



Arkansas State Library

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In the Matter of:

Wireline Competition Bureau Seeking Comments on E-Rate Category Two

WC Docket No. 13-184

We are pleased to be able to provide input on the impact of having access to secure and sufficient funding for library Wi-Fi and internal connections. Before the E-rate Modernization in 2014, Arkansas libraries had not received funding for Priority 2 services since the early years of the program. Unless libraries qualified for a 90% discount rate, it was assumed that there would be no funding left after all Priority 1 requests were funded. Most Arkansas public libraries qualify for an 80% discount.

Since E-Rate Modernization, over \$265,000 has been committed for Category 2 requests for Arkansas public libraries. Fifteen library systems have used this money to upgrade their internal connections equipment to support robust patron Wi-Fi.

Libraries are using Category 2 funds to increase their Wi-Fi to support library users who are completing job applications, finishing homework after school hours, seeking health information and staying in touch with family and friends. Many Arkansas public libraries offer coding, computer science and STEM programs for youth, all of which require a strong Wi-Fi signal.

Arkansas public libraries rely on E-Rate funds to reach connectivity goals, and increases in bandwidth often require updating internal network equipment. Forrest City Public Library, located in the Delta region of the state, upgraded to a fiber broadband connection. Without a corresponding upgrade to network equipment, the library would not be able to fully utilize the new internet speed. One-third of Arkansas library Category 2 funding requests were part of larger upgrade projects where the library filed both Category 1 and Category 2 requests. For those libraries that have not yet completed bandwidth upgrades, knowing that both Category 1 and Category 2 funding will be available in the future makes planning for an upgrade possible.

Other library systems upgrade Wi-Fi and internal connections branch by branch, and they rely on Category 2 support to assist with the upgrades. Pope County Library in the Ozark region of the state upgraded Wi-Fi in the main branch in FY 2016, and they continue to upgrade internal connections at other branches in FY 2017. This affordable approach allows the library to upgrade slowly when local funds are available.

With the commitment of the FCC to ensure a library budget of \$2.30 (\$5.00 for a selected category of larger urban and suburban libraries) per square foot, Arkansas libraries will continue to upgrade outdated equipment and plan for new construction.

Please maintain secure funding through the full five-year budget period as adopted during the 2014 Modernization. Arkansas libraries and the communities they support depend on that funding.

Sincerely,



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