

**Randolph County, North Carolina
BAND-NC Grant Application**

Lead Applicant Organization	NC Cooperative Extension Randolph County Center
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Partners Involved	Randolph County School System Randolph County Public Library Randolph-Asheboro YMCA Randolph County Government IT Department



Introduction

Like most counties, Randolph County suffers from a digital divide. The digital divide stems from two main reasons: lack of access to broadband, and lack resources to acquire appropriate devices to access the available broadband. In a recent survey, the Randolph County School System conducted to prepare for the 2020/2021 school year, revealed _____ students did not have broadband access in the home, and _____ students needed appropriate devices to access learning resources on remote learning days.

Description of Proposed Digital Inclusion Project

Students in Randolph County Schools will have two days of in-person instruction and three days of remote learning. The three days of remote learning is where the digital divide will be the greatest and make the most impact on student learning. Those students with digital devices and broadband access can move between the learning formats easily. The students on the “without access” side of the divide will face challenges in meeting their learning goals.

Ross Holt, the director of the Randolph County Public Library has experience with students seeking to overcome their digital divide. The library loans Verizon hotspots which are in high demand. However, Holt has witnessed students seeking larger format devices (tablets or laptops) so they can do their school assignments. He has observed that even families with smartphones have challenges relying on only smartphones devices to successfully complete assignments due to the size of the screen.

The strategy of this project is simple: Get as many Chromebooks in the hands of students as possible while building social capital between the collaborators by implementing the project. The collaboration between these partners will lead to the necessary social capital required to create a comprehensive Digital Inclusion Plan for Randolph County. Our data for the comprehensive plan will be collected as we implement this initial grant. NC Cooperative Extension Randolph County Center will compile the data and write the plan with the help of the partners.

The devices purchased with the grant will be shared among three organizations:

Randolph County School System: These will be loaned to students that have broadband access at home but do not have an appropriate device to access learning resources.

Randolph County Public Library: These will be used in the library or loaned out. Students will have three remote learning days each week. These devices will help students achieve their learning goals.

Randolph-Asheboro YMCA: These devices will be used at the facility with the students who are on their “remote learning” day. The YMCA has seen a _____ % increase in enrollment for their “Y Academy” services. This program is for working parents that need help with their children after school and when their children are in remote learning days. Without more devices

in their facility, students will not be able to access their remote learning resources.

Care will be taken to maximize the number of devices purchased based on which organization can receive the best discount on devices. If the county government IT department can purchase at a greater discount than the YMCA or school system, the money will be used in that way.

Intended Outcomes and Metrics

The intended outcomes will be bridging the digital divide with as many students as possible. Furthermore, this digital inclusion project will build the social capital needed to develop a digital inclusion plan for the county.

The metrics will include the number of students using the purchased devices and the production of a digital inclusion plan. Furthermore, if possible through data analysis, average scores of students on both sides of the digital divide will be calculated by grade level to determine the impact of digital inclusion on learning outcomes.

Potential Barriers

The timing of this project does not match perfectly with the start of school. Ordering the Chromebooks and getting them to the students may occur after the start of the semester. However, the need will be there, no matter when the devices are received.

Project Budget

Devices: \$5,000

In-Kind:

NC Cooperative Extension Randolph County Center Project Coordination of Digital Inclusion Plan Development

Randolph County School IT Department Chromebook Setup

Randolph County Public Library Services

Randolph-Asheboro YMCA Y-Academy Administration

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to seek funds that will directly benefit the students of Randolph County. The partners assembled for this opportunity offers the best value for the grant dollars. The NC Cooperative Extension Randolph County Center does not collect an administrative fee from the grant. Furthermore, this collaboration between these organizations for this project strengthens cooperation that already exists through our Randolph County 4-H program. We look forward to working on the Digital Inclusion plan, so we can move Randolph County forward.