Using Next Generation Technology Services to Solve IT Budget Challenges
Many organizations face budget constraints, especially government and educational entities. But, working with limited budgets doesn’t necessarily mean you have to forgo innovation and access to advanced technologies.

Information Technology (IT) is an area within all organizations that, when used correctly, can foster productivity gains and create cost savings.

This guide discusses how data, voice, data center and managed IT services can reduce IT spending by creating cost savings and improving use of existing resources. Organizations can gain transformational benefits from implementing a single service or multiple services.

The discussion is focused on topics of specific concern to government and education (Gov/Ed) entities. Government organizations include municipalities, county, state and federal governments. Education institutions include K-12 schools, regional school districts and higher education, such as community colleges, state colleges and universities.
SPECIFIC TOPICS IN THIS GUIDE INCLUDE:

Top Technology Goals of Gov/Ed Entities

Understanding the Constant Financial Pressure on Gov/Ed Organizations

Major Issues Affecting Gov/Ed Technology Initiatives

How Advanced Technology Services Solve Key Gov/Ed Challenges
  - Data Services
  - Voice Services
  - Data Center Services
  - Managed IT and Professional Services

How Government Programs Can Help Organizations Leverage New Technology
  - E-Rate Program
  - ConnectED Initiative

Organizations Using Advanced Technology Services
  - Monadnock Regional School District, Swanzey, N.H.
  - Lamoille North Supervisory Union, Lamoille County, V.T.
  - Heartwood Distributors, Saco, Maine
  - WoodenBoat Publications, Brooklin, Maine
  - Sunrise Opportunities, Machias, Maine

Why Consider FairPoint Communications for Your Next-Generation Technology Services
Technology is something that works in the background to improve operations. Implementation requires an investment of time, effort and budget. However, with expert management, IT projects can provide a foundation for long-term cost savings. In addition, technology investments can improve service for everyone who interacts with governmental and education organizations.

At the strategic level, Gov/Ed institutions leverage technology to accomplish a number of important goals:

**Enhancing Service Levels**

Gov/Ed organizations continually look for new and better ways to serve the public, such as making more services available online. Improving the quality of the service delivered and providing greater access to services can be achieved through advanced technology services.

**Promoting Innovation**

Just like their private sector counterparts, Gov/Ed organizations must seize the opportunity to capitalize on emerging technologies, such as mobile computing, social networking, analytics, virtualization and more. By creating the right foundation of data, voice, data center and/or managed IT services, Gov/Ed organizations can leverage these emerging technologies to develop new services, interact with the public, access information and services anytime from anywhere, use big data to measure performance and trends, and more.
Enabling Higher Productivity

Deploying technology services helps remove roadblocks for staff and citizens alike. Implementing next-generation technology services can help eliminate inefficiencies. Advanced technology services can optimize your IT, transform internal processes and help create access to new government services.

In addition to making it easier for the public to do business with Gov/Ed institutions, advanced technology services may require fewer governmental resources.

Improving IT Security

Gov/Ed organizations require assurances that their entire IT operation will be secure. IT security involves protection at every level of operation – from viruses, hacker attacks, human error and natural disasters.

Creating Transparency

Taxpayers like to know their tax dollars are being wisely invested and Gov/Ed projects are managed professionally. Using advanced technology services can help create a more transparent environment by enabling real-time information about performance measurements.

Lowering the Cost of Providing Services

One goal of implementing a technology service could be to drive down costs. At the same time, Gov/Ed organizations must be innovative in their approach to technology implementation so costs aren’t cut at the expense of service levels or in a way that connotes special treatment for one group but not another.
To accomplish the top technology goals outlined in the previous section, government and education entities must invest in advanced technology services. However, even with the value created from these IT investments, many organizations face declining budgets and may find it difficult to get approval for new projects. The challenge for IT managers is to justify the resulting value and return on investment relative to the adoption costs.

Most importantly, Gov/Ed IT managers need to demonstrate the consequences of under-investing in advanced technology services. How will using dated technologies affect costs, service levels, innovation, productivity, security and transparency initiatives over time?

Since the 2008 economic downturn, many Gov/Ed organizations experienced deep budget cuts. These cuts were made as a result of lost revenues, including less endowment income and decreased state funding for educational institutions, and fewer income taxes being collected due to higher unemployment rates. Smaller budgets also reflected a significant concern over future revenues.

