



November 7, 2017

Mr. Ajit Pai
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
4455 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

RE: WC Docket No. 13-184 - Seeking Comments on E-rate Category Two

Reply to comments, adding information on the importance of consistent and adequate funding to support library WiFi and internal internet connectivity

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The Texas State Library and Archives Commission works with over 550 public libraries in Texas to support learning and a robust educational and economic infrastructure. Public libraries are essential in this work and depend upon broadband connectivity to serve their communities and the nation as a whole.

The E-rate program, including maintaining the category two (C2) funding at its current level, remains a vital resource for Texas libraries. In 2016, 26 Texas libraries applied for \$729,969.09 in C2 funding and have been awarded \$475,635.60 to date. In 2017, the requested funding amount doubled with 30 Texas libraries applying for \$1,545,747 in C2 requests. One of those libraries, San Antonio Public Library, filed for approximately 25 of its branches, so 55 locations in total applied for funds. This illustrates the rising demand for C2 services from Texas libraries.

We further note the benefit of reducing the burden on C2 applicants by streamlining the square footage verification protocol as well as implementing concurrent reviewing and funding of both C1 and C2 applications. Allowing a two-year spending period and providing more allocation options for branches will also increase flexibility for applicants. We believe such changes to C2 will result in more libraries applying for C2 moving forward.

The availability and use of the E-rate program makes a critical difference, and in order to increase service to communities, TSLAC has launched a new state program to bolster public library connectivity through E-rate funding. The Texas State Legislature has appropriated \$1 million in state funds so that the agency can work with up to 100 libraries to apply for E-rate funds to increase their connectivity.

Distance education, workforce related activities, and access to digital resources are just a few of the key functions broadband-enabled libraries provide. These services are particularly important components of libraries, which are often the only source for free, reliable and secure Internet access in their communities.

We recently heard from one small rural Texas community about the challenges it faced. The single local bank location was closing, and the only means for many people to conduct online banking became the local public library. This type of connectivity must be reliable both in terms of speed and consistency.

TSLAC

*Preserving yesterday
Informing today
Inspiring tomorrow*

Currently, only 6 percent of Texas public libraries have internet connections at speeds recommended by the Federal Communications Commission. The need for E-rate funding is large and urgent.

We join the library community in expressing the importance of continuing the budget allocation for C2 funding.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark Smith
Director and Librarian