



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).

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FCC RELEASES REPORT SHOWING STATE-BY-STATE IMPACTS OF E-RATE PROPOSAL TO CLOSE WI-FI GAP IN SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES

E-Rate Modernization Proposal Would Help Upgrade Wi-Fi for Nearly 44 Million Students and 16,000 Libraries Nationwide by 2019

Washington, DC – The Federal Communications Commission today released a report of the potential impact of a pending proposal to modernize the federal E-Rate program to meet a pressing demand by the nation’s schools and libraries: robust connectivity to the Internet through Wi-Fi networks. Three out of five schools in America lack the wireless high-speed Internet – or Wi-Fi – to carry data at today’s broadband speeds.

The report provides a state-by-state breakdown of the estimated number of additional students, schools and libraries that would gain E-rate funding needed for Wi-Fi upgrades over the next five years under the proposal by FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler. Nationwide, the proposal would increase funding for Wi-Fi 75 percent for rural schools and 60 percent for urban schools, allowing an additional 44 million students and 16,000 libraries to have access to Wi-Fi services by 2019, all within existing program funding.

“Technology has changed. The needs of schools and libraries have changed. The E-Rate program must reflect these changes.” said Chairman Wheeler. “Modernizing E-Rate to expand Wi-Fi connectivity in schools and libraries will empower students and library patrons to use the latest education technology to access new learning opportunities and infinite worlds of information.”

Wi-Fi is the most cost-effective way to connect to the Internet at today’s speeds for individualized online learning. Despite this incredible Wi-Fi connectivity gap, the E-rate program was unable to support any Wi-Fi in 2014. When funds have been available for Wi-Fi in prior years, they have only reached about 5% of schools and 1% of libraries. The proposal will help close the Wi-Fi gap by maximizing existing funds, and ensuring funding is available to the vast majority of schools and libraries, not just a few.

The FCC’s E-rate program was established in 1996, and has become the federal government’s largest education technology program, supporting Internet connectivity and other communications services for schools and libraries. Since the program’s inception, it has successfully connected virtually all classrooms and libraries to modern communications networks.

But as currently structured, the program provides limited support for Wi-Fi services, which students increasingly need for individualized digital learning in school on tablets and interactive textbooks, and libraries need to meet the exploding demand for high-speed Internet access by patrons on their own devices.

The Commission is tentatively set to vote on the E-rate modernization proposal at its Open Meeting on July 11.

You can read a copy of the report here:

https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-327993A1.pdf

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