Lower revenues from the “Great Recession” have cut funding for many Gov/Ed organizations. For example, one study reported that Kentucky reduced its public school funding 11.4% between 2008 and 2015 and Oklahoma cut investments on education by a staggering 24% per student.

Faced with cutting budgets and reducing costs, it would seem investments in new technology would be curtailed. However, many schools and government entities are embracing technology to save money and improve service.
Instead of reducing investments in new technology projects, many IT organizations have turned to other budget-cutting measures, such as hiring freezes or reduced travel expenses. Forward-thinking Gov/Ed organizations are turning to tactics like outsourcing data, voice, data center and managed IT services that can lead to significant cost savings over time.

Although an IT department is a significant area of expenditure at most institutions, it cannot take its share of budget cuts without serious impact. Some Gov/Ed IT organizations have even increased technology spending to help them deal with increased financial pressures because doing so can fuel cost savings and productivity gains over time.

The IT decision-maker must develop the right balance between technology investments and generated cost savings. Given the slow economic recovery and the risk of another economic downturn looming, Gov/Ed organizations will focus on budget cuts for years to come. However, this laser-focus on cost-cutting shouldn’t translate to stalled technology projects. Increased financial pressures should increase an organization’s interest in leveraging technology for creating greater value and addressing their most pressing issues.

IT managers must convince their institutional leaders that technology services is an area for investment, not a cost to cut during tough economic times. IT will be highly relevant to an institution’s effort in accomplishing important goals related to cost reduction, service enhancement, productivity and innovation gains, security improvements and transparency initiatives.

Increased financial pressures should increase an organization’s interest in leveraging technology for creating greater value and addressing their most pressing issues.
Several issues make it difficult for government agencies and educational institutions to achieve their goals. In every case, however, prudent investment in advanced technology services can lessen the burden and help these organizations achieve their strategic goals.

The following chart summarizes these major issues and indicates the Gov/Ed organizations impacted:

All organizations face financial constraints, especially those in the Gov/Ed sector. Paying for employees’ rising healthcare costs and pensions limit funding available for other projects.

In addition, state appropriations for higher education in FY2015 will likely not increase from the previous fiscal year. And the federal government’s sequestration program forces cut backs on all spending, including IT procurements. This squeeze has compelled the federal government to do a more thorough job in technology procurement, resulting in a shift from CAPEX to more predictable OPEX.

However, financial pressures present opportunities to invest in technology for significant gains.

Technology Project Planning and Implementation Expertise:

Every IT department must develop funding models that optimize the use of technology to sustain core services, support innovation, facilitate productivity, save money, and more.

The IT leader’s responsibility is to demonstrate the value proposition derived from advanced technology services and how they can help the organization overcome challenges and achieve strategic goals.

IT leaders must use strategic project management to maximize technology investments. For successful project implementations, they must anticipate future needs, plan for unexpected costs, and manage change, despite dealing with differing needs, priorities and abilities.
Modernization of Aging IT Infrastructure:

IT modernization is a particular challenge for Gov/Ed entities that may be carrying legacy systems and applications, and also face the wide-scale retirement of employees who maintain them. However, modernizing IT is necessary to:

• Become more flexible and efficient so IT can respond quickly to changing conditions and new opportunities
• Provide enhanced service levels to the public at a lower cost
• Transform disparate IT systems into a modern, flexible architecture that maximizes the use of limited resources
• Create new levels of transparency into local government
• Find the proper balance among agility, transparency and security
• Develop sound policies for new technology initiatives such as mobile, social, Bring Your Own Device (BYOD), digital security, Big Data analytics, cloud and more
• Update antiquated networks so they can handle bandwidth-intensive applications like online video streaming

IT Staffing:

Many Gov/Ed IT departments, especially the smaller ones, spend an inordinate amount of time providing user support and putting out metaphorical fires. They have limited time and staffing resources to plan future technology projects or keep up with emerging technologies.

Gov/Ed IT departments must focus on becoming a proactive, strategic function within the organization. To accomplish this goal, IT needs to recruit, hire and retain a qualified staff. Regular updating of knowledge and skills related to new technologies is also a requirement.

