

E-Rate: Get your Share!



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ALA E-RATE TASK FORCE



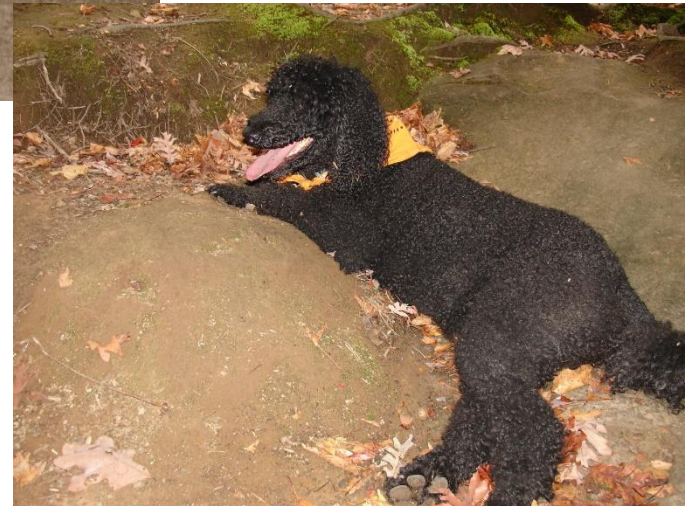


Information today
will be serious.....
But the tone will light

I promise to leave
out the E-Rate
Jargon (as much as
possible)

And focus on E-Rate
OPPORTUNITIES!

Introducing.....



**E-Rate Therapy Dogs:
Brooke and Collette**

E-Rate: Get your Share!



- **GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER**
- **E-RATE MODERNIZATION ORDER: OVERVIEW**
- **OPPORTUNITIES!**
- **OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION**
- **RESOURCES**
- **QUESTIONS**



Getting to Know Each Other



- Amber Gregory

- Arkansas State Library

- Coordinator of E-Rate Services



- E-Rate Task Force Member

- American Library Association (ALA) group made of state E-Rate coordinators and ALA's Office of Information Technology Policy (OITP)



E-Rate Task Force



- What does ERTF do?
 - Support state E-Rate coordinators with resources, information and communication
 - Work with other groups interested in E-Rate such as PLA, COSLA, ARSL, ULC, IMLS
 - Communicate directly with USAC and FCC regarding E-Rate issues impacting libraries
 - ✦ Two-way communication
 - ERTF is your direct line of communication to USAC & FCC, ALA and E-Rate experts

Getting to Know You



- Who applies for E-Rate Currently?
- Who used to apply?
- Who applies only for phone (voice, POTS)?
- Anyone completely new to E-Rate?

E-Rate Basics



- E-Rate is a program through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that allows for libraries and schools to receive discounts on telecommunications and information services.
- What does this mean...
 - Your library can receive discounts on internet access, some network equipment & wiring, and for a little while longer, your phone bill.

Key Players



- Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
- Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC)
 - Schools and Libraries Division
- Applicant (Library, School)
- Service Providers
- Support: State E-Rate Coordinators, ALA/ERTF, Consultant (if you hire one)



E-Rate Modernization Order



- “E-Rate 2.0” – “E-Rate Modernization”
- What is This??!!
- July and December 2014, FCC made the biggest changes to the E-Rate program since its beginning
- [July Order Summary](#)
- [December Order Summary](#)



E-Rate Modernization



- Libraries have groups working on their behalf to make sure library interests are represented in the Modernization process
 - ALA, State Library Agencies, COSLA, ULC, ARSL
- Schools, just like libraries, have stakeholder groups working to make sure they meet connectivity goals
- Modernization effort was largely driven by an analysis of school internet access shortfalls
 - WiFi Gap

E-Rate Modernization



- FCC and USAC really want to make the E-Rate program more accessible and useful to the library community.
 - Libraries represent about 15% of program participation
 - And 7% of E-Rate money goes to libraries
- FCC wants libraries to use more of the fund
- New E-Rate changes offer an opportunity for increased library participation and coordination of the school and library communities.

Never Enough Bandwidth!



- FCC Broadband Goals: (with ALA input)
- Libraries Serving fewer than 50,000 should have **at least 100 Mbps**
- Those serving 50,000 or more should have **1G**
- Keep these goals in mind when we talk about opportunities.....

Never Enough Bandwidth!



- Do you know the broadband (internet) speed your library has?
- According to ALA:
 - 1/2 of all libraries have speeds less than 10 Mbps
- AR – Average speed of 10 Mbps
 - Most rural libraries are **much** slower than this
- Almost everyone who walks into you library has at least one wireless-enabled device
- Get as much bandwidth as you can afford!

