

Claudia Bill-de la Peña  
Mayor

April 5, 2021

**SUBMITTED VIA ECFS**

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
45 L St. NE  
Washington, DC 20554

**RE: WIRELINE COMPETITION BUREAU SEEKS COMMENT ON  
EMERGENCY CONNECTIVITY FUND FOR EDUCATIONAL  
CONNECTIONS AND DEVICES TO ADDRESS THE HOMEWORK GAP  
DURING THE PANDEMIC-Docket No. 21-93**

Dear Ms. Dortch:

The City of Thousand Oaks is located in Ventura County, California. We are a population of 130,000 residents and feature two libraries the Grant R. Brimhall Library and Newbury Park Branch Library of which have been instrumental in supporting the needs of the community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In guiding your decision-making for Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Docket No. 21-93, we are pleased to share our comments to help develop the Emergency Connectivity Fund. This fund will allow potential funding for libraries to purchase eligible equipment or advanced telecommunications and/or information services to support students with connectivity for online/live-streaming classes.

For the City of Thousand Oaks libraries, our interests are simple. Seeking ways to narrow the digital divide, especially student access to remote learning during the pandemic, is critical. We would like to help provide opportunities to support households which do not have the financial means to purchase equipment and online services. Emergency Connectivity funds would be used to assemble “technology kits” consisting of a laptop, Wi-Fi hotspots and connectivity equipment for Thousand Oaks students and teachers to “check-out” from the library for online/live-streaming curricula.

In developing rules for the Emergency Connectivity Fund for libraries, the City of Thousand Oaks would like for the FCC to consider the following:

- Libraries should work in cooperation with schools/school district to determine right equipment needs. Conducting due diligence will assure that the equipment procured by libraries is compatible for online instruction. It would also be appropriate for libraries to work with schools to determine what type of homework and assignment submission platform is necessary. Laptops should also have the right *collaboration suite* such as Microsoft Office which allows students to prepare assignments in formats that are acceptable to teachers including Microsoft Word, presentations in PowerPoint and spreadsheets such as Excel in accordance with school standards.
- After consulting with local schools/school district, allow libraries the flexibility to procure equipment without limitations on brands. Purchase of laptops, Wi-Fi hotspots, modems, routers and other connected devices or equipment should not be specific. Many computer types/ brands such as Chromebooks have certain limitations and do not have the same capacity as laptops.
- The City recommends laptops for the purpose of online instruction. Desktop computers are bulky, require additional accessories such as keyboards, cameras, microphones and speakers. They are often difficult to install. Laptops are all encompassing and compact with built in microphones and cameras. They are preconfigured and simply need to be plugged in. Laptops are more suitable for secure library storage and check-out than large desktop computers.
- To support video-streaming hotspot and Wi-Fi services, laptops should support a minimum 28-35 Mbps. Anything less than that would not be effective for online instruction, especially for live-streaming classes.
- After the emergency period, equipment should be retained by the libraries and not surrendered (*back to the FCC*). Communities can still benefit from portable equipment and online access. The equipment should be used to augment current library equipment for public use/check-out to continue to support students, staff, job seekers, general library patrons who lack resources to afford laptops, Wi-Fi connections, etc.
- Competitive bidding with a 14-day streamline process is also recommended. A shorter bid process will help expedite technology kits for students without further delaying online instruction.



In addition, we suggest allowing libraries the flexibility in determining equipment cost and in contracting online services. Not all telecommunications or Wi-Fi providers have uniform subscription services.

- The City of Thousand Oaks agrees that these funds should exercise the same federal reimbursement, audit and reporting policies (including recordkeeping and inventory) as other federal grant programs.
- Finally, we strongly encourage the FCC to consider making the Emergency Connectivity Fund available to all libraries. While we understand the priority would be to support low-income access, each community has students who desperately need and deserve access and equipment to support their online education and coursework during and even after the pandemic. Perhaps a modified Community Development Block Grant calculation can be employed so that all libraries receive a fair share.

We appreciate the ability to provide comments to determine the final rules in administering the Emergency Connectivity Fund- Docket No.21-93. The City of Thousand Oaks, through the Grant R. Brimhall and Newbury Park Branch libraries, would like to play an active role in supporting students/teachers in our community who need the equipment and access for online/live-streaming education.

Sincerely,



Claudia Bill-de la Peña  
Mayor

CC: Congresswoman Julia Brownley  
Senator Dianne Feinstein  
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