Secure Data Storage & Disaster Recovery:

Protecting sensitive Gov/Ed data is a huge initiative since these organizations are often handling personal or sensitive information. However, many organizations do not truly understand their current vulnerabilities and potential threats, and have not undertaken a detailed risk assessment.

For example, some municipalities and schools rely on a make-shift server room that is precariously located in an office closet or back room to store their data. However, in-house data centers are commonly associated with deficiencies in planning for power and cooling, and lack of proper staff to monitor and maintain the equipment. In addition, some organizations mistakenly view their data storage as a free solution, but the cost to maintain equipment keeps rising and lack of reliability and physical security can be costly.

Gov/Ed entities must take proactive steps to identify risks in their data equipment and storage solution that could affect their operations, internal processes, financial performance, compliance and public confidence.
Energy Costs:

Energy demand and costs continue to rise for consumers, businesses and Gov/Ed entities, which is another reason why IT budgets are tight. A March 2015 report by ISO New England, which operates the New England power grid, showed the region’s residents doubled their spending on energy during the 2014 winter, with total energy spending at $6.8 billion, up from $3.6 billion during the winter of 2013.

Energy costs become especially important when an organization is trying to maintain proper temperatures in an on-premise data center. Gov/Ed entities that choose to outsource their data center to a trusted third party are less likely to be impacted by rising energy costs because their data center license includes the cost of electricity. Only under certain limited circumstances do third party data center providers consider passing those extra costs along to their customers.

Power Outages:

Facing a future where extreme weather events are more common, cities on the East Coast are building a resiliency to power outages. At-risk cities, especially those on the East Coast that haven’t historically had to prepare for hurricane-induced problems, are trying to improve their infrastructure and emergency plans to prevent power outages that can have devastating effects on residents, businesses and Gov/Ed entities alike.

To maintain uninterrupted operations in the event of a power outage, Gov/Ed entities should consider whether their data center is configured with redundant Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS), battery banks and generators. The generator can replace utility power for extended time periods. The data center should also house generator fuel on-site and have refueling contracts in place for extended outages. In addition, adequate physical security systems should be in place to minimize the risks to sensitive information and maintain service levels during a power outage. These concerns are driving Gov/Ed entities to consider licensing data center rack space from third parties that already have this covered.

Cloud First Initiative:

The federal government has issued a “cloud first” policy as a part of the Office of Management and Budget’s 25-point plan to reform federal information technology management. As an important aspect of government reform efforts, this policy strives to achieve operational efficiencies by adopting “light” technology and shared services.

As a result, more Gov/Ed entities are considering cloud-based technologies like Voice over IP or Software as a Service. Some organizations may even consider pooling their resources to improve their buying power. As a result, schools within a district and towns within a municipality can share resources.
Creating the Next-Gen Classroom:

To enroll, teach, support, counsel and graduate more students, educational institutions must turn to emerging technologies to leverage new initiatives like adaptive learning, blended learning, digital textbooks, connected educators, gamification, mobile and online learning, online assessments, open educational resources, high-speed video streaming, BYOD and more.

Capitalizing on technology for education has the potential to lower costs while serving an increasing number of students. However, several barriers exist, including limited funding. In response to decreasing state appropriations, many public institutions have to raise tuition just to keep services at the same levels. More often, educational institutions must creatively use technology and/or seek outside funding sources to maintain the required levels of technological sophistication. If they don’t, they risk higher faculty turnover and declining enrollment as teachers, parents and students seek schools that use the latest classroom technology, including virtual classroom capabilities.

Addressing Common Core Standards:

States and districts are preparing for the Common Core State Standards and related assessments. As a result, a need for aligned content and much more demand for formative data and data analysis exists.

Districts are beginning to switch from print to digital state assessments. In addition, student preparation requires a digital curriculum. Educational institutions must have the technology resources in place to properly support the Common Core initiatives.

Decentralized IT Resources:

Historically, many state and federal government agencies had decentralized IT operations because every department had created custom infrastructures, systems and services based on their needs. However, decentralization created significant duplication of hardware, software, personnel and other IT resources. This duplication increased overall costs, created disparate service delivery models, limited transparency, inhibited coordination among different departments, restricted access to high-level data metrics, and required redundant investments.

