

Texas  
Rural  
Funders

# Boosting Broadband with E-Rate

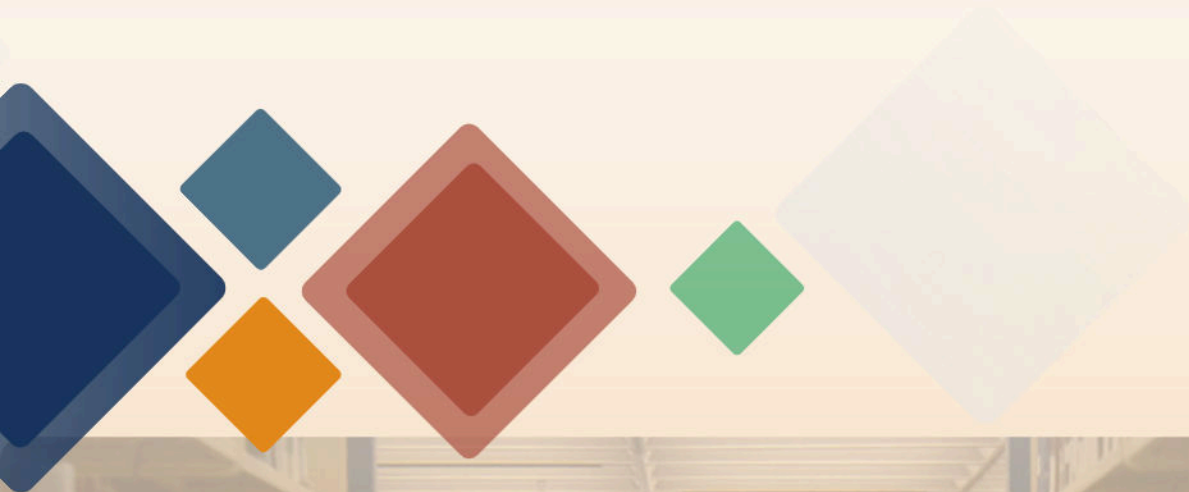
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# Executive Summary

For more than 25 years, schools and libraries across the country have had access to E-rate, a technology tool, first used to provide phone support, then data, and now to boost access to broadband internet. E-Rate is a federal program that is administered by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) which provides funding support for 20%-90% of costs for broadband hardware, connectivity inside buildings, and support services. Schools, libraries, education service centers, and other organizations can access a deep pool of non-competitive funds to connect people with the resources of the internet.

As rural communities seek creative ways to pay for broadband and increase connection speeds, E-Rate is a discount program worth understanding better. In this document, Texas Rural Funders shares information sourced from government websites and a variety of experts – including internet service providers, state agency representatives, and foundation partners – who have seen E-Rate used successfully across Texas.

We explore the ways E-Rate stretches capital investments, renews outdated networks, and increases accessibility for communities and entire regions of Texas. There are a variety of ways to use this document, depending on where you are in your E-Rate journey:

- **New to E-rate?** Learn how to access these federal funds
- **Do you find the E-Rate grant process too complicated?** Find out how to identify partnerships to develop a successful application.
- **Have you successfully secured E-Rate funding?** Read inspirational stories from Texas communities taking creative and inclusive approaches to increasing broadband access.





# E-Rate 101

The need to connect students, teachers, and consumers to jobs and information has led to a steady rise in demand for MORE broadband bandwidth in schools and libraries. Innovative digital learning technologies, from Zoom and Skype to Minecraft and Roblox, have accelerated that need over the last few years. Created in the 1996 Telecommunications Act, E-Rate is the Federal Communication Commission's discount program for libraries and schools.

E-Rate focuses on the largest and most urgent need - bridging the gap for broadband access - by making it affordable. E-rate funding supports from 20% to 90% of a project's cost, so schools and libraries can afford to shift from legacy technologies like copper phone lines to more modern methods, primarily fiber internet, at much higher speeds.

## *What Difference does E-Rate Make?*

The smallest accredited library in Texas, Marathon Public Library, serves 365 residents in this West Texas town. Library director Dara Cavness shared that the monthly bill for the phone, plus internet for nine computers, fifteen iPads, and more than twenty additional electronics is \$76. Without E-Rate, the internet bill was more than \$300 each month.



