

NUSF-117, Progression Order #1
Comments
Due 5-26-2023

**Ainsworth Public
Library**

Nebraska Public Service Commission

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: This letter is in response to the Order relating to public libraries on considering implementing a program to incentivize new fiber construction for E-Rate eligible entities.

1. Participation in the E-Rate Program: E-Rate is a great program to help libraries fund internet in their buildings. I feel that E-Rate is very important and should continue. Our library does not do E-Rate right now as the City and the Phone/Internet Company have an agreement in place for them to provide city departments free internet use in exchange for their company using some right of way free of charge. Not all libraries are this lucky. I know from applying for e-rate in the past, that the forms are somewhat confusing and take quite a bit of time to file. If the process could be made easier, it would help. Another problem is that the phone company says that they are coming to put in fiber and then the library waits and waits. The installation takes too long to get done in a certain time frame.

2. Reimbursable Expenses: Most of the small town libraries would not be able to understand the difference between the different types of construction for fiber such as category one or category two. It is confusing to them and so they may not apply. They may not know what is eligible. It is hard for a small town library of one staff to keep up on this. They may feel over their heads and not know who to talk to about this matter. If there would be a person to help with IT, I think that more would apply. Being reimburse for IT would be a big thing as small town libraries cannot afford a person to do this for them. Most librarians are the IT person in their libraries

3. Continuation of Nebraska Program: I feel that the program should be continued on an annual basis. Please don't discontinue the program. Technology continually keeps on changing and so would fiber needs and equipment as do the libraries themselves.

4. Certificated Carrier Requirements: Yes, I feel that the feasible approach is a carrier bidding on and providing services to participating entities would be required to agree to place the amount authorized for state support as a credit on the participating school, library, or consortium's account. The commission would then require a copy of an invoice showing that the credit has been placed prior to releasing the state support to the service provider. The commission further proposed that in cases where the state support amount creates a credit balance on a participating entity's account, the service provider would be required to agree to allow the participating entity to either utilize the credit for future service or issue a refund check at the school, library, or consortium's request.

5. Additional Topics: The cost of cybersecurity and filters for the CIPA requirements are very high for small town libraries to cover. Most do not have an IT person to help them and do not have the funding for this. If E-Rate could help with this somehow that would be great! It is hard to understand the language of the fiber e-rate building. Someone with knowledge that you could hire would be a great benefit. Also it is a struggle for some libraries to keep their computers/laptops up-to-date. If funds could be used to purchase new computers every so often it would help.

	<p>I hope that this letter helps you to understand what the needs are in small town libraries and that funding is hard to get from the city budgets.</p>
Albion Public Library	<p>Will there be help with filing and figuring out how the reimbursements will work?</p>
Atkinson Public Library	<p>The Atkinson Public Library would like to have the Nebraska Public Service Commission help with the maintenance to keep our computer equipment up to date. Our library pays 30% of the Internet bill and erate helps with paying 70% but could use help with expense. It would be great to have someone help keep our filtering up to date.</p> <p>At the present time it would help if we had someone help fill out the erate forms.</p>
Bancroft Public Library	<p>1. What opportunities can the PSC pursue to increase participation and cover costs incurred by schools, libraries, and Consortiums ("participating entities") in installing fiber networks? Examples may be initial fiber builds to the library (cost or other challenges), ongoing maintenance of equipment and infrastructure, payment of the monthly recurring costs for service, cybersecurity support, and filters for CIPA compliance. I think all of those things building, maintaining and monthly costs for the service and the other costs for technical support would be and are most welcome to all involved. Many small libraries cannot afford to have a tech person to help us keep up this wonderful service. Our patrons use the high speed internet even more than we know! I have seen them parked outside emailing, texting, studying and getting information often. it is a service we provide and that they are able to use. (We had a photographer in the rural area that used the high speed we have (thanks to E-rate and the Nebraska Library Commission's people!) to upload and download the pictures for her "cottage industry" work. She has done this for years but now she can do it much faster and she appreciates the service!) At this time E-rate is paying part of the costs for the monthly internet which is so important to the library and its patrons. They certainly did the majority of the costs of getting buried fiber to the library -- we would never have done it without the E-rate/Nebraska Library Commission's expertise in getting it all arranged/planned.</p> <p>2. What barriers do participating entities currently face in relation to participation in the E-rate program? Examples may be with the E-rate forms/filing, filtering support, lack of or cost of tech support, knowledge or help with what are eligible reimbursements/costs (e.g. project planning). Again, I think all of the above: E-rate forms/filing, filtering, tech support costs, and the people who help with knowing what is available to us for funding and maintenance. We would not know what to do or how to do it and most small libraries cannot afford to pay the costs of those expert personnel that we would need to advise us. Many of the personnel in these small libraries are older people not professionals on their way "up the ladder". The Nebraska Library Commission has been very good about helping us out with help in many of those areas.</p> <p>3. Are there any partnerships or outreach opportunities which the PSC should pursue? I am not aware of any partnerships o outreach opportunities. I always call the Nebraska Library Commission for help and they advise me!</p>
Bayard Public Library	<p>The Public Service helped me with the costs of bringing fiber to our Library. Without their help we would not have the fiber at our public library . It would be very helpful if we could get some support with our IT needs, updates and keeping</p>

	<p>equipment up to date. I also participate in the ERate program and is very needed to help pay for the monthly internet costs. Our small town in western Nebraska has a problem outside of our public library, we have a great need to bring new up dated fiber to our town. The library can't keep their doors open 24 hours a day. The fiber that the current internet provider says they provide is old out date and they block other internet providers from coming to town. So, when students try to do homework after library hours at their home, they have slow connections or no connections at times. If two or more family members try to use the internet at same time, they get spinning with the internet trying to keep up. Our small community needs your help.</p>
<p>Blue Hill Public Library</p>	<p>1. I believe that increased participation in the E-rate program could be brought about by covering costs of ongoing maintenance of equipment and infrastructure, by payment of monthly recurring service costs, by cybersecurity support, software upgrades and CIPA compliant filters. I believe the funding of technical support people who can make in-person visits as well as email and phone consultations would be helpful to many smaller libraries who may have only a skeletal staff.</p> <p>2. For my library, the lack of technical support is a major barrier on many levels. Funding for tech support people who can make in-person visits/consultations would be a major help. Assistance with CIPA filters, project planning, and better understanding what the eligible reimbursements are would be a major boost to our library's potential participation.</p> <p>3. Anything that could help small libraries assess their technical needs and advise on technology/software upgrades and necessary filters would be appreciated!</p> <p>4. Yes.</p> <p>5. Ongoing tech support; upgrades to existing equipment/computers/software.</p> <p>6. Software upgrades and third-party support would increase participation and should be eligible for reimbursement. Alternatively, perhaps regional tech support people could be employed to make regular, biennial visits to libraries, or to be regularly available for phone consultation or in-person visits. I'm not familiar enough with the over-arching program to comment on whether any expenses should be barred.</p> <p>7. I think that if services are expanded, particularly in the area of technical support, to include tech support and software upgrades, the program should be expanded for another four years. If, during that time, participation justifies it, then it should automatically renew annually.</p> <p>Thank you for this opportunity to provide input</p>
<p>Broadwater Public Library</p>	<p>We have Vista Beam here at our Library and Village Offices. I feel we are not in need of these services at this time. Thank you</p>
<p>Bruun Memorial Library</p>	<p>1. What opportunities can the PSC pursue to increase participation and cover costs incurred by schools, libraries, and Consortiums (“participating entities”) in installing fiber networks? Examples may be initial fiber builds to the library (cost or other challenges), ongoing maintenance of equipment and infrastructure, payment of the monthly recurring costs for service, cybersecurity support, and filters for CIPA compliance. I don't know if this qualifies as opportunities, In a small town there is a great need for Internet access. Because so many use their phones, they</p>