As a result of these serious consequences, state and federal agencies are beginning to consolidate and centralize their IT operations.
Although government and educational entities face considerable obstacles, using advanced technology services can help them accomplish their goals more easily and quickly in many scenarios. Even under intense budget pressure, Gov/Ed organizations can invest in technology to actually save money.

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IT investments make government more efficient, productive and transparent, which leads to reduced expenditures. According to the researchers, their empirical analysis “strongly supports the hypothesis that more IT investments by state CIOs are associated with lower state government spending.”
The technology areas offering the greatest potential for cost savings and other significant benefits include data, voice, data center and managed IT services. In some cases, you can work with one vendor for all these next-gen IT services – a vendor that owns and manages the entire infrastructure. A single point of contact streamlines troubleshooting of potential issues.

Below is a summary of each of these four service areas, including what they are and how they can help Gov/Ed organizations overcome challenges and achieve their goals.

**DATA SERVICES – THE FOUNDATION OF EVERYTHING IT**

Almost everything organizations do while conducting business requires the Internet. Therefore, the quality of the underlying network is of critical importance.

For example, educational institutions can’t leverage the latest classroom technologies unless their networks can handle bandwidth-intensive applications and a plethora of mobile devices. Everything ties into the network – mobile apps, online testing, distance learning, BYOD, video streaming, high-speed wireless access and more. Investing in hundreds or thousands of new laptops and tablets won’t do much good if the network can’t handle the increased data traffic and simultaneous connections of different wired and wireless devices. It must also be able to scale appropriately for applications like high-speed video streaming and at times of day when usage is higher. In addition, it must enable the level of security needed to protect sensitive information.

Working with an experienced data service provider can help you design the right network infrastructure to support your current and future applications. Flexible, scalable Internet bandwidth will meet the technology-oriented operations of Gov/Ed entities. You and your provider can design a network that handles multiple complexities while delivering high-capacity, reliable and affordable services that will ensure quality of service.

**VOICE SERVICES – ELIMINATE CAPITAL INVESTMENTS IN TELECOMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT**

Government organizations and educational institutions across the country often struggle to fund daily operations, let alone technology investments. While end-of-life for a typical on-premise PBX phone system can be three-to-four years, it’s not uncommon to hear of Gov/Ed organizations who keep theirs for 10-15 years to avoid the expense of replacement. However, at some point, these organizations need to consider their options if they want to sustain reliability, enhance service levels and lower costs. Voice services based on Voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) technology can provide Gov/Ed organizations with a next-gen, versatile communications solution that saves money and enhances performance and reliability.
Voice services can include Hosted Private Branch Exchange (Hosted PBX) and Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) Trunking. Hosted PBX is a cloud-based voice service delivered over the Internet or private IP network for anywhere, anytime communications. SIP Trunking leverages an organization’s existing on-premise equipment by connecting it to a service provider’s IP-enabled PBX and network.

Outsourcing voice services to a technology provider eliminates hefty investments in on-premise IP-based equipment and/or network infrastructure, as well as the in-house expertise to maintain it. For example, Hosted PBX requires only limited hardware at the local level, usually only desktop IP phones. And, because VoIP-based services use data lines, organizations may be able to avoid the need to invest in additional phone circuits.

Both Hosted PBX and SIP Trunking offer beneficial unified voice and data connectivity solutions for Gov/Ed organizations. Communications become more efficient, mobile and economical.

DATA CENTER SERVICES – IMPROVE IT OPERATIONS WITH FLEXIBLE OPTIONS

Like businesses, Gov/Ed organizations must consider the pros and cons of maintaining an in-house data center. When you manage an on-premise data center, you gain some control but often at the expense of flexibility, security and cost savings. The main issue involves whether you want to own infrastructure and incur the associated capital expenditures and risks. Or, whether you should work with a data center service provider that can spread the costs of operating a data center across multiple customers and provide a higher level of physical protection and greater peace-of-mind.

It’s not uncommon for smaller Gov/Ed entities to believe they incur no cost for storing data and equipment in-house. Many organizations are also under the impression their on-site data and equipment are safe, and they have an adequate disaster recovery plan in place.