## *How does E-Rate Work?*

Eligible schools, independent school districts, private schools, charter schools, and libraries may apply individually or as a consortium. After defining needs in an application, applicants select the partners they want to work with for a one-year term or multi-year contract.

Funding may be requested under two categories of service:

**Category 1:** supports delivery of broadband to a school or library building

**Category 2:** funds hardware and services that support broadband access within schools and libraries, including: maintenance, managed services, and equipment such as routers and modems

Discounts apply to the costs of eligible services, and are based on local percentages of people in poverty. [Rural entities](#) which are defined as communities with fewer than 25,000 people have access to a slightly higher discount.

<https://www.fcc.gov/general/E-rate-schools-libraries-usf-program>



## What benefit does E-Rate provide?

"The E-Rate discount you get depends on the characteristics of your community. In Alpine, we get an 80% discount. That enables us to get a lot of services without committing a lot of bucks. There is no cash flow issue because we sign a contract with the provider and they bill the government directly."

- Don Wetterauer, Director of Alpine Public Library

# 80%



## Category 1 & Category 2 Expenses

### Category 1

Delivery of broadband to a school or library building

#### Eligible Services or Expenses:

Data Transmission Services and/or Internet Access

#### What It Funds:

- Monthly charges, special construction, installation, and activation charges, maintenance and operations charges
- Leased Lit Fiber
- Leased Dark Fiber
- Self-Provisioned Broadband Networks
- Internet service, whether accessed via telephone, satellite, cable modem, DSL, or fixed line
- T-1 or T-3 lines
- Network equipment
- Special construction funding for the deployment of new or upgraded facilities, including design and engineering, construction, and project management
- Connections between buildings of a single school on different campuses

### Category 2

Hardware and services that support broadband access within schools and libraries

#### Eligible Services or Expenses:

Internal Connections, Managed Internal Broadband Services, and Basic Maintenance of Internal Connections.

There is a NEW FCC pilot to support cybersecurity initiatives

#### What It Funds:

- Antennas, Cabling, Firewall service, Racks, Routers, Switches
- Uninterruptible Power Supply / Battery backup
- Wireless access points
- Software supporting the components on this list
- Cloud functionality for connectivity
- Manufacturer's warranty for up to 3 years
- Managed support of wi-fi and networks
- Managed services for leasing networks
- Repair and upkeep of hardware,
- Connections between buildings of multiple schools on a single campus
- Cybersecurity design, implementation, and support

## Examples of Ineligible Expenses

- Staff salaries and labor costs for the applicant
- Network management to include 24-hour monitoring
  - On-site ongoing technical support from contractors
- Applications, content, email, end-user devices like computers, laptops, tablets



# E-Rate Inspirations

## *Panhandle Connected: Public-private partnership in Region 16 ESC*

In the Texas Panhandle, schools, businesses, and families struggle with costly, unreliable internet connectivity. The residents of Amarillo and the surrounding region experience high poverty rates, with more than 80% of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. Access to reliable, high-speed internet is out of reach for most families, with local prices among the highest in the country, averaging more than \$90 for a 200 MB connection.

A group of organizations built a coalition called Panhandle Connected to address broadband needs. The coalition included: school districts, Region 16 Education Service Center (ESC), the City of Amarillo, Amarillo Area Foundation, Connected Nation Texas, local businesses, and nonprofit partners. This plan, which has a \$90 million price tag for fiber optic infrastructure, connects the schools in Amarillo and 63 nearby communities. The vast majority of the cost (80%) is covered through the E-Rate program. The partners in the region are fundraising for the remaining project budget of \$20 million, with only \$7 million left to raise.

The Panhandle Connected project uses the Region 16 ESC as the backbone organization that coordinates and connects school districts and other partners across the region. Since 1967, Region 16 has served 80,000 students and 11,000 staff members in 61 districts and 3 charter schools over 26,000 square miles. It is one of twenty education service centers across Texas, which assist school districts in improving student performance, implementing legislative or TEA initiatives, and supporting school districts to operate more efficiently and economically.



Region 16 will serve as the conduit to access the internet backbone headed to Dallas, and will build a middle-mile network across the region. Private internet service providers will use this infrastructure to sell the last-mile service to schools, businesses, and homes across the region.

With the original design and construction underwritten by E-Rate, the Panhandle Connected project enables hundreds of thousands of users (who would not have had access otherwise) to receive broadband internet with reliability and resiliency, all at a reasonable price.