	<p>also need a place to print. There is also a large percentage who may not be able to afford a computer or Internet access. But the challenges are also great. There is no tech person in town, the nearest is 25 miles away. And unfortunately our Internet provider has been having a significant amount of outages. Since our circulation/catalog operates in the cloud that's a big challenge, and it would be nice to have something more reliable.</p> <p>2. What barriers do participating entities currently face in relation to participation in the E-rate program? Examples may be help with the E-rate forms/filing, filtering support, lack of or cost of tech support, knowledge or help with what are eligible reimbursements/costs (e.g. project planning). In our small town, the librarian is a part-time position, When you add to that that the librarian is also a little past full retirement age, it gets more complicated. I do not possess the knowledge to do anything major with technology/internet access/etc. And since my budget was cut drastically two years ago, and not increased last year, cost is a big thing. We currently are receiving our Internet at no cost and if that changes I don't know where the money will come from. In the past I found E-rate to be cumbersome and was very grateful when we discontinued it.</p> <p>3. Are there any partnerships or outreach opportunities which the PSC should pursue? I do not know of any. I wish technology and access could be easier in small towns. That and dealing with city government are the two biggest drawbacks for the library. It just makes we hope for retirement sooner than later.</p>
City of McCook Library	<p>We have fiber at our library which we received during a grant the Nebraska Library Commission did a while back. The problem we have is lack of tech support, but at the same time we have not had many issues with fiber. Helping with maintenance and the monthly fee to have the fiber would be invaluable with the situations that libraries are in and with rising costs with everything. Anything that you could do to help would be greatly appreciated. Any library that does not have fiber now, will love it and it also helps move the libraries into the future with communication needs. Thank you.</p>
City of Norfolk Library	<p>Thank you for making public libraries a priority, and for making getting fiber to each public library a goal. This is essential for the connectivity, vitality, and sustainability of all our Nebraska communities both large and small.</p> <p>In order to get all public libraries connected fiber, I suggest creating statewide supports. All public schools are connected to fiber through Network Nebraska for public schools. I am not familiar with how that program was executed, but I would suggest possibly following that model for getting public libraries connected to either Network Nebraska or another fiber network. The Nebraska Library Commission is an invaluable resource to our libraries, but I believe that further infrastructure support is needed to make sure that all public libraries get connected. I would also suggest creating a statewide consortium for public libraries to be able to apply for E-Rate funding as a group rather than having hundreds of separated applications. This would greatly streamline the process, especially for our small libraries who need this help the most. It would reduce repeated trainings, year after year, as well as save much valuable time and resources across the state.</p>
Clay Center Public Library	<p>We have fiber internet and were helped by the Library commission to achieve that. With their guidance it did not cost the library anything. There was a lot of paperwork to fill out but again the library commission staff was very helpful in getting things done correctly. Thank you!</p>
Exeter Public Library	<p>We do not have fiber at the Exeter Public Library at this time. The Internet is very slow and not very productive in our daily activities. We currently offer six Mbps</p>

Internet to our library patrons. After school we have often have over a dozen students on their phones, Cricut machines along with their tablets and iPad. They share the Internet with the library staff and other patrons in the library. We also currently share the internet with the Village Office.

The students say it is too slow for them to work on homework. It also really hard to get work done on the computers we use for library business responsibilities and at the city office.

Will it be beneficial for our library? Yes it would be but how much would the cost of installation be? We have a budget that we have to attend to; we would need to know how much we have to get from grants and/or other funds to afford fiber? How much does it cost to go fiber optic? Price per month? Installation? How soon can we go with fiber optic? Will bringing fiber to the library also allow residential and businesses connect to fiber? Our library is willing to use E-rate to take advantage of the 50% discount funding that is available to install fiber at the library. I am very excited to know that I also can receive the 20% matching funds to assist with the cost of the fiber installation. However, under the current NUSF-117 order the library would still be responsible for 30% of the cost to bring fiber to our library. I am concerned that the library will not be able to cover the cost for the fiber installation. Additional NUSF funding to cover the remainder of the cost

after the E-rate Special Construction funding and the current NUSF matching fund would be very helpful for our small rural library. We could accommodate the youth in our community that visit our library daily, the patrons and the library and village office staff can use the internet to do business.

Will there be IT support and a local company around to answer questions? Support would be required and needed for non-tech library staff. I think that it's important to provide IT support (including network support) for libraries. Our budget is small and we would be happy to use E-rate to fund for the eligible Cat2 equipment and maintenance services, but there's also the driving time that we have to pay for an IT support person to come from York or maybe Lincoln. Again our E-rate percentage is only 50%. That leaves 50% of the cost up to our library budget. I cannot address the monthly recurring cost issue as we do not use the E-rate currently. Again, we will be in the same situation as we are with tech support. We only have a 50% E-rate funding for paying for our monthly Internet cost. Any assistance by the PSC will be welcome to enable us to provide reliable, scalable, broadband for our library's community.

The reason our E-rate is so high is because our school funds the lunch program. They are also part of the Purple Ribbon Meat program which helps the students and families, but is not good for our library.

Fiber connectivity is definitely needed across the state. My family lived in Lincoln and it was so nice to have fiber to the residence. But in rural areas of Nebraska, fast and reliable internet is not to be found. Our library in the Exeter, utilizing the FCC E-rate program and matching funds will be challenged, due to 50% E-rate discount, to bring fiber to the library and sustain the overhead cost for equipment and monthly internet costs, without additional funding resources.