E-Rate Modernization



- **Main Points
(OPPORTUNITIES!)**



- **More Money!**
- **Fiber Rules Equalized & Easier to Follow**
- **Increases Transparency**
- **Encourages Consortia Participation**
- **Simplifies Administrative Burden**

New Money! How Can I Get Some?



- **Category 2 Money**
 - (for equipment and connections within the library)
- **Additional \$1B available each year FY 2015, FY 2016**
- **First time Category 2 money has been available since FY 2012**
- **FY 2015, ALL Category 2 applications were funded!**
- **Category 2 money should be available through 2019**



New Money! How Can I Get Some?



- Category 2 Opportunities, cont.
- First time for most applicants that they can count on funds being available for internal connections requests
- In the past, the most economically disadvantaged libraries got funded first, then others if there was enough money.
 - Now there is enough money for the libraries in the middle to wealthy end of the spectrum have a chance at this money.

New Money! Fantastic Opportunity!



- Eligible Equipment: Routers, Switches, Access Points, Wiring & Cabling and more
- Amount your library is eligible for is based on the square footage of your library
 - \$2.30/sq. ft. with a \$9,200 floor for libraries under 4,000 sq. ft.
 - Available over a 5 year period
 - Spend it all now or save some for later...up to you!
- This is a great time to assess the wiring and equipment within the library building.
- Use E-Rate to upgrade your network equipment.

New Money! Fantastic Opportunity!



- Questions to ask about your network equipment
- How old is the equipment?
- Is the equipment adequate to support computer and Wi-Fi usage in the library?
- Not just enough Wi-Fi to cover library-owned equipment, but patron-owned devices too?
- Are you accounting for future growth?

New Money!



- Shift from using E-Rate dollars to pay bills to using the program to increase broadband connectivity.



More New Money!



- December 2014 Order added \$1.5 B annually to the E-Rate fund
- Previously capped at \$2.25 B (plus inflation)
- New cap is \$3.75 B (plus inflation)
- New amount provides over \$4.9 B for services such as internet access & internal connections equipment.

Fiber



- The FCC has made applying for a fiber internet connection simpler.
- In the past, there have been different rules for Lit and Dark Fiber.
 - Don't worry about the details just yet, but know that both are eligible
- FCC has tried to equalize treatment of both options and make it possible to build & own your own fiber network if it is the most cost-effective solution.
- If building your own fiber network is beyond your technology comfort-level, that is ok too....

Fiber



- Underlying Opportunity around new fiber rules
- New eligibility should increase competition and encourage more build-out of fiber networks by existing service providers, even in rural areas.... eventually.



Fiber



- Use E-Rate as a resource to upgrade your library to a fiber connection.
 - It can make the cost-prohibitive possible
- Installation costs are eligible as part of the internet access service (Category 1)
 - These can be rolled into the monthly cost of the internet service
 - Usually as part of a 3 or 5 year contract
 - Or they can be separated out into a one-time cost

Fiber



- FCC will not shy away from expensive fiber internet access projects as long as it is a cost-effective solution to achieve higher bandwidth to meet community need.
- Remember those FCC Goals?
 - 100 Mbps
 - 1G
- A 1G connection will be fiber...



Importance of RFPs



- If you undertake a large project that includes multiple sites or a complex upgrade, is it a good idea to write an Request for Proposal (RFP).
- RFP is a document that gives additional details about your project and helps you get more accurate bids.
- If you are doing a complex upgrade involving Category 1 and Category 2 requests, make sure you put the requests in the correct category of service and your RFP supports this.
 - Ask for help if you are unsure.

Maximizing Cost-Effectiveness of E-Rate



- Pricing Transparencies: Am I paying too much?
- Prices paid by libraries for internet access vary widely
 - Urban vs. Rural differences
 - Challenges such as geography and accessibility
 - Costly build out for internet service providers increases prices for the service
- Example: Idaho Commission for Libraries went on record during the Modernization project noting that prices paid by rural libraries varied from \$3.33/Mbps/month to \$397/Mbps/month

Pricing Transparencies



- USAC will make available the costs that E-Rate applicants are paying for services .
- It will be easy to see what other local applicants are paying for which services and who is offering service in your area.
- This tool is not yet available....
 - The info can be retrieved, but not easily or in a simple format
- Yet!....This should be coming soon (we hope.....)

Pricing Transparencies



- This means that if your library signs a contract for new service that it wishes to get E-Rate discounts on, it cannot contain any language that keeps the pricing a secret.