*"When we all partner together, we're all successful,"* shares Michael Keough, Chief Technology Officer for Region 16. Schools across the region experienced common technical challenges, and addressing those challenges was the driver for this collaborative design. The Panhandle Connected approach builds on Keough's previous successes in improving internet availability, speed, and reliability in smaller districts in Dumas and Canyon. Once he took the role at Region 16 ESC, the strong legacy of partnership across the region's districts enabled them to undertake a more ambitious, inclusive, and cost effective strategy.





While the Panhandle Connected project is grounded in schools, benefits will extend to communities, businesses, and residents to improve overall quality of life. The Amarillo Area Foundation is behind the project, specifically by supporting communities to build last mile networks. As an early partner and key convener for the project, their vision for the project, not only highlights why connectivity is important but also defines the widespread regional impact.

*"We understand that everything works together as an ecosystem. We need to attract, train, and maintain local talent, but we can't do this unless there are strong business development and educational opportunities. Furthermore, business development and education opportunities can't exist without modern means of connectivity, which is why we need to work together for the benefit of all."*

Michael Keough explained how the project scope broadened from engaging multiple school districts in a technical solution through the Education Service Center to investing in a project that would improve the economy of the entire region.

**"** The communities of the Panhandle have a lot of benefits; land is cheap and taxes are low. Businesses from around the country look at the opportunity of where to put in a new location. If the community doesn't have connectivity, they have to go somewhere else. When businesses locate here, they bring in jobs, families, and a boost to the local economy, and that impacts the school district. Once you have connectivity, you start getting businesses, you support the schools, and it's a self-fulfilling cycle.

- Michael Keough, Chief Technology Officer for Region 16

**"**



The Panhandle Connected collaborative includes the local agriculture innovation hub. The absence of reliable broadband infrastructure in rural regions hampers the adoption of transformative technologies like precision farming, Internet of Things applications, and data analytics, all of which rely on real-time data. As a result, regional agricultural producers face obstacles in optimizing crop yields, conserving resources, and reducing operational costs. With a stable high-speed internet connection, numerous smart agriculture technologies are unlocked, transforming everything from livestock tracking and irrigation and fertilizer application practices to production animation.

While school districts and Region16 ESC are at the center of this collective effort to connect the region, the benefits go well beyond education. Agricultural partners will benefit from increased productivity and healthcare providers will gain access to more telehealth options. Meanwhile, economic development initiatives and local government will benefit from more tech-enabled communities. Amarillo and surrounding communities are leveraging E-Rate in so many ways to get more done together.





## The Deep East Texas Digital Connector Library Cohort

Increasing broadband access presents a set of technical infrastructure challenges, but limited internet knowledge, skills, and confidence are another big issue in communities. The Deep East Texas Digital Connector Library cohort convened the staff and boards of seven rural East Texas libraries for a two-year program of work, facilitated by Rural LISC and supported by the T. L. L. Temple Foundation. This program engaged libraries in providing digital opportunity in rural communities where availability and uptake of affordable, reliable broadband internet is limited.

Each library in the Digital Connector cohort conducted a needs assessment, developed a strategic plan, and most importantly, built a regional network focused on the role of libraries as community anchors that are essential to improving rural quality of life.

**"By training and supporting current library staff, this initiative build[s] the capacity of libraries to serve as local hubs for addressing the barriers community members face,"** said Wynn Rosser, Ph.D., President and CEO of the T. L. L. Temple Foundation.

Each library received flexible funding to address the unique facility needs of their location and patron community. One library used the Rural LISC investment to support telehealth; they built a wired, private "shush" booth for telehealth and other personal appointments and created resource guides to support users in confidently using the new space and its digital resources.

The team from Buna learned a range of great lessons from their library peers across the region, including how to: implement a circulation system, introduce E-books to patrons, boost the wireless internet capacity to improve service for library users. They also enhanced community programming to engage more local residents. Foot traffic at the Buna library has increased ten-fold as a result.

The T. L. L. Temple Memorial Library in Diboll has leveraged its participation in the peer group to deepen its existing E-Rate relationship with Diboll Independent School District (DISD), resulting in upgrades for both the district and library. A wireless signal reaches the library from DISD, giving the library access to the school's E-rate subsidized bandwidth at no cost.