However, if your disaster recovery site is located near your operation, it will be subjected to the same flood plain, weather pattern, power grid or other risk factor. In addition, if your leadership team does not adequately address what will happen to your facility, equipment and data during a disaster – or even a simple power outage – you’re dealing with an elevated risk.
Every Gov/Ed organization must consider the cost and security ramifications of certain situations. The following “what-if” scenarios are just a few examples of what some organizations have actually experienced:

- Are the servers supporting your core operational programs – accounting, food service, directories – stored on-site at a facility that is open to the public and not in a secure, hardened data center environment?
- What if you couldn’t access your building for one day, two days or longer?
- What if the bathroom next to the server room flooded and ruined your equipment?
- What if the air conditioner broke and your equipment overheated?
- What if the janitor accidentally unplugged your server to run the vacuum?
- What if the power went out in the school building where your communications equipment resides? How would you tell parents and teachers about the status of their students until you could relocate your server to another building?

Data center colocation services can eliminate many of the costs of sustaining an infrastructure at optimal levels. With the right provider, organizations benefit from high levels of physical security, audited processes, the latest data center technologies, hard-to-find expertise and tools to aid any Gov/Ed organization in its disaster recovery solution.

Gov/Ed institutions can leverage service provider data centers and shift capital expenses (CAPEX) to more predictable and stable operating expenses (OPEX). Instead of owning and maintaining your own data center infrastructure, Gov/Ed institutions can outsource their data center services to experienced providers and often save money on power, cooling, infrastructure, staffing and other costs associated with managing their own data centers. They can also optimize their business continuity and disaster recovery plans by using data center colocation as a “hot site” for redundancy or for data storage in the event of a disaster.
Government agencies and educational institutions continually look for ways to become more efficient. This goal becomes challenging when they don’t have insight into how their network and network equipment are performing until something goes wrong or when they lack the in-house resources to implement their next IT project because it requires specialized construction, installation or maintenance resources. However, organizations can rely on service providers to provide a wide range of managed IT services, professional services and construction solutions.

Managed IT services may include Ethernet Dedicated Internet Access (EDIA), Ethernet Line (E-Line), Ethernet Local Area Network (ELAN) and Wireless Local Area Networks (Wireless-LAN). The right provider will provide and install your router, offer proactive trouble-ticketing and monitoring of your network, and provide a 24/7 customer portal with strong reporting functionality so you can understand performance and usage. These additional services take the complexity of managing a router out of the equation, help solve any potential network issues more quickly, and help IT managers determine when their network is approaching capacity and is in need of an upgrade.

Service providers can also support Gov/Ed entities with structured cabling and inside wiring projects, construction project management and custom-built network solutions. Whether it is a new fiber construction project, a site survey for a new facility or properly installing a video security monitoring system across your campus, check with your network service provider to see if they can act as a single project manager of all deliverables and vendors. Network service providers are experts at building, improving and maintaining networks and the equipment that rides over the network. They can help Gov/Ed entities by planning, coordinating, installing and maintaining their network connections – allowing personnel to stay focused on their core mission.

Some project examples may include:

• Wireless installations
• Demarc extensions
• Site surveys
• Project management
• Campus wiring – building-to-building wiring or re-wiring
• Internal cabling – from cabling design to adding wiring for wireless access points
• Fiber-lit fiber services and dark fiber construction
• Security system installation
Two major government programs for educational institutions include E-rate and ConnectED. E-rate currently helps save these organizations money on qualified expenses and ConnectED is a program to encourage schools and libraries to achieve connectivity of at least 100 Mbps.

**E-rate** is also known as the “Schools and Libraries Program.” Put into effect by Congress in 1996, the program was designed to help all eligible K-12 schools and libraries access modern telecommunications and information services. Its goal is to make telecommunications and information services more affordable for eligible educational institutions by discounting telecommunications services, Internet access, internal connections, managed internal broadband services and basic maintenance of internal connections.

The discounts can range from 20-90%, with greater discounts for schools and libraries in higher poverty and rural areas. In 2014 the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) approved a $1.5 billion funding increase for its E-rate program, raising the overall funding cap for the program to $3.9 billion annually.

An example of how E-rate can streamline technology services involves the Monadnock Regional School District in Swanzey, N.H.

> “E-rate voice and data subsidies helped reduce our overall cost for a new Hosted PBX system and made it doable for our budget,” said Neal Richardson, CISSP, Director of Technology and Emergency Management for Monadnock Regional School District. “E-rate didn’t support us in replacing on-site PBX equipment, so this ability to get some funding for a new solution made moving to Hosted PBX that much more appealing.”

