E-Rate (Universal Service) Program for Schools and Libraries

What is the E-Rate (Universal Service) Program?

On May 7, 1997, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted a Universal Service Order implementing the Telecommunications Act of 1996. The Order, commonly referred to as "E-Rate" (Education Rate) ensures that all eligible schools and libraries have affordable access to modern telecommunications and information services. Up to $2.25 billion annually was authorized initially to provide eligible schools and libraries with E-Rate discounts. The amount actually allocated by Congress for 1998-99 was $1.9 billion, but the full $2.25 billion has been authorized each year beginning with 1999-2000.

What agency administers the E-Rate Program?

In January 1999, the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) - which is the overall administrator of Universal Service Fund collection and distribution - merged with the Schools and Libraries Corporation (SLC) and the Rural Health Care Corporation (RHCC). As a result of this merger, USAC created several divisions. The Schools and Libraries Division (SLD) is responsible for administering the E-Rate program for libraries and schools.

What types of libraries and library systems in New York State are eligible for discounts?

The following are eligible to apply for discounts:

- public and association libraries (if they are members of a public library system);
- not-for-profit special libraries (if they are members of a reference and research library resources system);
- public library systems and reference and research library resources systems.

The following are also eligible for E-rate discounts as part of their school district, nonpublic school, BOCES, or Big 5 City Board of Education application:

- public school library media centers;
- nonpublic school library media centers;
- school library systems.

What is the application process for eligible libraries and library systems in New York State?

Applicants are required to develop a technology plan to ensure that the library or library system has the ability to use the services once purchased. Technology plans are approved by the State Education Department, New York State Library, Division of Library Development for the following types of libraries:

- public library systems and reference and research library resources systems;
- public and association libraries;*
- not-for-profit special libraries;*

** Plans for member libraries are certified by their library systems before being approved by the State Library.*

Technology plans for public and nonpublic school library media centers and school library systems are approved by the

State Education Department, Office of Technology Planning. Current technology plans cover the three-year period 2007-2010.

Libraries and library systems submit their application for this program (Forms 470 and 471) directly to the Schools and Library Division (SLD).

What services are eligible for discounts?

Discounts can be applied to all commercially available telecommunications services, Internet connectivity, and internal connections.

What is the level of discounts?

Discounts range from 20 percent to 90 percent, depending on economic need and location (urban or rural). The level of discounts for libraries is based on the percentage of student enrollment that is eligible for the national school lunch program in the public school district in which the library is located.

How many libraries and library systems in New York State received E-Rate discounts for Program Years (PY) 1-10 (1999-2007)?

For each Program Year (1-10), an average total of **379** libraries and library systems in New York State received an average total of **$11.9 million*** from the E-Rate Program.

** Funding for PY 10 is not yet completed.*

What is the status of Program Year 11 (2008-2009) for libraries and library systems in New York State?

The distribution of funding for Program Year 11 is still underway. To date, a total of **325** libraries and library systems have received a total of over **$8.2 million**. It is expected that additional libraries and library systems will receive discounts for PY 11.

How can I obtain more information?

You can get further information by contacting your library system. For additional information, visit the New York State Library website <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/univsvc/>, which includes links to both the SLD and E-Rate Central websites. You can also contact Maribeth Krupczak, New York State Library, Division of Library Development at (518) 486-5250, mkrupcza@mail.nysed.gov.

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