E-Rate Overview

Johnnay Schrieber, Deputy Division Chief
Johnny Roddy, Attorney Advisor
Telecommunications Access and Policy Division
Wireline Competition Bureau
Federal Communications Commission

Tribal Consultation
April 13, 2023

E-Rate Program Overview

Provides funding to help schools and libraries obtain affordable telecommunications and Internet access.

- **Eligible Applicants:** Public and private schools (K-12), libraries, and groups of schools and libraries (e.g., consortia, districts, library systems).

- **Eligible Services:** Schools and libraries are eligible for funding for 20% to 90% of the costs of eligible equipment and services:

  Category One: Services that support connectivity **to** schools and libraries. For example, data transmission and Internet access service, including special construction services for network builds.

  Category Two: Services that support connectivity **within** schools and libraries. This includes internal connections (i.e., routers, cabling, or other equipment needed for a Wi-Fi network); managed internal broadband services, and basic maintenance of internal connections.

*Discount varies based on the school or library's level of poverty, the urban/rural status, and the type of service.

Impact on Libraries

- The E-Rate program supports libraries of all sizes for a wide variety of connectivity needs.

  — A small library might seek funding to upgrade its Wi-Fi network equipment and purchase monthly service from its local service provider.
  — A larger library system might seek funding for a wide area network that shares data between the library buildings.
  — And in cases where it is the most cost-effective option, libraries and library consortia might seek funding to build the broadband infrastructure themselves (a practice known as "self-provisioning") or for special construction for services over a third-party's network to get much-needed connectivity to unserved libraries.

- Since the first program year, libraries have received nearly $2 billion in funding.

- Each year, we receive applications requesting funding for **approximately 12,000 libraries**.

E-Rate and Tribal Libraries

— In 2018, Congress adopted the Museum and Library Services Act, which specifically included Tribal libraries in the definition of libraries that are eligible for support under E-Rate.

— In January 2022, the FCC amended its rules to include "Tribal library" in its definition of "library," clarifying that Tribal libraries are eligible for E-Rate support.

What constitutes a Tribal library eligible for E-Rate support?

• Tribal Governments can designate a library as a Tribal library (Ex: through a Tribal Resolution).

• Tribal libraries should demonstrate three basic characteristics of a library:

    (1) **regularly scheduled hours**;

    (2) **staff**; and

    (3) **materials** available for library users.

• Tribal libraries may also work with the state library administrative agency where they are located.

> **Please Note**: Tribal libraries that are part of a Tribal college or university are currently ineligible for E-Rate support. Under the E-Rate rules, libraries must be independent from any school to be eligible for support.

When can you apply? January - March 2024

- E-Rate funding is available by funding year:

    — Each funding year runs from July 1st through the following June 30th.
    — For example, funding year 2023 runs from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024.

- **Applicants can request funding during the application filing window, which will be open from January – March 2024 for the upcoming funding year 2024.**

- **Applicants can start planning for funding year 2024 now.** For example, the FY 2024 FCC Form 470, the form that is used to request bids for equipment and service will be available beginning on July 1, 2023.

- You can also find further information about how to participate in the E-Rate Program at https://www.fcc.gov/tribal-libraries and https://www.usac.org/e-rate/.

E-Rate Program – Tribal NPRM

- **On February 16, 2023, the Commission adopted a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) seeking public comment on how to make it easier for Tribal schools and libraries to apply for and receive E-Rate funding. The Tribal NPRM asks:**

  - Should the E-Rate application and processes be improved by: (1) simplifying the E-Rate forms; (2) exempting low-cost services and equipment from competitive bidding; and (3) providing an extended or separate application filing period for Tribal libraries?

  - Should the E-Rate cost-allocation rules be simplified for Tribal libraries that may share space and/or services with non-eligible entities?

  - Should the category two rules be changed to increase the discount rate from 85% to 90%, and the $25,000 funding floor per school/library for Tribal schools and libraries?

  - Should a Tribal community representative be added to USAC's Board of Directors?

  - Should the FCC adopt a definition of "Tribal" for use in the E-Rate program?

  - Should Tribal College libraries that also serve as a public library be eligible for E-Rate support?

What's Next?

Please submit comments to the E-Rate Tribal NPRM
(available at https://www.fcc.gov/document/connecting-tribal-communities-broadband).

We welcome your ideas!

You can submit written comments on the NPRM to TribalE-RateNPRM@fcc.gov or in the FCC's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS) at https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/filings/standard. Please include CC Docket Nos. 96-45, 97-21, and 02-6 in your written responses for the NPRM.

- Deadline to file **comments** is **Monday, April 24, 2023.**

- Deadline to file **reply comments** is **Tuesday, May 23, 2023**.

Interested parties are also invited to submit information for this proceeding after the May 23, 2024 deadline, if more time is needed.

Resources and Contacts

- FCC Tribal Libraries webpage at **https://www.fcc.gov/tribal-libraries**

- USAC Tribal Libraries webpage at https://www.usac.org/about/tribal-nations/usf-programs/e-rate-program/

FCC Tribal Libraries Team

Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC)

Office of Native Affairs and Policy, Consumer and Governmental Affairs	**Telecommunications Access Policy Division, Wireless Competition Bureau**	**USAC E-Rate Customer Service**
Bambi Kraus	**Johnnay Schrieber**	**Call:** (888) 203-8100
bambi.kraus@fcc.gov	johnnay.schrieber@fcc.gov	**Hours:** M-F, 8 am - 8 pm ET
Jill Springer	**Kate Dumouchel**	
jill.springer@fcc.gov	kate.dumouchel@fcc.gov	**USAC Tribal Liaison:**
Lloyd Collier	**Johnny Roddy**	**Gem Labarta** (Gem.Labarta@usac.org)
lloyd.collier@fcc.gov	johnny.roddy@fcc.gov	
	Molly O'Conor	
	molly.oconor@fcc.gov	