Initiated by President Obama in June 2013, **ConnectED** is intended to provide teachers and students with access to advanced technology and digital content. The program will use new technology to personalize the learning experience so students can develop the skills they need to compete in the global marketplace. Although no funding mechanism is in place yet, the initiative is driving schools to start work on meeting program goals.

With fewer than 40% of America’s schools having the required broadband connections necessary to leverage the latest technologies, ConnectED’s goal is to provide high-speed Internet speeds of 100 Mbps or more to 99% of students by 2018.
The following case studies illustrate how organizations are using advanced technology services to improve performance and efficiency while setting them up for the future:

**MONADNOCK REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT, SWANZEY, N.H.**

Monadnock Regional School District may be small, but its education goals match those of even the largest districts. “We strive to provide our school district with a world-class technology infrastructure that rivals a Fortune 500 company, delivered in a fiscally sound way,” explained Neal Richardson, Director of Technology and Emergency Management, Monadnock Regional School District. “Our staff and students deserve that.”

When quality began suffering with its old PBX, the district considered an upgrade. Lack of available replacement parts and handsets meant Monadnock would need a full replacement. However, the budget would not cover a district-wide upgrade to a traditional phone system.

Fortunately, Monadnock was able to leverage a cloud-based voice system from FairPoint Communications. “The FairPoint Hosted PBX gave us a modern, feature-rich phone system that eliminated the hassle of installing and maintaining PBX equipment on our premises,” Richardson said. “The cloud-based system lowered our total budget request and made it possible for us to replace our entire phone network at once rather than one PBX at a time as budget might allow.”
Along with the Hosted PBX, Monadnock decided to upgrade its network to FairPoint’s Ethernet service. In doing so, the district could configure a single network for both voice and data.

“With the FairPoint Hosted PBX, there was no hardware to replace or maintain, and that ultimately cost less,” Richardson said. “I no longer had to worry about buying $20,000-30,000 worth of PBX equipment to get me by in the event something happened to the system at one of our schools.”

~ Neal Richardson, Director of Technology and Emergency Management
Monadnock Regional School District

To help make the upgrade possible, Monadnock was able to participate in the federal government’s E-rate program. While E-rate funds would not cover the cost of replacement hardware for a traditional phone system, they would subsidize part of the cost of the cloud-based voice service.

With redundancy built into the network, Monadnock also gained priceless peace of mind. If the district’s primary line goes down, it can fail-over to the PBX side of the network.

A cloud-based phone system enabled the Monadnock Regional School District to upgrade its voice system much sooner than planned, and for tens of thousands of dollars less than expected.

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The Lamoille North Supervisory Union is a school system located in rural Lamoille County, Vermont. FairPoint Communications worked with the school district to bring high-speed Internet to the classroom so students and staff can enjoy the digital connections they need to succeed.

Prior to working with FairPoint, the district’s remote location limited its options for Internet providers and centralized data center services. The school system’s 2,450 students and staff were in constant need of wireless connectivity and access to online data. Existing Internet service did not allow teachers to use technology in their lessons and limited student access to critical information.

To address these issues, FairPoint provided the district with business-class Ethernet Dedicated Internet Access (EDIA). FairPoint installed a 500 Mbps EDIA line that provided the district with high-speed connectivity.

In addition, FairPoint configured a Hosted PBX solution for the Lamoille school district. Based on Voice over IP (VoIP) technology, the voice package replicates the functionality of an on-site PBX, but without the associated costs and challenges of installing and maintaining an on-site, customer-owned phone system.

“It has revolutionized the way we do things.”

~ Robin Gouin,
Lamoille Union High School Technology & Support Team

As a result of these technology investments, the Lamoille North Supervisory Union has one source for its Internet and voice communications requirements. Teachers and students enjoy continuous, reliable and fast Internet access and data transfer capabilities. Teachers use iPads and Smart Boards for classroom lessons or to connect instantly with professional learning communities and fellow staff at other locations.
Students use both computers and iPads on campus to complete assignments, create works of art and connect with other students across the school district and around the globe. The tools they use, such as Skype, FaceTime and GoToMeeting, are only accessible with fast, reliable Internet connections. In addition, each student now has an email address that includes online backup and storage.