As a partner to serving families during out-of-school hours, the library has a natural connection with the schools. In exchange for free internet access, the library partners with DISD to provide every student and faculty member with a "Lumberjack Card," giving them online access to both E-book and research databases without having to physically go to the library. Another example of the strong, new partnership is an in-town interlibrary loan system between the school and library that has improved the customer service experience for Diboll families. As Diboll library director Justin Barkley shared,



The main barriers to library access in a rural community like ours are time and transportation. This relationship with DISD has allowed us to provide more equitable service for patrons with long work hours or unreliable transportation, and has become a cornerstone piece of a community wide initiative to support families and improve learning outcomes for all students.

- Justin Barkley, Diboll Library Director





At a moment of unprecedented public support to expand broadband access in the U.S., Diboll is a powerful proof point for rural communities. A subsidized internet connection was the foundation for a deeper partnership, which expanded amenities and reinforced a culture of abundance in one of East Texas's few population centers.

The Digital Connector Cohort has benefitted from and enhanced the trust that rural libraries and library staff have developed to support patrons with navigating new technologies and online services, the Digital Connector cohort has also been an invaluable learning model and professional development opportunity for library leaders. Buna Public Library board member John Hargrove describes his experience in the cohort saying, "We learned faster, smarter, and more productively by making decisions together." His colleague Tricia Jagneaux added, "In being rural, the concept passes down. My son works with me, and that helps spread our work. All the people we talk to hear about our success, and it helps our work, and other rural innovation, to continue."



**T.L.L. TEMPLE FOUNDATION**  
EST 1962  
BUILDING A THRIVING DEEP EAST TEXAS

**RURAL LISC**



## *The Voice of the ISP: FiberLight Leaders Speak Up*

Successful E-Rate implementation depends on effective collaboration among schools and/or libraries and the internet service providers (ISPs) they contract with. The ISPs bear a great deal of the financial and operational risk for building networks, and E-Rate is a time-tested way to leverage government investment to cost-effectively bring broadband to rural communities. FiberLight is one of these network providers working throughout west and central Texas. Locally-based public sector experts Matt Leach and Mike Ellison shared their perspectives about building local partnerships that connect communities, education service centers, schools, libraries, and other community anchors with high speed internet access.



Matt Leach

Mike Ellison

### **Q: What role does your internet service provider play in helping schools and libraries with broadband?**

A: We start with building relationships with community stakeholders who will benefit from this network. That includes schools and Educational Service Centers, but also small businesses, and all businesses. With a subsidy of 80% at times, we can get hundreds of miles of construction covered through E-Rate. That is a much different challenge than working without the Universal Service Administrative Corporation (USAC); without them, we're trying to fund 100% of the network, which is, of course, much harder to fund than 20% of the network.

### **Q: What risks do you assume as a builder?**

A: As a builder using E-Rate dollars, we can only charge USAC for the amount to schools. However, we will lay more fiber to connect all the players in a community, including schools, businesses, neighborhoods, and agricultural users. It's nothing but a win. These E-Rate networks could fill the rural broadband gaps that exist today.

When an RFP comes out, we can't talk to the district. By that point, we need to understand the needs of the school, what they want to do with curriculum, and their technology goals, which depends on the relationship-building done to that point. Most of the time, carriers respond to an RFP without context; when we have an authentic relationship with a district, it is critical to writing a winning response.

[In one specific situation,] FiberLight went in as an investment. We invested substantially more than we wanted to. We made a bet. We invested in the school and community with the hopes of expanding that out into the community, commercializing the network that E-Rate mostly paid for.



**Q: How is a community approach different from a single school approach?**

A: A community approach would easily double or triple the cost over a single ISD. Sometimes economic development corporations can be strong points of contact because they know everybody. They can put dollars into the project if they want their business park connected, they may be able to get everyone to the table, or they may have the ability to promote that their small town has fiber that is upgradable to whatever bandwidth you need.

**Q: How do you account for what is already connected by your ISP?**

A: Anywhere you go, there is a lot of older infrastructure. It can be unreliable, it can have a low fiber count, or it can be oversubscribed. If you go bid on a school, they have to justify what they're paying for. If a school has a great connection but likes another provider better, that's not a good reason for change. Building fiber on someone else's network adds complexity, but sometimes fiber swaps [among two or more providers] make sense in the project.