[Exeter Area Purple Ribbon Meat Program Overview:](#)
Patrons of Friend, Exeter-Milligan schools

	<p>Purple Ribbon Meat program has been in existence since 9-13-2016 in the Exeter-Milligan and Friend schools. Purple Ribbon Meats is a program that supplies locally grown beef and now for the first time pork to be processed at a USDA processing plant and then delivered to the school's cafeterias for the cooks to prepare for the lunch and breakfast programs at the school. This meat replaces the meat that is bought through the commodities. We as livestock and grain producers in this area raise the best quality of meats and grains in the entire world. We ship our meats all over the world and they are fed the quality of grain produced in this area but before this program our students were getting meat from commodities that do not represent our high quality of animals we grow right here in our district.</p> <p>Our schools have partnered together in this program since 2016. We have done this strictly on donations from outside of the school through businesses and farmers and individuals in agriculture or retired from the field. We are wanting to expand and give more opportunity to other businesses or individuals who might not have understood this program or the impact it has on our district. People crave our products in other parts of the world but before this program our own students were not receiving this quality of meats at our schools with the federal lunch programs. On December 20th, our towns will compete on the basketball court for possibly the last time as individual schools before they join next year for NSAA activities. The Purple Ribbon Meats program will be auctioning off some prime rib and brisket after the girls' varsity game and before the boys' varsity games in Friend this night. All the money raised from these sales will go towards funding the program.</p> <p>Purple Ribbon Meats is run through the FFA Booster 501-c3 and all donations are tax deductible whether you are donating a live animal or donating cash directly to the program. All our steers come from the Haare Feedlot or Weber Feed Yard. We have animals scheduled for January that we are looking for sponsorship for along with paying for the processing. This school year we will be doing 8 steers and 12 hogs. We will be spending \$25-30,000 just this school year for this program. You are invited on the 20th to come out and bid on these items or if you would rather give a donation to the program, we will be accepting them as well. If you have interest or further questions about donating to this program either money or livestock and are unable to attend this night, please get ahold of one of these representatives of this program. Paul Segner, Eric Milton, Scott Vhynalek or one of the superintendents of the schools. Purple ribbon meats wants to say Thank You to all who have contributed to this program in the past. Paul Segner Treasure and proud supporter.</p>
Fairmont Public Library	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Our cost after erate etc is \$170 a month which is twice what we were paying before fiber. The best part of it is our speed and not looking at downtime when things are lagging or off line. We have never been offline since it has been installed. 2. I love that they are doing my erate forms/filing. that has helped save time for me. 3. Partnerships? Dont know unless we could share with our city buildings also with any more cost.
Fullerton Public Library	<p>I did not pursue the E-rate funding as I found the paperwork daunting. I only work part time and adding all this paperwork on to an already full schedule wasn't really possible at that time.</p> <p>With being such a small library, I work very hard at using my tight budget wisely. We simply don't have the funds for the equipment or upgrades needed nor are we</p>

	<p>able to pay for and maintain the software for computer monitoring/protection which I think is required.</p> <p>Our internet is less than ideal. It is a constant struggle as it is spotty and can be inaccessible more often than I would like. We really are at a standstill in the library when we cannot access the internet. So, it is clear to me that assistance from this program would be incredibly helpful, however the financial aspect on our end presents barriers to pursuing it further. I welcome any assistance you can provide.</p>
Geneva Public Library	<p>I believe the expansion of broadband to library will help a great number of fellow Nebraskans and I applaud efforts to financially make this possible for libraries.</p> <p>I would humbly request that the PSC, NLC, DOT, CIO, and/or whatever other agencies are working on this plan, physically visit and meet with library directors, their Board of Trustees, and City/Village administration all together to present this broadband project and how PSC/NLC/et al. can bring broadband to the library. Going to a site to meet with stakeholders would go a long way in communicating the project with high-need locations and would help those local stakeholders understand precisely how it would work for them. Many rural and tiny libraries have few staff, a wide range of knowledge on these topics, and very little budget. By visiting these sites in person and starting the conversation on how you can get fiber to the library, it shows your interest in making this happen and gives you the opportunity to evaluate how much the library staff/trustees/administration understands the technology and e-rate requirements, and then to what extent PSC/NLC/et al. needs to work with the location to bring broadband to the community. If you rely on these libraries to reach out to you, I'm afraid many will not, because they didn't see the invitation, are unaware of the opportunity, are afraid of what would be involved, or assume they can't afford it. When a library relies on volunteers or only has one staff person, it's simply not possible to keep abreast of everything going on in the library world and what opportunities may be available to them.</p> <p>If the PSC/NLC/et al. can pay for all or most of the expenses to bring fiber to the library, complete all the e-rate paperwork necessary on behalf of the library both for Category One and Two for the initial construction, software, and hardware, as well as Category One for ongoing monthly expenses; provide strong support in meeting the CIPA guidelines (specifically provide recommendations on a filter and financially supporting the purchase and set up of a filter); cover expenses that are not eligible for e-rate; and ensure that the library can afford the monthly recurring cost of fiber, I believe many rural and underfunded libraries would participate in the program and everyone would see the benefit from this program bringing fiber to their community. I believe there are many libraries who do not participate in e-rate (and therefore would not lead the crusade to bring fiber to the library) because of the difficulties in completing the numerous e-rate application forms; the fact that there are no fiber providers in their area to select from; a variety of difficulties in selecting/installing/utilizing an internet filter; and general tech support in providing and understanding public computers, cyber security, personal data security, Wi-Fi options, etc. If a library doesn't fully understand these technological factors, they are not going to want anything to do with bringing a broadband connection to their library. I can't help but feel that if PSC/NLC/et al. personally visited and demonstrated exactly how they can make broadband happen at their specific location, more libraries, villages, and cities would be on board and be anxious to participate.</p> <p>I'm not saying that librarians in rural and/or tiny libraries are idiots or luddites. Every single library is different, from their staff and their tech abilities to</p>

	<p>the tech options available to them at their locations. You can't take the same approach to all Nebraska libraries for these reasons and more, and visiting each library with your toolkit of options would allow you to customize exactly what needs to happen in each location.</p> <p>No part of this broadband project can move quickly, and PSC/NLC/et al. should plan now to expand the program deadline. In my experience, it takes time to work through the various e-rate application forms within the federal timeline, and it always takes longer than an ISP expects to lay fiber, which relies on their contractors to lay the line. There are supply chain issues to mitigate, tunneling and groundwork to coordinate and accomplish, weather to negotiate, One Call and other entities to coordinate with, and the list goes on. There are a lot of people and entities to work with and everyone needs their respective time. In Geneva, there were delays for months when Glenwood was trying to lay fiber around town. It seemingly took forever and more than six months passed from the projected dates we were originally told Glenwood planned to have fiber to our location and when it actually arrived, and then several more months before we could actually get connected. There are just too many involved in the process that it is not a quick process. Expecting to facilitate the construction of fiber connections to libraries throughout the state before the end of 2024 is unrealistic and I would strongly suggest the project was extended another four years to provide time to get the projects done.</p> <p>It is my great hope that Nebraska libraries of all sizes can enjoy the broadband speed that the Geneva Public Library utilizes. Offering fast internet speeds that do not fail, or falter under high use, is necessary for our community to be productive while they accomplish education, employment, and entertainment tasks at the library; it is necessary for businesses and organizations trying to utilize web-based meetings in the library's meeting room facilities; and it is necessary for library staff to accomplish daily tasks and the general circulation of library materials. I know other communities have greatly benefited from fiber being initially laid to the library and then an easier time branching out to the rest of the community. So much of our lives hinges on a fast internet connection that having this basic utility available to all in our community is nothing short of a requirement, and if Nebraska state agencies can make this a reality, you should do absolutely everything in your power to make it happen. Thank you for your time.</p>
Grand Island Public Library	<p>We are on Network Nebraska. When Steve was here our former director, he had our library signed up with the Office of the CIO/Network Nebraska (4 year program.) Our Internet service is unlike every other public library except Lincoln and Omaha in that we have a fiber transport circuit to Network NE. I think this setup is great because we don't have to do the e-rate forms, filing, etc. It's great service too. I don't know what the cost savings, would be going a different route?</p> <p>We've been very happy with our current setup and our service, support etc. I would like to see Nebraska's E-Rate Special construction program continue after 2024 (June 30 2025) and for another four year contract. I can't think of any negatives unless we could do it cheaper and easier? It would be great to have an excel sheet with comparisons. As a fairly new library director it would be great to have more information. Thanks!</p>
Hemingford Public Library	<p>I have read through this document a couple times, I don't see any easy answers for the questions put forward. Our library does not participate in E-Rate as we have fiber optics and the carrier "Mobius Communications" allows us a generous discount. I know Mobius has worked hard to get fiber optics to their rural customers</p>

