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For Immediate Release**FCC ADOPTS ORDER GIVING TRIBAL LIBRARIES GREATER ACCESS TO E-RATE PROGRAM FUNDING*****Seeks Comment on Further Simplifying E-Rate Rules for All Program Applicants***

WASHINGTON, July 20, 2023—The Federal Communications Commission today adopted an order providing Tribal libraries and other E-Rate participants enhanced access to funding so they can obtain affordable, high-speed broadband services and equipment to connect students and library patrons with online learning opportunities. The E-Rate program began in 1996 as a federal effort to provide funds to libraries and schools for basic internet connections. Over the years, the FCC has updated the program from connecting libraries and schools to covering services like installing Wi-Fi throughout the building, and in 2022, the Commission amended its definition of library to include Tribal libraries, clarifying that Tribal libraries are eligible to participate in the program.

With the Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking adopted today, the Commission makes changes to provide Tribal communities and other E-Rate participants with greater access to the E-Rate program. Specific updates to the E-Rate program rules include:

- Granting E-Rate eligibility to Tribal College and University libraries that serve as public libraries in their communities.
- Creating an exemption to the competitive bidding requirements for libraries seeking E-Rate support for category two services that total a pre-discount price of \$3,600 or less per library per funding year. Category two services are the internal connections needed for broadband connectivity within schools. This step can help simplify the application process.
- Increasing the maximum category two discount rate to 90% and the category two funding floor to \$55,000 for Tribal libraries. This step can raise the amount of funding for category two services that are reimbursable through the E-Rate program.
- Providing guidance on cost allocation issues experienced by applicants.
- Adopting a formal definition of “Tribal” within the E-Rate program to better identify Tribal applicants seeking E-Rate funding.
- Amending the Commission’s E-Rate program rules to add a Tribal community representative to the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) Board of Directors.

- Directing USAC to provide increased outreach and training to Tribal applicants.
- Seeking comment on ways to further simplify the E-Rate program for all applicants.

Action by the Commission July 20, 2023 by Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 23-56). Chairwoman Rosenworcel, Commissioners Carr, Starks, and Simington approving. Chairwoman Rosenworcel and Commissioner Starks issuing separate statements.

CC Docket No. 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).