**Q: What else do you want E-Rate applicants and public institutions to know?**

A: The idea of rural success is built around partnerships. The economies of scale just aren't there without them. With last-mile and middle-mile providers, the best way for schools to leverage their E-Rate dollars is to bring these government entities and other partners together for conversations and planning.



## *Texas State Library and Archives Commission Creatively Supports Libraries Across Texas*

Nothing else serves the community quite like a library. A place different from home, work or school, where it's not required to buy anything to spend time. From picture books for young patrons to Talking Books for those unable to access the written word, libraries provide ways for anyone and everyone to access information. Library staff unlock countless opportunities for their patrons. As a trusted partner in digital navigation, librarians help people access technical content, from basic computer operations to the latest ChatGPT uses. At the state level, Henry Stokes fills that role in supporting library staff across the state as the Digital Opportunity Program Coordinator at the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC).

Over the last fifteen years, Henry has helped library staff make technology and technology skills more accessible to all Texans. TSLAC's [website](#) provides library staff with well-organized resources on a variety of technical topics, including definitions in Library Technology Basics to information on building regional technical coalitions in Digital Opportunity.

Specific training is another focus of Henry's work. Sessions like "Getting READY to Build Better School Partnerships," "Y'All Tech Care Now," and "The Quest for E-Rate" use humor and creative themes to make technical skill-building approachable and engaging.

While schools often have the IT staff and support to write successful E-Rate applications, libraries seldom have that level of staffing. Yet libraries provide people with opportunities for digital connection and navigation, and that all requires broadband.

TSLAC provides library staff with free access to E-Rate consultants who are available to support libraries in quantifying their technical needs and writing successful applications.

The website, training, and consulting that TSLAC makes available provide comprehensive support to many library staff members across the state. In fact, Henry Stokes could be considered the original digital navigator for Texas libraries. With a willingness to pick up the phone or to answer detailed emails, he and his colleagues provide libraries with timely technical expertise and the kind of advice that comes from experience. For Texas libraries, large and small, TSLAC combines the professional resources with a personal touch to meet community needs.



Henry Stokes, Digital Opportunity Program Coordinator for Libraries



# Where Do I Start?

Using the framework of Who, What, When, Where, Why, How (with a couple bonus questions), this section explains how the E-Rate process could work for you and your organization.

## 1 Who is eligible to apply for E-rate?



Independent school districts, public and private charter schools, and education service centers



Accredited libraries



Collaborations between libraries & schools

### What about Head Start? Preschool? Juvenile Justice? Adult education?

For schools to be eligible for support, the age range served must be elementary or secondary school-aged children.

## 2 Who administers E-Rate?

Funding for E-Rate programming is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) under the direction of the FCC. The USAC is funded for 2024 with \$4.4 billion. The annual investment enables E-Rate funds to be awarded to all qualifying applications. In other words, it is a non-competitive discount program.

### What is Universal Service?

Universal service is based on the principle that all Americans should have access to a baseline level of telecommunications service in order to keep everyone in the United States connected. This idea is the cornerstone of the Communications Act of 1934, which created the FCC. Since that time, universal service policies have helped make telephone service and broadband more widely available, even in rural areas that are difficult or not cost-effective for providers to serve

#### USAC administers several complementary programs to E-rate.

**The Lifeline program** offers a monthly benefit towards phone or internet services for low-income subscribers.

**The High Cost program** provides support through more than a dozen separate funds to eligible telecommunications carriers to deliver affordable voice and broadband service in rural areas that would otherwise be unserved or underserved



Universal Service Administrative Co.

**The Rural Health Care program** provides voice, data, and broadband support for health care providers

### How is E-Rate Funded?

Universal service is paid for by contributions from telecommunications carriers, including wireline and wireless companies, based on an assessment of their revenues.

All telecom customers contribute to the fund that supports E-Rate. Telecommunications companies are required by law to make contributions to the Universal Service Fund (USF).

### 3

## Who Can Help Me With E-Rate?

E-Rate has been around more than 25 years, and the landscape of technical assistance and consulting support is rich. This list has been curated to help applicants understand the landscape and to navigate for strategic planning, technical assistance, or training support.

### PARTNERSHIPS

#### Agencies

The [Texas State Library and Archive Commission \(TSLAC\)](#) has amazing reach and resources, including [training](#), E-Rate application coaching, a K12 library advisory group, library website templates, a private funding directory, and other technical assistance. TSLAC also provides support through the [Toward Gigabit Libraries Toolkit](#) to help libraries assess and plan for broadband updates.