	<p>and the public school system. Since participation has been low I would advise continuing at least one more 4 year period and reevaluating.</p>
<p>Hildreth Public Library</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What opportunities can the PSC pursue to increase participation and cover costs incurred by schools, libraries, and Consortiums (“participating entities”) in installing fiber networks? Examples may be initial fiber builds to the library (cost or other challenges), ongoing maintenance of equipment and infrastructure, payment of the monthly recurring costs for service, cybersecurity support, and filters for CIPA compliance. We don't have fiber in our community (population 350). We would need technical support, funding and maintenance help. 2. What barriers do participating entities currently face in relation to participation in the E-rate program? Examples may be help with the E-rate forms/filing, filtering support, lack of or cost of tech support, knowledge or help with what are eligible reimbursements/costs (e.g. project planning). We don't participate in E-rate and prefer not to filter our computers. 3. Are there any partnerships or outreach opportunities which the PSC should pursue? Not that I can think of.
<p>Hruska Public Library</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What opportunities can the PSC pursue to increase participation and cover costs incurred by schools, libraries, and Consortiums (“participating entities”) in installing fiber networks? Examples may be initial fiber builds to the library (cost or other challenges), ongoing maintenance of equipment and infrastructure, payment of the monthly recurring costs for service, cybersecurity support, and filters for CIPA compliance. To increase participation, an on-site visit, if requested by library staff, from someone familiar with the program would be very helpful. Unique challenges are faced at each institution, and having someone available to give suggestions and guidance would go a long way toward encouraging participation. Questions regarding maintenance of equipment, monthly payments, cybersecurity, and filters could be answered directly. 2. What barriers do participating entities currently face in relation to participation in the E-rate program? Examples may be help with the E-rate forms/filing, filtering support, lack of or cost of tech support, knowledge or help with what are eligible reimbursements/costs (e.g. project planning). Barriers: 1.) Tech support to plan the project is the first barrier. Does staff have access to support and the ability to pay for that support prior to funding? Will this expense be reimbursed in a timely manner? 2.) Once the plan is determined, figuring out what is eligible for reimbursement, preparing the forms, submitting the forms at the appropriate time, providing filtering, and finding ongoing tech support are the next five barriers. All of these steps take time which is in very short supply in busy libraries that are already trying to provide a variety of opportunities and services to their communities. 3. Are there any partnerships or outreach opportunities which the PSC should pursue? Community college tech students could be a possible outreach opportunity for “on-site” training.
<p>Keene Memorial Library-Fremont</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What opportunities can the PSC pursue to increase participation and cover costs incurred by schools, libraries, and Consortiums (“participating entities”) in installing fiber networks? Examples may be initial fiber builds to the library (cost or other challenges), ongoing maintenance of equipment

	<p>and infrastructure, payment of the monthly recurring costs for service, cybersecurity support, and filters for CIPA compliance. It seems like we should be able to include monthly cost of service and any supporting software when applying for these funds.</p> <p>2. What barriers do participating entities currently face in relation to participation in the E-rate program? Examples may be help with the E-rate forms/filing, filtering support, lack of or cost of tech support, knowledge or help with what are eligible reimbursements/costs (e.g. project planning). Our library does not apply because we have extremely low monthly internet costs (\$100/month for two circuits as our vendor donates the circuit for the public) and the paperwork is more work than it's worth.</p> <p>3. Are there any partnerships or outreach opportunities which the PSC should pursue? Can't think of any. The proposed model for Certificated Carrier Requirements where you would require a credit on our account prior to paying the vendor would not be looked upon favorably by our accounting department. Credit memos are notoriously difficult to work with. We would prefer to award the contract, pay the carrier, and submit our invoice for reimbursement. Thank you for your time.</p>
Lied Randolph Public Library	<p>Our library went through the initial process of applying for special construction for fiber. When we received the bids we felt we could afford the special construction but not the additional cost of the monthly rates. We are eligible for a 70% discount but even with that our rates were going to triple. We would need additional help with our recurring costs to install fiber if we apply again.</p> <p>It would be beneficial for our library to have additional help with the E-rate forms and tech support to help us plan as well as maintain reliable internet and technology services. We have added a Makerspace to our library and we rely on our internet to provide these services and would find it beneficial to add fiber.</p> <p>Please feel free to contact me if you would like any more information. I am pleased the commission is looking into the possibility of providing more and better service to our state.</p>
Logan County Library	<p>I am letting you know that our Library is already being changed over to Fiber through Great Plains Communications. They are changing it for free, so I don't think we will need any help at this time.</p>
Madison Public Library	<p>The Madison Public Library participates in the E-Rate program because of the costs we have to. We have just went to fiber this past year only because the company providing it that said they could install it for free for us. The only problem is that the lines are not buried, but hanging overhead, and at times this does not work for the library. We also had to hire a company to help us with the support and continuing upkeep of the computers, because we are not very tech savvy. It takes a lot of time to find the filters to keep us in CIPA compliance and keep us secure for our patrons.</p> <p>Another barrier in participating in the E-rate program is the time and stress of doing all the paperwork and keeping up with all the timelines. I know that I alone depend on the people at the Library Commission to help me with these forms at time, and if they have to help everyone, how do they get anything else done. It would be nice to be able to have someone that would come to the library and help with the paperwork</p>