According to Robin Gouin in the Technology & Support department at Lamoille Union High School, “It has revolutionized the way we do things.” The school system has benefitted from connectivity that has changed the way teachers teach and students learn. Online interaction offers a more collaborative learning experience. And, everyone has constant and easy access to a wide range of online resources both in the classroom and at home.

HEARTWOOD DISTRIBUTORS, SACO, MAINE

Kitchen and bathroom remodels typically net some of the highest returns for the cost. In Southern Maine, Heartwood Distributors is the go-to place to transform these rooms and boost home values with cabinets, countertops and custom design.

For most of its 22 years, the company had the same phone system, an outdated PBX that began acting up. Heartwood also couldn’t make simple changes easily, such as recording custom voice mail greetings. Owner Peter Yerxa knew it was time for an upgrade but was put off by the price tag. Instead, the old PBX pushed the issue for him.

“All of a sudden our phones wouldn’t answer and we couldn’t get replacement parts,” Yerxa said. “We had to do something fast.”

Fortunately, Yerxa had received a call not long before, introducing him to FairPoint’s Hosted PBX. With the cloud-based solution, Heartwood would avoid the large upfront investment of an on-premise system and never have to worry about replacing old hardware. Plus, the company would add convenient calling features it didn’t have before.

“For about the same price we pay for phone service each month, we get all the equipment and don’t have to maintain it ourselves. It’s a big plus for us,” Yerxa said.

The Hosted PBX provided the ideal solution for the small business, a new phone system without the barrier of a huge upfront bill or the recurring maintenance costs. As a hosted solution, FairPoint’s Hosted PBX is continually maintained and monitored for upgrade needs, requiring no action or additional cost for Heartwood. Nor does Heartwood need an IT professional to make any changes to configurations.

“The Hosted PBX is definitely less expensive in the short term and long run, and we don’t have to worry about it becoming obsolete,” Yerxa said.
Starting from humble beginnings in 1974, WoodenBoat Publications has grown from one employee to 45 employees. Today, the company publishes both hobbyist and professional magazines six times a year, publishes one annual Small Boats magazine, operates a school that teaches 600 students annually, hosts the premier trade show for the professional industry, runs an online store, and publishes books on boat building, design and repair.

But as the operation grew and new technologies emerged, the company’s network infrastructure and phone system failed to keep pace. WoodenBoat faced the similar challenges that many Gov/Ed organizations do today. The company reached the limits of its T1 network and 25-year-old phone system. Yet WoodenBoat did not have the resources to completely revamp its network and install a state-of-the-art, on-premise phone system.

To address these limitations, WoodenBoat turned to FairPoint for a Hosted PBX solution running on a FairPoint Ethernet line. The company’s network was upgraded to a 30 Mbps fiber line with FairPoint’s Ethernet Dedicated Internet Access (E-DIA). This solution provided WoodenBoat with modern calling features for $30,000 less than a traditional system would cost, as well as all the bandwidth the company needs for online sales, file sharing and more.

With the new solution, WoodenBoat benefits from exceptionally fast online ordering, even during high traffic times. It can send large publication files to its out-of-state printer in a flash. And, it can better accommodate its increasing remote work force, including the company’s sales reps located around the country.

“With the FairPoint Hosted PBX, we have a top-of-the-line, new phone system without the huge upfront investment or cost of continuously upgrading our hardware,” said Jim Miller, president of WoodenBoat. “And our network can now handle anything, so we know we’re not missing out on revenue.”

Miller credits the FairPoint solution with improving communication with remote staff, increasing network responsiveness, saving money and providing access to sophisticated calling capabilities.

For example, WoodenBoat staff members can receive transcribed voice mail in their email inboxes. They can also use a dashboard to configure settings and easily access all of their contact numbers in an online directory. And they’re able to forward their numbers to their mobile devices so they can be reached at home or on the road.

In addition to avoiding more than $30,000 in upgrade costs related to its existing on-premise PBX, WoodenBoat will continue to keep expenses down as it grows. The company always leases the latest equipment and software upgrades take place automatically behind the scenes.
SUNRISE OPPORTUNITIES, MACHIAS, MAINE

Founded in 1957, Sunrise Opportunities provides residential and work programs, as well as mental health services, for more than 140 children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Every day, the nonprofit organization’s case managers and caregivers working at a dozen locations communicate with clients and guardians regarding schedules, medical needs and more.