The [Texas Broadband Development Office](#) in the Office of the State Comptroller is the facilitator and matchmaker in broadband, and helps people understand what funding and collaborative opportunities are available statewide.

[Texas Education Agency](#) provides extensive written resources to districts exploring E-Rate, including publishing the annual calendar for applications and providing a number of technical tools to build E-Rate requests for bid.

[Texas Library Association](#) is the professional membership association for the 6,000 Texas libraries in cities, towns, and schools. With an annual conference, numerous training opportunities (including focused resources for digital navigation) and a leadership development cohort each year, TLA supports professional networking for Texas library professionals.

#### Foundations

The [Tocker Foundation](#) provides libraries with transformation grants. The Tocker Foundation team supports libraries to engage architects to help the library rethink and modernize their space and access to information. Tocker also supports library staff to attend the Texas Association Library Conference for professional networking.





## Organizations

The [Association for Rural & Small Libraries](#) is a nationwide membership organization focused on the staff and needs of small libraries. With work groups and an annual conference, this group is a collective for professional learning, without the need to scale solutions down to fit rural settings.



[Collaborative Institute for Rural Communities & Librarianship](#) (CIRCL) is a think tank for, by, and of the rural library community and aligned partners. Its network conducts research, makes policy recommendations, and provides culturally-responsive advocacy strategies to amplify rural libraries across the country. Several Texas libraries are CIRCL members.

[OCLC](#) is a global library organization that provides shared technology services, conducts original research, and conducts community programs for members and nonmembers. OCLC operates WebJunction, an online community for building the knowledge, skills, and confidence of library staff at the heart of vibrant communities. [WebJunction](#) is a learning hub for library professionals on digital equity, digital literacy, and other timely topics.

[Partners Library Action Network](#) is a membership organization dedicated to improving Texas libraries through access to operational consulting, technical training, collective purchasing, and a grant program for library redesign.

[Texas Rural Funders](#) developed a [Grants Hub](#), which includes a list of grants, updated each month, a roster of experienced, vetted grantwriters, and a collection of [Rural Resources](#), designed to support program and grant development.

## Consultants

*"Structured institutional support is one of the biggest wins for a rural library to have, to have someone with program expertise, because it is so daunting ... There's a deep fear of messing up on a federal form, which intersects with peoples' biggest fears about not doing the right thing."*

- Kendra Morgan, OCLC (Library professional association)



[Libraries Connecting Texas](#) - All accredited Texas public libraries can take part in the Libraries Connecting Texas program. TSLAC has hired experts from an E-Rate consulting firm at no cost to the library. In the first year of the program, eighty-four libraries successfully applied for more than \$600,000 in broadband funding, increasing their bandwidth by an average of 927%.

[E-Rate Productivity Center](#) - This site from the Universal Service Administrative Company, maintains a list of approved E-Rate consultants. Some of the approved consultants include the following:

[E-Rate Solutions](#)

[E-Rate Central](#)

[E-Rate Advantage](#)

# 4 When do I need to apply?

The E-Rate application process has a specific schedule for schools and libraries to submit their needs, and a separate time frame for applicants to accept bids from vendors (who offer products and related services) and providers (who deliver broadband). This process map explains **who** needs to do **what** by **when**.



