Sirs,

In regards to our school unit utilization of category 2 funds we were one of the e-rate filers that used almost all of the allotted Category 2 funds. The amount we had left over at the end of our 5 year allotment was so small that it was not enough to purchase anything that we needed and that fell under the guidelines of use of category 2 funds. In our case the timing was good for the use of the category 2 funds. We had a school building that we were gutting and renovating so we used the category 2 funds to replace wiring and switches in that building as part of the rebuild.

We also have a fiber optic cable that runs between our two buildings that are about four blocks apart. We have our internet service come in one building and the other building is provided internet access via this fiber optic cable. We installed the original fiber optic cable almost 20 years ago and it was multi mode fiber. At the time of the install that was not an issue but over the years as our bandwidth use and speeds went up this fiber optic cable actually became a bottleneck due to it being multi mode fiber and the length of the run. We were able to use category 2 funds to run a new single mode fiber which now allows us to scale our internet bandwidth to 10Gb and beyond. We should be set for a while with this new cable.

I already have plans for the second round of category 2 funds The switches for our internet service and WiFi in our other building have started to fail after 10 to 15 years of service. I have had a couple of switches fail and replaced them with the used switches from our other building. Our plans for the second round of category 2 funds is to replace those switches. We will also be purchasing switches which will allow us to have a fiber optic backbone through that building instead of a copper backbone.

We have been a 1-1 school unit for over seven years now with all students from grades 3 through 12 using a laptop or Chromebook on campus and off for educational activities. The health of our backbone network to deliver internet access to access points and from building to building is VERY important to us. We try to be proactive and build and maintain a system that provides internet access to every student and teacher that is trouble free and reliable. The loss of category 2 funds will make it difficult if not impossible for us to purchase hardware to make that possible.

It is my opinion that the restrictions on the use of category 2 funds may be the reason some schools do not use those funds. Had we just purchased new switches and connectivity before the modernization of category 2 funds occurred we probably would not have used the funds. In most cases those kinds of purchases are made with some grant. We would have wanted those funds the next round as those switches got older and unreliable and we would not have the local funds to replace them. With the uncertainty of having a grant other than e-rate to provide the funds for those kinds of replacements we may have to abandon 1-1 computing until we can come up with the funding to replace failing equipment.
Thanks