BEFORE THE
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of:	)	
	)	
	)	GN Docket No. 09-47
A National Broadband Plan for Our Future	)	GN Docket No. 09-51
	)	GN Docket No. 09-137
	)	

Reply Comments – NBP Public Notice #1

Submitted by the
WISCONSIN DEPARMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
(September 8, 2009)

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (WIDPI) is the state agency with statutory oversight for Wisconsin's public schools and public libraries. Our brief reply comments focus on (1) whether to develop single or multiple definitions of broadband, and (2) whether an application-based approach to defining broadband will work.

(1) Whether to develop single or multiple definitions of broadband.

We support the comments filed by Internet2[1] and the Schools, Health and Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition.[2] Both of these organizations suggest that the Commission develop a definition of broadband for community anchor institutions that is different than any developed for residential consumers.

[1] Internet2 comments, p. 5. We also note that the American Library Association referenced this concern in its comments filed in June 2009 "In the Matter of a National Broadband Plan for Our Future," GN Docket No. 09-51.
[2] SHLB comments, p. 3. The WIDPI is a member of the SHLB Coalition.

However, even within the context of establishing separate definitions there are far more variations in the broadband needs of community anchor institutions than there are for individual consumers. For example, in Wisconsin many of our small libraries have 1.5Mbps connectivity while a larger library—like Milwaukee Public Library—is at 80Mbps. This same variation exists in our K-12 schools too. One way to address the "one size does not fit all" issue is to look at the numbers served. For libraries this can be the community population. For K-12 schools it can be based on student/staff counts. For the latter, the comments by the Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA), the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) and the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) recommend broadband be defined using student/staff numbers as a benchmark.[3] We support this concept.

(2) Whether an application-based approach to defining broadband will work.

We support the comments filed by Internet2 and Google.[4] Both or these organizations state their serious reservations that an application-based approach to defining broadband is workable. While applications are a major factor in driving the need for increased bandwidth, basing a definition on applications would be of limited and ephemeral use. For example, just defining the bandwidth needed for "video" raises the obvious question: What type of video? A small "talking head" video can use well under 100Kbps, but a high definition full screen video can require one-hundred times this bandwidth, or more. Of interest, the FCC's Universal Service Schools and Libraries program (E-rate) defines eligible use in its Internet category partly based on type of application. In comments the WIDPI filed on August 9, 2007, (CC Docket No. 02-6, 2008 Eligible Services List[5]) we stated, "From a policy and implementation perspective, defining 'basic' [Internet access] at the application level will place the Commission in an endless cycle of reviewing every new application for eligibility." We believe that basing any broadband definition on type of application is not practical, it is not good policy, and it may have a negative impact on future application development and innovation.

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[3] Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA), the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) and the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) comments, p. 2.
[4] Google comments, p. 8.
[5] Available at http://fjallfoss.fcc.gov/prod/ecfs/retrieve.cgi?native_or_pdf=pdf&id_document=6519610434.

In summary, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction urges the Commission to establish a separate definition of broadband for community anchor institutions and to not use an "application-based approach" as part of any such definition. Thank you for listening to our comments.

Sincerely,

Robert Bocher
Technology Consultant
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction