. The ICN Regional Technology Centers provide Domain Name Services (DNS), IP Addresses, connection consultation, and other services for all ICN users. The RTCs are also a site's first point of contact for equipment and circuit installation, troubleshooting, services, and connection monitoring and support.

### **How is the ICN governed?**

The Illinois Century Network is governed by a Policy Committee that has seven standing members representing the Board of Higher Education, the Community College Board, the State Board of Education, the State Museum, the State Library, the Department of Central Management Services, and the Governor's office. Legislation now allows for the expansion of Policy Committee representation to include private K-12 and higher education, and other participant constituents who are not already represented. The Policy Committee meets four times a year in various locations. For more information visit [www.illinois.net/policy](http://www.illinois.net/policy).

### **How do ICN constituents provide input into the growth and future of the ICN?**

In order to plan for the long-term scalability and sustainability of the ICN, the management team established the Advanced Engineering Taskforce (AET). The members of the AET are drawn from a wide group of professionals representing the diversity of the ICN constituents and the most advanced technological projects in the state. The ICN staff also works closely with the Illinois Online Leadership Council to ensure the network will be able to support the educational applications being developed in the Illinois elearning community. Opportunities for constituent input also exist through ICN sponsored forums and by e-mailing comments to [icn@illinois.net](mailto:icn@illinois.net).