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For Immediate Release**FCC ACTS TO ENCOURAGE GREATER PARTICIPATION BY
TRIBAL APPLICANTS IN E-RATE PROGRAM*****Proposes Simplifying Rules for Accessing Program Offering High-Speed Internet for
Schools and Libraries***

WASHINGTON, February 16, 2023—The Federal Communications Commission today adopted a proposal seeking comment on steps to encourage greater participation by eligible Tribal applicants in the E-Rate program, which provides high-speed internet to schools and libraries. Established in 1996, the E-Rate program has provided support for connectivity to and within schools and libraries, allowing students and library patrons to obtain access to essential communications and broadband services.

The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking seeks comment on how to make the E-Rate program easier for eligible Tribal applicants to encourage greater program participation, including:

- Simplifying E-Rate forms and cost-allocation requirements;
- Providing an additional competitive bidding exemption for low-cost services and equipment for Tribal applicants;
- Increasing the maximum discount rate for Category Two services from 85% to 90% for Tribal applicants;
- Allowing Tribal college libraries that serve a dual role by also serving as the Tribal community's public library to be eligible for E-Rate support;
- Providing an extended or separate application filing window for Tribal libraries to align with their Tribal procurement requirements and approval processes;
- Increasing the Category Two \$25,000 funding floor for Tribal applicants;
- Adding a Tribal representative to the Universal Service Administrative Company's Board of Directors, which administers the program for the FCC; and
- Considering other potential reforms to encourage greater participation by Tribal or similarly situated small or rural applicants, particularly if they face barriers that impede equitable access to the E-Rate program.

Other Commission Steps to Encourage Tribal Library Participation in E-Rate:

- In October 2022, the Commission launched a pilot program to make it easier for Tribal libraries to apply for and receive broadband funding through the E-Rate program: <https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-announces-pilot-help-tribal-libraries-sign-e-rate>.

- The Commission adopted an order in January 2022, updating rules in the E-Rate program to clarify that Tribal libraries can access funding to provide affordable, high-speed internet access in their communities: <https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-connecting-tribal-libraries-through-e-rate-program>.
- The order updated the outdated definition of “library” in the E-Rate rules to make clear that it includes Tribal libraries, resolving a longstanding issue that limited their access to the program.

Action by the Commission February 16, 2023 by Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 23-10). Chairwoman Rosenworcel, Commissioners Carr, Starks, and Simington approving. Chairwoman Rosenworcel and Commissioner Starks issuing separate statements.

CC Docket No. 02-6, 96-45, 97-21

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).