



New Jersey School Boards Association

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AGENDA ITEM NO. XIII.E BOARD OF DIRECTORS

For Meeting of November 3, 2017

FOR: **ACTION**
 DISCUSSION

FROM: **Dr. Lawrence S. Feinsod, Executive Director**

RE: **Information Technology Assessment—Recommended Expenditure**

Background:

“Becoming a ‘Future Ready’ Association” is a key goal area identified during the development of our Strategic Plan for 2018-2020:

Leading by example, NJSBA will provide local boards of education with the resources to become “Future Ready.”

Achieving this goal will require NJSBA to possess the technological resources necessary for it to continue serving our members effectively as their needs grow in the future.

In May 2017, I asked Technology Consulting Services, LLC to conduct an Information Technology Assessment of the Association. The organization is headed by Michael Esolda, who has extensive experience in school district and local government information technology environments. Mr. Esolda serves as chief information officer for both Woodbridge Township and the Woodbridge School District.

Our immediate objective was to assess the status of NJSBA’s technological infrastructure and the Association’s future needs in this area. This information will be critical for NJSBA to take the steps necessary to position itself as a technology leader, capable of providing the services our members will need.

Completed in September, the [Information Technology Assessment](#) included the following recommendations:

1. Replacement or updating hardware and software to ensure effective delivery of current and future services;
2. Upgrading or replacing the current Customer Relationship Management System—that is, the Association membership database;
3. Increased professional development programs for staff, and
4. Development of an IT strategic plan.

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The assessment spanned a four-month period and took into consideration the following:

- Interviews with 35 NJSBA staff members among eight departments;
- Dialogue with the NJSBA Officers;
- Engagement with six vendor partners that support NJSBA's technology platforms;
- 2015-2017 NJSBA Strategic Plan;
- 2017 NJSBA Staff Technology Advisory Committee Report;
- 2017 NJSBA Employee Professional Development Survey;
- 2018-2020 Strategic Plan Membership Survey Summary;
- 2017 Report of the Business Plan Committee;
- New Jersey's Future Ready Schools Initiative, and
- Reports by our current maintenance/help desk service provider, Mercadien—a network management plan (11/24/2015) and a service plan assessment (8/18/2016)

Of critical importance is the first recommendation, replacement or upgrading of hardware and software. The recent replacement of network switches, which connect our various hardware components, represented a step toward updating our IT infrastructure. However, a substantial portion of our hardware and software has reached the end of its useful life and still needs to be replaced or upgraded.

The Technology Assessment found that the current IT environment is hampering the staff's ability to work efficiently to serve the membership. Recommended replacement or upgrading of hardware and software will enable the staff and membership to engage each other more effectively and productively through professional development, advocacy, consultation and other communication.

The estimated *one-time cost* to complete the replacement or upgrading of hardware and software is \$500,000, as indicated in Appendix A of the report. Our current (2017-2018) budget projects an undesignated free balance of approximately \$3.9 million. John Faford, director of budget and finance, assures me that the recommended expenditure can be drawn from free balance without any negative financial impact.

The Officers and I have discussed the Information Technology Assessment and its recommendations. We believe they will be essential to NJSBA's success as we move forward with our Strategic Plan.

Recommendation: I recommend that the Board of Directors approve a one-time expenditure not to exceed \$500,000 from undesignated free balance to upgrade the Association's technological infrastructure as indicated in the September 22, 2017 Information Technology Assessment.