	<p>and at time explain what we are doing. I know that there are times I just do not understand, and just do what I did the year before, and I am sure it is not right at times. There has been times that I wonder if it is worth all the trouble to do the paperwork to have this program, because the stress really gets a person down.</p> <p>I do appreciate being able to participate in the E-rate program, without it I am not sure we would be able to have free internet available to our public. Thank you for your time and listening to my comments.</p>
Meltman Memorial Library	<p>What opportunities can the PSC pursue to increase participation and cover costs incurred by schools, libraries, and Consortiums (“participating entities”) in installing fiber networks? Examples may be initial fiber builds to the library (cost or other challenges), ongoing maintenance of equipment and infrastructure, payment of the monthly recurring costs for service, cybersecurity support, and filters for CIPA compliance.</p> <p>Getting fiber installation to the library and ongoing costs incurred due to fiber installation. Also, increasing awareness of what E-rate is and how the program works, as a fairly new library director, I still don’t really know about this program and how it works. Part of that is my fault, since I haven’t had time to dig into it, but part of it is not having materials that clearly explain it being pushed out. CIPA compliance is also an issue, so help with that would be nice.</p> <p>What barriers do participating entities currently face in relation to participation in the E-rate program? Examples may be help with the E-rate forms/filing, filtering support, lack of or cost of tech support, knowledge or help with what are eligible reimbursements/costs (e.g. project planning).</p> <p>Project planning would extremely beneficial as well as help in filling out the forms and what we can claim.</p> <p>Are there any partnerships or outreach opportunities which the PSC should pursue?</p> <p>Reimbursable Expenses: At present, expenses eligible for reimbursement in the program are limited to costs incurred for Special Construction. Special Construction does not include charges for network equipment.</p> <p><u>Category One:</u> The federally defined E-rate Category One includes costs for monthly charges, installation and activation charges, network equipment necessary to make a Category One wired or wireless broadband service functional, and maintenance and operation charges. Should the PSC consider expanding eligible expenses to include any of these categories?</p> <p>Yes, computers and networking equipment are extremely expensive, especially for small libraries. It takes a huge chunk of our budget to replace these things and takes away from other services we could be providing.</p> <p>What items or services are most needed by eligible entities in Nebraska? What additional eligible expenses might be reimbursable?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Computers b. Software, both office software and learning software/apps for kids c. Network equipment d. Tablets <p><u>Category Two:</u> The federally defined Category Two of E-rate includes internal connections needed for broadband connectivity within schools and libraries. This includes repair, upkeep, and maintenance of networks, software upgrades, and third-party support. The PSC seeks comment as to which, if any, of these services would most increase participation in the E-rate program. Should any of these services be</p>

	<p>eligible for reimbursement in Nebraska as well? If so, what considerations or limitations should the PSC consider in allowing these expenses to be reimbursable? Conversely, are there any expenses that should be specifically excluded from E-rate reimbursement?</p> <p>All of these are important. You can't run a library in today's world without broadband. If Nebraska wants libraries to provide that connectivity, then all costs should be considered. Maybe reimbursement could be on a sliding basis dependent on city or budget size. Maybe it could be a percentage. I don't know if I believe everything should be free, but a discount would be great.</p> <p>Nebraska's E-rate special construction program was originally planned to be available for a four-year period, for E-rate program years 2021 through 2024. The program is therefore set to end after E-rate program year 2024, which ends June 30, 2025. The PSC seeks comment on whether the program should be continued. Would it be appropriate to extend the project for another four years? Alternatively, should the program be set to automatically continue on an annual basis?</p> <p>The program should absolutely be extended. Any help that can be given to libraries is appreciated. Our budgets are stretched thin as it is since we have limited income.</p>
Morrill Public Library	<p>What opportunities can the PSC pursue to increase participation and cover costs incurred by schools, libraries, and Consortiums ("participating entities") in installing fiber networks? Examples may be initial fiber builds to the library (cost or other challenges), ongoing maintenance of equipment and infrastructure, payment of the monthly recurring costs for service, cybersecurity support, and filters for CIPA compliance?</p> <p><i>Honestly I'm not sure we still have DSL witch does have its limitations.</i></p> <p>What barriers do participating entities currently face in relation to participation in the E-rate program? Examples may be help with the E-rate forms/filing, filtering support, lack of or cost of tech support, knowledge or help with what are eligible reimbursements/costs (e.g. project planning)?</p> <p><i>We actually don't use the E-rate program we get our internet and Wi-Fi for free from charter. But there are many limitations to having DSL many times it stops working for unknown reasons, or its slower when the wind blows, sometimes it takes a while to load a page. And I have addressed all these things with charter and their solution is to restart the router which doesn't do much.</i></p>
Nancy Fawcett Memorial Library	<p>I am responding to your request regarding if we need assistance to improve our internet connection. We actually already installed fiber optic network in our library and are very pleased with the enhanced upgrade. If there is any more input I can provide, please feel free to contact me.</p>
Ogallala Public Library	<p>As Library Director in Ogallala, Nebraska we greatly appreciate having fiber to our public library. We have a new construction building that took many years, Fundraising dollars and Grants to complete but fiber connectivity has been a serious strength as we focus on our business and grow it to fit the needs of our community and patrons. In looking to the future of the State of Nebraska, it is imperative that all public libraries have the basic need of fiber connectivity to handle the requests and needs of their patrons in this Great State.</p> <p>Thank you for making this Order a priority and allowing the future of Nebraska's Public Libraries to be a safe and technologically sound place for all our growing needs.</p>
Ord Township Library	<p>1. What opportunities can the PSC pursue?</p> <p>Fiber is in our neighborhood. In 2022 we had 1 bid not accepted (from Great Plains) via Network Nebraska because they did not file correctly. The second bid from Hamilton would have still been out of pocket over \$10,900 (after discounts) to get fiber to our building. And reoccurring monthly costs were too extensive for us</p>

	<p>to consider. To us, the cost was prohibitive knowing that our current infrastructure is aged and needed to be addressed.</p> <p>For Fiber run to our Library, we would need help with:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the initial connection to the Library; 2. updated infrastructure and maintenance; 3. monthly reoccurring costs <p>2. Barriers? The timeline for planning what is necessary for E-RATE Category 2 is extremely prohibitive based on rural Nebraska's ability to find someone to bid the process and then follow through when the window is "open" is not feasible. The process is confusing and is full of bureaucratic red tape. No one seems to understand that these forms are not written in layman's terms. Only looking at the forms 3-4 times a year is an intimidating process and is exactly why so many library's choose to not deal with the headache. As a side note, the Library Commission will bend over backwards to help when needed. Their commitment to the program is wonderful but they do not have the staff power to hold every library in the state's hand to fill out every form.</p> <p>3. Partnerships? The Nebraska Library Commission. Maybe a board of librarians to speak for ourselves? I don't know the answer to this. I wouldn't recommend more mud in the water. Simplify the process.</p>
Palmyra Memorial Library	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What opportunities can the PSC pursue to increase participation and cover costs incurred by schools, libraries, and Consortiums (“participating entities”) in installing fiber networks? For small Rural areas cost is a big issue . If they worked with the local counties and provided a discount or a fixed rate that may help . 2. What barriers do participating entities currently face in relation to participation in the E-rate program? Right now , it is more affordable for us to get our wifi and internet connections through the village. We are only paying \$5 a month. Which is really good for how well the wifi works in the Library. 3. Are there any partnerships or outreach opportunities which the PSC should pursue? If you are interested in working with Allo or even Google Fiber those may be partnerships worth looking into.
Ppotter Public Library	<p>The only concern our small library has with our current internet and computer services is in regard to tech support. Having someone to provide specific computer tech support and guidance in the panhandle without high cost to small libraries would be very beneficial. Perhaps the Nebraska Library Commission is already working on this.</p>
Ravenna Public Library	<p>What opportunities can the PSC pursue to increase participation and cover costs incurred by schools, libraries, and Consortiums (“participating entities”) in installing fiber networks? My library receives free wifi from a local business, however if we would ever switch to fiber we would need assistance in paying for monthly bill for use. Because we are a very small town library we do not have tech support. I make due with what I can do and learn from you tube videos. Training</p>