Yet the organization’s phone systems – a mix of older and newer models across locations – were unreliable and lacked the modern capabilities that would save time and enhance customer service. To address these shortcomings, Sunrise invested in a new, on-premise phone system. However, the organization lost support for the system when the vendor went out of business a year later.

Without ongoing support, the phone system crashed frequently. “Our phone system failed at least once a month,” said Thomas Michaud, executive director. “As a nonprofit, we don’t have an IT department, so staff members had to drop what they were doing or we had to pay for an external provider to troubleshoot.”

Similar to municipalities, nonprofits often lack the budget and staffing resources to properly install and manage an advanced communications infrastructure. By moving to FairPoint’s Hosted PBX solution, Sunrise avoided thousands in hardware upgrade costs, freed its staff from regular troubleshooting, and empowered its team with time-saving communications capabilities.

At the same time, Sunrise deployed 20 Mbps Ethernet Dedicated Internet Access (E-DIA) service to support the nonprofit’s Hosted PBX and all other business operations requiring Internet connectivity. Sunrise has the capacity to handle the applications it needs now and to add more in the future.

“All the features and benefits are so much better than what we had before that it was easy for everyone to transition,” said Michaud. “I remember sitting through demos thinking, ‘It would be great if most of this works,’ because our past experience with other systems was that very little did work. But FairPoint has worked very well from rollover to now. We’ve had no issues.”

Michaud’s favorite benefit of the new solution is not having to worry about support. “We haven’t had to call FairPoint yet because it’s running smoothly, but I know that if we need support, we can get it quickly,” he said.
You bring your “A” game to your job every day. And you keep upping your game to stay ahead, right? Just one question—is your communications provider built like you?

Communications isn’t just a basic utility service any more. It’s the central nervous system of your organization. So yours had better be responsive, reliable, advanced and always ready for your next challenge.

In northern New England, there’s just one name for all that — FairPoint Communications.

There’s a reason more than 95% of businesses in northern New England can connect to the FairPoint network. It’s 17,000 fiber miles long and growing—the biggest and most reliable in the region. And to keep it the best, we’re continually investing in the infrastructure and technology to power your future needs. As your IT and communications needs evolve, FairPoint has both the unmatched network capacity and knowledgeable people to deliver enhanced business-grade services all from one source.

FairPoint has a history of successfully servicing some of the region’s largest and most critical organizations, including government and education. Our technology solutions support change and growth. Plus, you’ll benefit from a team with years of experience navigating federal funding programs like E-rate.

We can do much more for your organization than provide data transport and availability at the desired speeds to all your locations. We can help you use technology in smart ways that improve operations and save you time and money. With FairPoint, you can focus more on running your organization, and use your IT staff more strategically, by outsourcing some or all of your IT operations, from routine to complex. For example:
1. **Converge voice and data onto a single network.** FairPoint’s VoIP services deliver a modern business-class phone system with mobile- and cloud-based features. We offer two VoIP options: Hosted PBX and SIP Trunking. Both options simplify network requirements, provide access to enhanced features and lower operational costs.

2. **Use data center colocation for savings and protection.** We’ve already made the capital investment in a physically secure, state-of-the-art data center, so you don’t have to. Experience ultimate peace of mind by working with FairPoint for your primary data center or secondary site for redundant computer operations and data back-up. If you experience a serious failure or disaster at the office, your organization can stay up and running with the right solution. Our data center services are connected by the largest privately owned and managed network in northern New England.

3. **Free up your resources. Use ours.** We have skilled personnel to help you with remote-hands tasks at our data center. With our experienced Advanced Services team at your fingertips, your IT staff has more time to develop new applications and address strategic priorities.

**Bottom line:**
**Whatever you need, we’re on it.**

WE LIVE HERE, SO WE CAN BE RIGHT THERE.

After building the largest fiber-based Ethernet network in northern New England, we know more than just the territory. And we service it as only people deeply rooted here can—with more in-market service centers, owned and operated trucks, and people from your community who have a stake in your success and support your local charitable and civic organizations.

To arrange a free, no-obligation consultation from an experienced Gov/Ed sales representative, contact FairPoint Communications at 1-866-984-3001. For more information on FairPoint’s technology services, visit [website](#).
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