Maximizing the Cost-Effectiveness of E-Rate



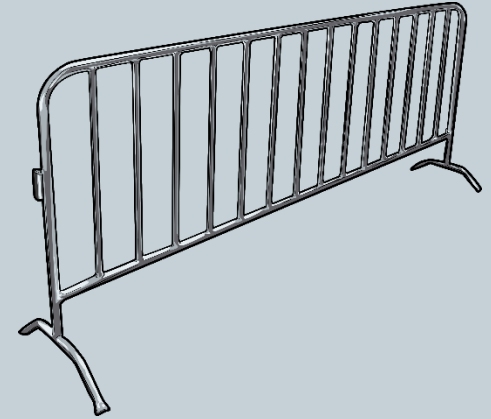
- Consortia: Enjoy bulk-buying!
- Consortia and bulk-buying help applicants get the best deals possible.
- Leaves more money in the E-Rate fund for everyone else if the costs are lower
 - Win-Win situation!
- USAC was directed to speed the review of consortium applications (these used to take a really long time...)



Barriers to Participation



- Yes, there are Opportunities,
- BUT...



- Barriers we will overcome today include....
- Disappointment over phone phase-out
- Only 1 Internet Service Provider in town
- Administrative Burden is Too Much!
- Filtering: Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA)

Phase out of voice service



- Voice service will be phased out by 20% per year
 - FY 2015 was 20% less
 - FY 2016 will be 40% less
 - until POTS discounts are gone...
- Phase down hurts all applicants in the short term – rural, urban, suburban, schools & libraries
- Reason: FCC's Modernization reforms realigned program to focus on adequate and affordable broadband connectivity.
 - We don't have dial-up internet connections anymore...

Phase out of voice service



- Shift from using E-Rate dollars to pay bills to using the program to increase broadband connectivity.



From this



To this

Only 1 game in town...

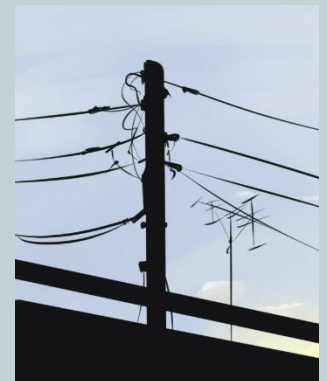


- Only 1 Internet Service Provider in town
 - This is a reality for many rural libraries
- Use the E-Rate competitive bidding process to look for new vendors.
- Use E-Rate to see who local schools and libraries use for internet service and how much they pay.
- Talk to local businesses to see what plans they are using from local vendors and the price.

Only 1 game in town...



- You may find there is still only one option in town, but the broadband landscape is changing.
 - It won't remain underserved forever
- Get in the habit of routinely searching for new internet options and negotiating the best deal for your library.
- E-Rate is an excellent tool for this!



Connect America Fund



- Connect America Fund: Universal Service Fund program (related to E-Rate) to encourage build-out in rural and high-cost areas.
- If service providers receive money using this program, they are obligated to respond to E-Rate applications posted in these rural areas.
- This will help competition and drive down prices in rural areas.

Business Class Internet



- Exempt from filing the Form 470 if your library can get commercially available internet access of at least 100 Mbps down and 10 Mbps up at a cost of \$3,600 or less annually
 - \$300 per month
- The FCC's data indicates that this service exists
 - (Don't Laugh...)
 - Do some research to see if this is available to you.
- Warning: Even if this service is available, it still may be a good idea to file the Form 470.

Administrative Burden is Too Much!



- Yes, E-Rate is a tedious program....No denying this!
- Some applicants compare E-Rate to filing taxes
 - (Perhaps this is an appropriate comparison)
- Unlike filing taxes, you will get money every year
 - Think of this as a guaranteed tax return when the E-Rate application is filed correctly



- E-Rate Modernization puts a focus on plain language
- Should help the program be more user-friendly

Administrative Burden is Too Much!



- The FCC and USAC really want to improve the E-Rate experience
- E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC), a Web-based portal
- Starting FY 2016, everything will be accessed (forms, supporting documents, communication) via your library's EPC account
- They are still working out the bugs, but it will be a centralized and streamlined tool soon.

Administrative Burden is Too Much!

