ALA priorities for E-rate post modernization
March 26, 2015

Since the Commission adopted the final E-rate modernization order, we have turned our attention to planning for the 2016 funding year to ensure libraries are equipped to take advantage of the new opportunities in the program. We appreciate the considerable work that USAC and the Commission have undertaken and look forward to working with both agencies as the new E-rate rules and program changes are implemented. In looking forward, below we provide a summary list of our goals for the E-rate program. We believe these goals are of mutual interest and will help not just our nation's libraries but will also help USAC and the Commission achieve their goals for the program.

Goal number 1: Increase affordable broadband capacity for libraries, especially for those furthest behind the 100Mpbs to 1 Gbps goals
- Develop applicant guides and other information on the new broadband build-out options, including dark fiber and fiber ownership.
- Commit more resources to enforce the Lowest Corresponding Price Rule.
- Monitor progress and impact of CAF requirements for bidding on E-rate RFPs.
- Develop best practice for consortia for libraries joining or establishing consortia, and increasing opportunities for more economies of scale.
- Make available data on broadband costs and costs of related services.

Goal number 2: Increase library participation in the program
- In support of the E-rate program's Goal 3, simplify all aspects of the application process, including follow-up application review processes.
  - Develop an application process specifically targeted at regional or state consortia
- Develop technical assistance/support programs funded ― by USAC and implemented by the state library agencies ― to reach those libraries where:
  - Lack of expertise in broadband planning has impeded meaningful upgrades in a timely manner, and;
  - Lack of any experience with C2 applications is an impediment to applying for C2 funding.
- Establish an E-rate expert task force with library and school state coordinators to vet USAC processes and provide user experience feedback (e.g., to provide input on data collection strategies, form changes, and implementation processes).
- Establish an E-rate applicant "portal" with online tools to enable libraries (and schools) to easily track the status of their application, the amount of funding paid out, the funding

remaining, deadlines to submit various forms, etc. This portal will also enable applicants to compare their cost for various E-rate services with the costs paid by other applicants.
- Develop library-specific training opportunities (webinars, topical conference calls, regional workshops) to increase knowledge base of state coordinators.
- Develop resources for helping libraries transition from voice support to broadband.

Goal number 3: Maintain and institutionalize strong relationships with USAC and the FCC
- Establish regular communication channels with staff working at various levels of both agencies.
- Provide input of the library experience with the E-rate program through the library representative on the USAC Board and to relevant staff at both agencies.
- Identify opportunities for USAC and FCC staff to engage with ALA members (e.g., attending ALA and other library conferences such as the Association for Rural & Small Libraries, meeting with ALA members during ALA's annual national legislative advocacy days).

Goal number 4: Establish E-rate as a core public policy area for state library and public library leadership
- Build understanding of E-rate as essential for supporting public and school library networks and infrastructure.
- Increase and maintain support among library leadership at the local, regional, and state levels for E-rate advocacy.
- Institutionalize engagement with E-rate issues among library groups through the coordination of ALA.

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