	<p>for tech services would be great. Also, needed is cybersecurity support and help with filters for CIPA compliance.</p> <p>2. What barriers do participating entities currently face in relation to participation in the E-rate program? Our library utilized E-rate funding when we built our new facility 5 years ago. However, because we receive free internet services from our local provider we do not participate in E-rate. I have never filled out the paperwork since taking over as director 4 years ago. I feel very intimidated by the paperwork and tech knowledge required to fill out e-rate forms.</p> <p>3. Are there any partnerships or outreach opportunities which the PSC should pursue? I feel that tech support is the number one thing that small libraries could utilize. We don't have a budget to call tech support and the best way we can serve our communities is if we know more about our systems and how servers work.</p>
<p>Rising City Library</p>	<p>Currently, very few public libraries are even using E-Rate in Nebraska. Fortunately, our small community library went through the grueling/heavy lifting process several years ago and qualified, but it's very tedious to complete this each year, and we only have a library director for 15 hours each week.</p> <p>We are currently subsidized at 70% of our monthly cost, so we end up paying about \$30/month for basic DSL. It's through Vyve, and it's supposed to be 100/10 but we know full well we're not getting the 100 MBS.</p> <p>The challenges we have are that it's almost impossible financially to consider a higher speed DSL plan to have faster internet at our small library. We barely cover payroll costs. We'd love to have fiber brought into our local library to open up new opportunities for the library, and surrounding areas, but we would need additional funding and project implementation help from the PSC, State of Nebraska and the NE Library Commission. Currently, I feel that support is very weak or non-existent.</p> <p>The ongoing costs after fiber is brought to the building can be expensive and unrealistic for most local libraries, and we see a real need for additional subsidization for local libraries to stay afloat. The technical support and firewall/network connectivity would be a huge help to small libraries who can't afford to hire their own IT experts. We'd like to see our library director spending their time on public-facing programs for the community and not have to worry about if the internet is down. We'd also like to be a part of the state-wide consortium that helps local libraries through the procurement process for E-Rate funding each year.</p> <p>We are very interested in bringing fiber optic to the Rising City Community Library and to Butler County down Highway 92; however, we'd need or like to work with the State of Nebraska and the federal government on project planning and having a vision for the future. IE: E-Rate Special Construction Funding Project</p> <p>The partnerships that the PSC should be looking at strongly are partnering with public power districts to carry the fiber to communities and rural areas to meet the needs of underserved communities/townships/rural areas. I don't see that happening and it needs to be a huge focus. What is the PSC doing about this?</p>

Rock County
Library

What opportunities can the PSC pursue to increase participation and cover costs incurred by schools, libraries, and Consortiums (“participating entities”) in installing fiber networks? Examples may be initial fiber builds to the library (cost or other challenges), ongoing maintenance of equipment and infrastructure, payment of the monthly recurring costs for service, cybersecurity support, and filters for CIPA compliance.

A huge help would be from the initial fiber costs in order to get fiber to libraries. I could see another benefit coming from help with getting CIPA filters installed on computers to help libraries stay compliant. Maybe a yearly check in on equipment after initial set up is done for the next 3-5 years to make sure everything is working as it should would be helpful as well.

2. What barriers do participating entities currently face in relation to participation in the E-rate program? Examples may be help with the E-rate forms/filing, filtering support, lack of or cost of tech support, knowledge or help with what are eligible reimbursements/costs (e.g. project planning).

I feel like some libraries are not aware of the benefit that can come from E-Rate, especially if their library has never done it before. Lack of tech support in small libraries can also cause a few problems because many small town librarians are working on these forms themselves and may not be knowledgeable in that area.

3. Are there any partnerships or outreach opportunities which the PSC should pursue?

I am not aware of any.

Here is more detailed information:

Reimbursable Expenses: At present, expenses eligible for reimbursement in the program are limited to costs incurred for Special Construction. Special Construction does not include charges for network equipment.

4. Category One: The federally defined E-rate Category One includes costs for monthly charges, installation and activation charges, network equipment necessary to make a Category One wired or wireless broadband service functional, and maintenance and operation charges. Should the PSC consider expanding eligible expenses to include any of these categories?

Personally, having the two categories can get a little confusing at times. I don't know if there is a better way to separate the two or if it would be easier to combine them? Or maybe even add more categories to make it be clearer.

5. What items or services are most needed by eligible entities in Nebraska? What additional eligible expenses might be reimbursable?

I have always wondered if there would be a place to help pay for telephone lines as well as the monthly internet charges. This would be very beneficial in my library.

6. Category Two: The federally defined Category Two of E-rate includes internal connections needed for broadband connectivity within schools and libraries. This includes repair, upkeep, and maintenance of networks, software upgrades, and third-party support. **The PSC seeks comment as to which, if any, of these services would most increase participation in the E-rate program.** Should any of these services be eligible for reimbursement in Nebraska as well? If so, what considerations or limitations should the PSC consider in allowing these expenses to be reimbursable? Conversely, are there any expenses that should be specifically excluded from E-rate reimbursement?