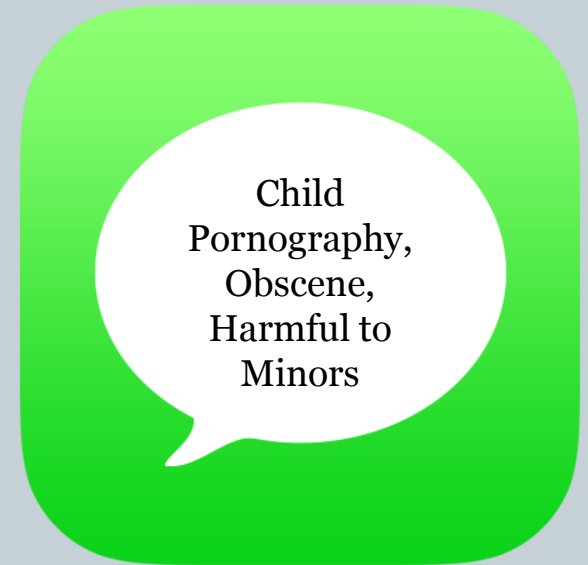


- EPC, cont.
- Communication with State E-Rate Coordinators is especially helpful on this issue.
- ERTF/State Coordinators communicate directly with USAC
 - What works
 - what doesn't
 - how to make it better
- EPC is in process, so give us your input!
- We will take it back to USAC.

Filtering



- To receive E-Rate discounts on internet access and network equipment (Category 2), your library must be compliant with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA).
- If your library is not apply for E-Rate because of CIPA, take another look.



Filtering: Why not?



- Library does not believe in filtering
 - Every patron should choose for themselves what to view



- Solutions: There may be ways to configure the filter to levels appropriate for children's, adult or staff computers
 - Focus on filtering only to the least intrusive level
 - Required to filter only visual images of child pornography, obscene material, harmful to minors (for computers accessed by minors, specifics are largely a local decision supported by library policy)

Filtering: Why not?



- The cost of the filter is more or equal to the cost savings
 - And then there is the administrative burden too!
- This may be true for basic internet service, but reevaluate this in light of new money for network equipment and fiber opportunities.
- Look again for low cost filtering options

CIPA Update



- ERTF is currently working with ALA to update CIPA guidance.
- Goals: Demystify CIPA and answer FAQs
 - Better define the situations in which a library would not need to be CIPA compliant, but still receive E-Rate discounts.
- If you have CIPA questions, let your state E-Rate Coordinator know.
 - We will add your input to the guidance we produce.

Where to Find Help



- **LibraryErate website**
 - New resource with information for all levels of E-Rate experience
 - Created by ERTF member Emily Almond (GA) and others in conjunction with COSLA & IMLS

- **State E-Rate Coordinators**
 - ALA keeps a list
 - <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/e-rate-state-coordinators>



Where to Find Help



- **ALA & the E-Rate Task Force**
 - Contact ERTF via your state E-Rate coordinator
- **USAC website**
 - www.usac.org/sl
 - Website undergoing updates following Modernization
 - Beware that not all pages are up to date and accurate. Double-check accuracy of information.
- **FCC website**
 - <https://www.fcc.gov/e-rate-update>
 - For when you want to read the E-Rate Orders word for word

Closing Thoughts

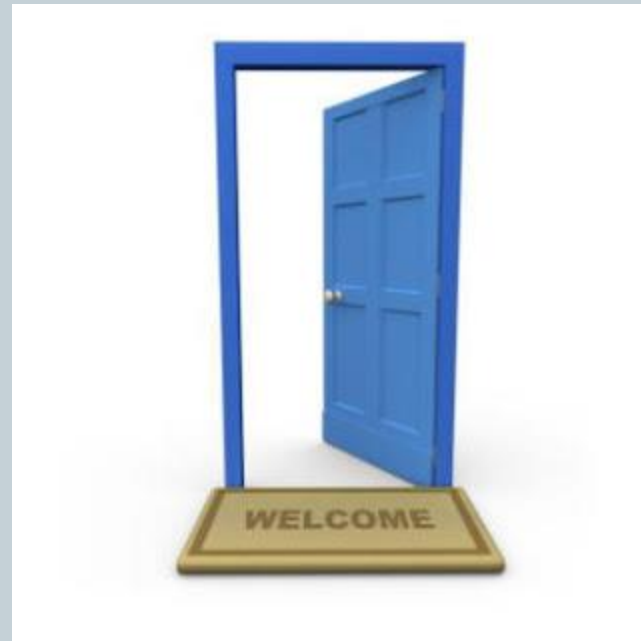


- For rural applicants, there is not a one-size-fits-all solution.
- Your library may not be able to take advantage of the opportunities all at once.
- Plan now to phase in changes as it makes sense for your library.
- Know which opportunities fit your library and use E-Rate when the time is right for your library.

Closing Thoughts



- The FCC has opened the door, and it is up to the library community to take advantage of the opportunities to increase broadband capacity.



Questions?



E-RATE: GET YOUR SHARE!