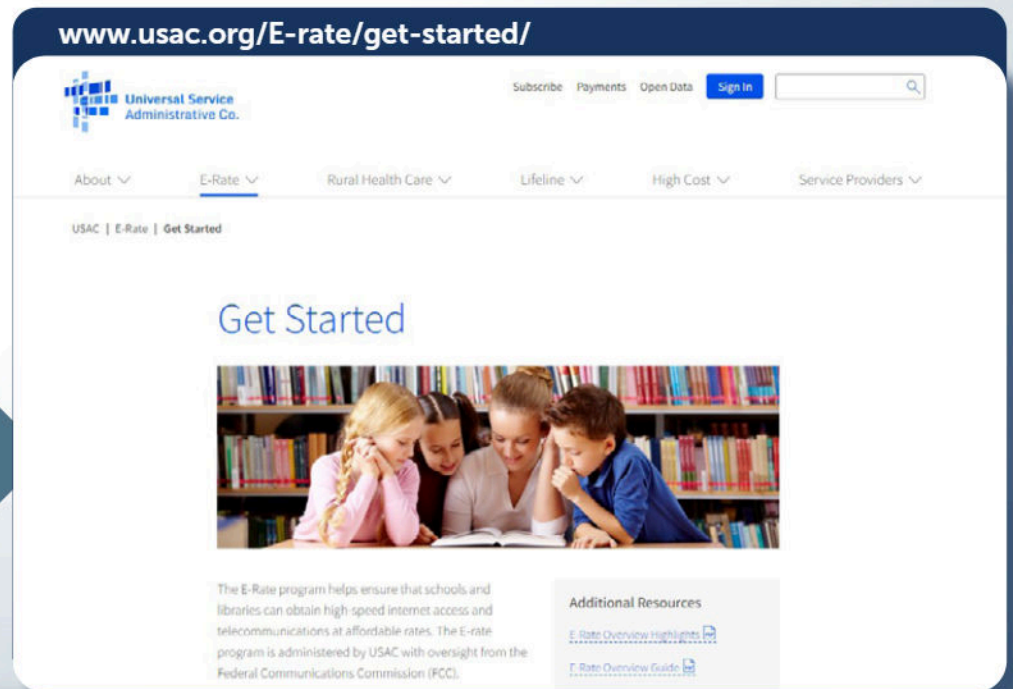


## 5 When can I apply?

There is no limit to a community's ability to "re-apply" for E-Rate support. Successful or unsuccessful applications have no influence on future decisions. In fact, applicants can request technology upgrades to the same systems every five years.

## 6 Where do I apply for E-Rate?

The resources referenced in this document can guide the development of your E-Rate application. The hub of the entire process is the Universal Service Administrative Council site. You or your technical assistance partner need to start [here](#) with your application.



The screenshot shows the website [www.usac.org/E-rate/get-started/](http://www.usac.org/E-rate/get-started/). The page features the USAC logo, navigation links for 'Subscribe', 'Payments', 'Open Data', and 'Sign In', and a search bar. A main navigation menu includes 'About', 'E-Rate', 'Rural Health Care', 'Lifeline', 'High Cost', and 'Service Providers'. The 'E-Rate' section is highlighted, and the page title is 'USAC | E-Rate | Get Started'. The main content area has a 'Get Started' heading and a photograph of four children reading a book together. Below the photo, a paragraph explains that the E-Rate program helps schools and libraries obtain high-speed internet access at affordable rates, administered by USAC with oversight from the FCC. An 'Additional Resources' box contains links for 'E-Rate Overview Highlights' and 'E-Rate Overview Guide'.

# 7

## How do I find the right ISP as a partner? What should I ask?

The E-Rate application is a technical document, with plenty of specific language, framed with legalese. It may seem a little overwhelming at first, but it serves a useful purpose. This document enables applicants to be precise about their needs, and helps USAC avoid fraud or abuse. Once you get beyond the high tech vocabulary, there are ways to make this application work for your community. While it may be appealing to immediately choose the lowest-cost provider, it's important to think about how to best serve your community. Here is some additional guidance for applicants on looking at measures beyond price.

Examples of questions to ask in an interview to understand a company's approach to service and partnership.

- 1. How many libraries and schools do you service today? Can we get a list of references for Category 1 and 2?

The biggest testament to reliability is having testimonials from other schools and libraries. They will deliver the truth about the provider's uptime and response when there are equipment glitches.

- 2. Do you offer Service Provider Invoicing?

This allows the applicant to pay the discounted amount monthly, and the provider bills USAC for the balance.

- 3. Do you offer a multi-year contract with different bandwidth speeds, with the option for voluntary extensions?

This will ensure the applicant can upgrade bandwidth at any time during the contract. This also enables the applicant to extend the contract.

- 4. Will you use the fiber facilities to serve businesses and other customers along the way?

You want the provider to say "Yes," and to offer services to paying customers along the right of way. If they say "No," they may not intend to serve locations that need more market offerings. They may also not have tech support, or may lack a willingness to invest more resources in your region.

- 5. Will the school or library own the connections between buildings or the hardware, or will the service provider own the network?

When the service provider owns the fiber and hardware, they have the responsibility for installation, repairs, and support, all of which may be confusing or expensive to handle.



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[www.texasruralfunders.org](http://www.texasruralfunders.org)