	<p>Help with maintenance and upgrades would be beneficial. This might be harder to reimburse though as maintenance is needed at various times throughout the year. A claim system where libraries could send in claims as they are needed would be helpful to allow libraries to get the help they need as they need it.</p> <p>7. Nebraska's E-rate special construction program was originally planned to be available for a four-year period, for E-rate program years 2021 through 2024. The program is therefore set to end after E-rate program year 2024, which ends June 30, 2025. The PSC seeks comment on whether the program should be continued. Would it be appropriate to extend the project for another four years? Alternatively, should the program be set to automatically continue on an annual basis?</p> <p>I would like to see this program automatically continue on an annual basis. There might need to be even more trainings/ workshops to get more libraries to participate. Potentially hosting a session at the Nebraska Library Association conference might be a good place to add these or hosting an informational booth there.</p>
Seward Memorial Library	<p>My library had participated in the e-rate program for many years until recently, when a change in our internet provider was made due to a faster connection at a reasonable price, even without them participating in the e-rate program as a provider. I believe there are many providers who choose not to participate in this program. If there is anything the PSC can do to entice more participation from the provider's side, I think there would be more libraries who would choose to participate.</p> <p>The e-rate program should renew automatically every year and it should not be up for debate. Those libraries who need this discount should not be forgotten or left in limbo. AND, if we change providers in the future we would absolutely participate again.</p> <p>I'm not sure you can do anything about the costs of phone service for libraries, but when that was dropped from the federal program it was a real blow to our budget.</p> <p>The MAJOR need that I hear about from many libraries is a PERSON (or many people) who are able to come on site to assist with technology issues. Small communities don't have people they can turn to for help in many situations, and while technology is getting easier to use it also changes so fast it is hard to keep up with what is needed, what should be planned for, how to fix glitches, etc. Who can we call??? That is a MAJOR issue across the state!</p>
Shelby Community Library	<p>I need help with lack of or cost of tech support, knowledge and to shut off Smart Shield to get our up date's on our computers. Then to turn on our Smart Shields after the up dates are done. I don't have the training to do this or know how then the computer don't work. I have Fiber that is GREAT!</p>
Shelton Public Library	<p>1. Participation in the E-Rate Program: Shelton Public Library is a participating entity in the E-rate Program. I spoke with the client relationship manager, at Hamilton's (service provider) and was informed that Shelton Public Library would not incur any cost for the construction of fiber networks as we are an existing customer. Hamilton's is planning for the construction and has not provided additional information, currently, pertaining to the potential cost of the construction or the increase in service rates. Shelton Public Library is a small library with a limited budget. We seek financial aid, so that we may provide up-to-date equipment, reliable service, and materials to better serve our community. I am not aware of any opportunities, that the Commission may seek, partnerships or outreach, to increase participation in the E-rate Program.</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Reimbursable Expenses: Shelton Public Library, owned by the Village of Shelton, does not have the funds available to accommodate the construction of a fiber network or the means to transition from Copper DSL, without the E-rate Program. Expenses eligible for reimbursement within Nebraska’s E-rate program should be expanded. 3. Continuation of Nebraska Program: The library was actively participating in the E-rate Program, before I became Director and the library was accredited. This program is necessary for all libraries that operate as a primary resource of information and services for the communities they serve. It is necessary to have a higher download/upload speed for multiple users. 4. Certified Carrier Requirements: I agree with the proposed Certificated Carrier requirements to place the amount for state support as a credit to the library and a copy of invoice before releasing state support. I agree that any credit balance should be issued in refund or credit for future service. 5. Additional Topics: I believe it would be difficult for a small library to execute a Technology Plan without state support. Shelton Public Library could not afford the service for internet connection or construction, in addition to the essential software, system subscriptions and compatible equipment.
Sioux County Public Library	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What opportunities can the PSC pursue to increase participation and cover costs incurred by schools, libraries, and Consortiums (“participating entities”) in installing fiber networks? Examples may be initial fiber builds to the library (cost or other challenges), ongoing maintenance of equipment and infrastructure, payment of the monthly recurring costs for service, cybersecurity support, and filters for CIPA compliance. I would think any of those listed above would be helpful. 2. What barriers do participating entities currently face in relation to participation in the E-rate program? Examples may be help with the E-rate forms/filing, filtering support, lack of or cost of tech support, knowledge or help with what are eligible reimbursements/costs (e.g. project planning). I find the whole thing overwhelming to be honest. I am not internet savvy when it comes to knowing the internet and fiber networks and knowing the lingo. When I get into the forms and trying to fill them out, I have no idea what I'm doing and what I'm answering for or to. Perhaps if I understood the whole fiber network jargon better I would be more comfortable. I fear that I'm not filling the forms out correctly, or that I'll ask for something that we don't even need, or not enough, etc. I've watched the videos, I've participated in the webinars live and recorded and I'm still just full of questions and indecisions. I guess I need someone to hold my hand and fill it out one-on-one with me! 3. Are there any partnerships or outreach opportunities which the PSC should pursue? Not Sure
South Sioux City Public Library	<p>The application process for erate is extremely convoluted. When I began this library was not signed up correctly for this service and it took a full month to get the organization signed up properly. There are so many rules and procedures to keep up with that is was virtually impossible to keep up with the order of operations. I could have used a streamlined process or some sort of check system to know I followed all the necessary steps properly and in a timely fashion.</p>
Springfield Memorial Library	<p>As a small town library, we have not switched to fiber yet as we are on a fixed budget and cannot afford the monthly payments involved with fiber. To pursue this, we would need assistance covering the initial set up fees, in addition to the monthly payments and any ongoing maintenance involved. We also currently use a free filtering system to be CIPA compliant so that is another cost that may have to be taken into consideration if we were to switch to fiber.</p>

	<p>The E-rate program is a great assistance to our library. It can be tricky to understand what exactly needs to be done for each form so I think additional assistance for some libraries in filing forms would be beneficial - especially for those very small libraries who are filing the forms themselves rather than having a tech support person on staff to assist them. It is possible there are small libraries who do not file for E-rate due to this reason. Thank you again for seeking our input. I hope it all goes well!</p>
<p>Syracuse Public Library</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What opportunities can the PSC pursue to increase participation and cover costs incurred by schools, libraries, and Consortiums (“participating entities”) in installing fiber networks -ongoing maintenance of equipment and infrastructure, payment of the monthly recurring costs for service, cybersecurity support, and filters for CIPA compliance. 2. What barriers do participating entities currently face in relation to participation in the E-rate program? <i>Help with the E-rate forms/filing, filtering support, lack of or cost of tech support, knowledge or help with what are eligible reimbursements/costs</i> 3. Are there any partnerships or outreach opportunities that the PSC should pursue? <i>Public Libraries</i>
<p>Taylor Public Library</p>	<p>We are a very small community of 140 people with an annual library budget of \$13,500. This pays staff, utilities, maintenance and book purchases. Our current phone/internet provider cost is less than \$100 per month. Their tech support is very helpful whenever I call. We have 2 computers in our facility for staff/patrons use. We are happy with our current company and will not be inclined to make any change in our provider.</p>
<p>Tecumseh Public Library</p>	<p>In response to your Order, what is prohibitive for our library is the cost of the installation of fiber that isn’t covered by the special construction funding, and assistance with the E-rate process. The E-rate forms and process are lengthy and complicated, and it is easy to make a mistake and not qualify for the program. I do not understand why the process has been made so complicated. Tax payers pay into this fund, the money should be returned to the organizations without so much paper work. The library didn’t qualify several years ago after going through the process. The board decided it wasn’t worth it, considering the amount of money given to the library. It would be helpful to have an “expert” do the filing on our behalf.</p>
<p>Valentine Public Library</p>	<p>We have filed for E-Rate assistance for many years and have been grateful for the ongoing assistance. However, our connectivity has not come without some good luck and trial and error. We say this because we do not have IT and networking assistance personnel, so we are learning as we go. As library staff, we have become the tech support, although most installation, wiring, and networking are left to experts. It is when those experts leave the community, we are the ones that keep up the support of the system. However, we have felt that access to fast speeds and up-to-date technology is vital for our rural area. In recent years, the Broadband expansion efforts nationally have made access more accessible and more affordable for many rural areas. Hence, the library is no longer the only place for fast speeds and internet access. However, the library is still a hub for activity and internet access. As needs change and equipment ages, keeping all connectivity aspects up to date and in good working order is essential. Financial assistance for entities purchasing technology equipment and installing and maintaining said equipment and devices are vital to small entities with limited budgets.</p> <p>Thank you for taking the time to consider and review the enclosed comments.</p>

<p>Verdigre Public Library</p>	<p>1. Participation in E-Rate Program: Verdigre Public Library has applied for E-Rate funding since 2000, and I personally have done the application process since 2015. It is hard for solo-librarians to accomplish the task--not that it takes a lot of time, but because technology jargon takes awhile to learn and the government application portal (EPC) is confusing. Even though I "go from" my previous year's application I still make mistakes (e.g. this year I filed two 471s because I got an urgent email notification that something wasn't finished...). However I've learned to just answer EPC emails whether I fully understand what they are asking and every year my application gets sorted out. An opportunity would be to communicate with local governments and library boards so those folks GET IT how awesome it is for a library to get 80% of our internet paid for. This library would not have the budget for 100x100 Mbps internet otherwise! Another opportunity would be to utilize the library systems and NE Library Commission further. One person in NLC is an expert at E-Rate and does what she can to educate librarians, but it is just one of her many job descriptions. There needs to be a traveling person who will visit rural libraries and help specifically with the EPC. The timeline is also long and confusing. All these years of doing it, and I still don't have a routine of which month I should get which form filed. I've mentioned some of the barriers to public library participation. My own example is I am a library director who works twenty hours a week for a so-so wage, and I am responsible for everything that happens here alongside collections management and customer service (ex. marketing, custodial, programming for all ages, technology, grant-writing and so on). I'm an "expert" at E-Rate compared to many of my fellow librarians, but every year it feels like luck if I get it right.</p> <p>2. Reimbursable Expenses: Once again, I am confused. Is the Nebraska Public Service Commission considering adding to what we libraries get federally from E-Rate?? If yes, that would be amazing. I have used E-Rate for category one (every year), category two (once, but need to again--by the way I need help with planning out the internal upgrades I should ask for) and special construction (this library caused the first fiber optic to be laid in Verdigre!) I would say EVERY eligible reimbursement would be helpful. Bring back telephone subsidies, too. Another percentage coming from the state would be welcome! As it is, we've had trouble getting wages increased a meaningful amount above minimum wage because of budget constraints. (Can the Public Service Commission help with utilities for public libraries?) Internet and category two upgrades are measurable for me and therefore fairly straightforward to apply for. However, I wish I could get help with cybersecurity and IT, generally, but I don't have tangible options that I know of. I don't even know how to access those services let alone apply for them in E-Rate. Also, answering these questions makes me wonder if the software I use for filtering (CIPA compliance) and virus protection are reimbursable now? That, too, would help our budget.</p> <p>3. Continuation of NE program: We were lucky enough to get a grant through you (or NUSF, is that the same thing?) to help with our fiber build-out of 2021, so yes, I think you should extend the grant period to let more libraries have time to wade through the process. If you continued grants on an annual basis, I would put in applications for anything we were eligible for. As our Village is beset with needed infrastructure upgrades, I will do anything I can to help the library be self-sustaining.</p> <p>4. Certified Carrier Requirements: I like the current system of our ISP being paid by USAC and the grant showing as credits on our internet/phone bill. Otherwise it might count as income for the library which can be confusing. Plus our Village Clerk serves as the library's treasurer and any other system would add to her too-long list of tasks.</p>
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	<p>5. Additional Topics -- I'm a huge fan of E-Rate.</p>
<p>Wahoo Public Library</p>	<p>Our library currently has Spectrum high speed internet that we pay \$125 per month. We have had no connection issues or speed problems. We have budgeted every year for internet/phone as part of our utility line item. It has never come into question to reduce this amount. We recently switched our phone service from Spectrum to a VOIP option that is coordinated with our City offices.</p> <p>I have never applied for the E-rate discount for a number of reasons but the main one is it is way too complicated & involved especially for smaller libraries with limited staff & time to devote to this complicated process. The one year (2019) that I tried to apply I kept getting booted off the USAC website as I didn't have a password. I called direct was told we had an account (which I had no record) & that they would send me a link to reapply. Never got the link, then 2020 came & well you know the rest.</p> <p>As long as we have budgeted funds from our City to cover our reasonable priced service, I see no reason to change.</p> <p>We would love to offer fiber & I just watched Great Plains Communication run the line in front of my building last week but was told they only plan to offer to residences not business. Spectrum is way too expensive & even figuring an e-rate discount we would not be able to upgrade. Our Speedtest results show that our connectivity is excellent & we have had no complaints about speed or problems. We offer Wi-Fi also with no issues for that service either. Perhaps we are just in a sweet connectivity spot but I know there are many areas in our state where connectivity is a problem. I am assuming the funding for this program is coming from federal tax dollars of which we all contribute, so hopefully a good solution will be forthcoming.</p> <p>The best solution for helping the libraries in the State of Nebraska is for the PSC to negotiate a fair discount for the services & offer it to all who wish to sign up, just like the ESU's do for the public schools. Don't make the process so complicated & it should be fair for all libraries no matter the size.</p> <p>The Nebraska Library Commission will be a good partner to work with they obviously love helping libraries & they are the E-rate gurus!</p>
<p>Walt Hill Public Library</p>	<p>Yes, we would love to have fiber at the library, but in the past I have not had good experiences with the e-rate program.</p> <p>The e-rate system in my opinion is outdated. For all the work that we do for the 470, 471 etc. we do not qualify for funding for phones. It is too nerve racking for me, so I chose to opt out the last few years. It is hard to report, and I am running a library basically by myself. I have reports that need to be done to continue to be certified and accredited, besides ordering new books, cataloging and providing programming</p> <p>I apologize if I sound negative, but running the library should be about the patrons, and in our case especially the youth. I just don't have the time or the energy to do both.</p>
<p>Waverly Library</p>	<p>1. What opportunities can the PSC pursue to increase participation and cover costs incurred by schools, libraries, and Consortiums ("participating entities") in installing fiber networks? Examples may be initial fiber builds to the library (cost or other challenges), ongoing maintenance of equipment and infrastructure, payment of the</p>

	<p>monthly recurring costs for service, cybersecurity support, and filters for CIPA compliance.</p> <p>Ongoing costs of the installation and upkeep. We do not have the resources to initiate any upgrades to our current system.</p> <p>2. What barriers do participating entities currently face in relation to participation in the E-rate program? Examples may be help with the E-rate forms/filing, filtering support, lack of or cost of tech support, knowledge or help with what are eligible reimbursements/costs (e.g. project planning).</p> <p>What do you have to do to be eligible for the program? We are not an accredited library. We are funded by donations so we are extremely limited in what we can afford to provide our patrons.</p> <p>3. Are there any partnerships or outreach opportunities which the PSC should pursue? Since we are not an accredited library this limits us to a lot of programs and grants.</p>
West Point Library	<p>(1) The John A Stahl Library has had fiber for several years. I feel it has been a good asset to our community that we have been able to offer high speed Internet service. Category 2 eRate funding has provided us with up to date equipment such as firewalls and connectivity devices. This funding has allowed the Library to keep step with technology. We would not have been able to have such a technology system without this funding.</p> <p>(2) I think that the NE Library Commission provides good training on how to fill out the eRate forms. I have been requesting eRate for our Library since the beginning of this program and think that the forms have become more user friendly as time passes.</p> <p>(3) Our Library took advantage of the Emergency Connectivity Grant that provided funds for laptops, mobile devices, mobile hotspots and money for monthly service for the hotspots. The funding for the monthly fees will end in December of 2023. My suggestion is that PSC should consider funding the mobile hotspots. Our hotspots circulate well but it would certainly help our budget if we had help in continuing this service to the public.</p>