

## **FAQ on the E-rate and Bandwidth Increases on the BadgerNet Converged Network (BCN)**

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The following FAQ provides more information on the 2011 E-rate application process and the bandwidth increases many school districts and libraries will likely receive as a result of the BCN contract extension. Contract negotiations are now in progress between the state Department of Administration (DOA) and AT&T, the prime vendor representing over seventy telecommunication providers. The DOA Secretary's office believes that negotiations have proceeded to the point where it is "highly likely" that school district and library system head-end circuits will get 100Mbps for \$250/month.

The following questions and answers are stated in the context of a school district but they apply to public library systems too.

### ***E-rate Questions***

#### **Q: Can a school district apply for E-rate on a BCN circuit subsidized by TEACH?**

A: No. TEACH files an E-rate form 471 application on all TEACH subsidized circuits regardless of whether the circuit connects to a high school, middle school (CESA, library, etc.). If a district also files for E-rate on the TEACH circuit there will then be two E-rate discounts requested on the same circuit. This "double-dipping" is not allowed in the E-rate program. The E-rate funds TEACH receives helps to subsidize the BCN circuit costs to schools and libraries.

#### **Q: Can a district apply for E-rate on additional bandwidth not subsidized by TEACH?**

A: Yes. Example 1: Under the pending BCN contract extension the district's head-end circuit (often to the high school) will get a 100Mbps circuit subsidized by TEACH. But if the head-end needs 200Mbps, the district can apply for E-rate on the additional 100Mbps. Example 2: A district's middle school has a TEACH subsidized 10Mbps circuit, but it needs 20Mbps. Like example #1, the district can apply for E-rate on the additional bandwidth. Example 3: The district's TEACH subsidized head-end circuit is sufficient but it has no TEACH subsidized circuits to other schools in the district. The district cannot apply for E-rate on the head-end circuit but can apply for all bandwidth needed by the other schools.

### ***Bandwidth Upgrade Questions***

#### **Q: My district's high school now has a 40Mbps BCN head-end circuit subsidized by TEACH. Do I have to notify TEACH or DOA that I want an increase to 100Mbps?**

A: No. Head-end circuits will all be brought up to 100Mbps with no action needed by the district. For information on the approximate timeframe on when this will happen, see the questions below.

**Q: TEACH approved a recent upgrade for my school district head-end circuit (e.g., from 20 to 40Mbps). Will this increase still happen? Or will the circuit be brought directly up to 100Mbps?**

A: Recent bandwidth increases were made under the current BCN contract and will proceed as scheduled. For schools, if the bandwidth increase can be completed with no site visit needed, most of these upgrades are happening in March - April. This is the time frame for most library upgrades too. If the bandwidth increase requires a site visit (e.g., to upgrade network hardware, etc.), these upgrades will likely be done in May - June. Sites needing fiber may not see this installed until Q3 or even Q4 in some areas. Bottom line: It may be months between the time the recently approved bandwidth increase happens and the increase to 100Mbps. (See next question.)

**Q: When will the upgrade to 100Mbps happen? Will our circuit be upgraded by the time school starts in September?**

A: Until the contract extension is signed, the new bandwidth rates are finalized, and the TEACH budget reviewed, it is not possible to know exactly when the increase to 100Mbps will take place. In addition, the following are several other factors that will influence the bandwidth upgrades.

- There will be about 700 schools and libraries getting bandwidth upgrades. This large number complicates the scheduling.
- There are over seventy telecommunication providers involved and each is responsible for the upgrades in its service area.
- In some areas of the state the provider must make substantial upgrades to its middle mile infrastructure before it can provide last mile 100Mbps connections.
- Some sites will need fiber installed. In some locations fiber is at the curb but in other locations it may be more than a mile away.
- Some upgrades can be done remotely, others require a site visit.
- Some library sites will need extra copper pairs installed. This will require a site visit.

Within the context of the above factors, work on the bandwidth upgrades will begin very soon after the contract extension is signed. Once work is fully ramped-up, the target objective is to transition about 5-10 existing fiber sites per day to 100 Mbps. It will take longer to do the libraries because some need fiber installed and other upgrades, and most will require a site visit. (Most schools already have fiber, most libraries do not.) Once the contract extension is signed DOA—in close cooperation with the providers—will develop a project schedule listing all sites getting a bandwidth increase. The current scenario is that each site will be assigned to a particular month. Approximately 20-30 days prior to installing the upgrade an actual day will be determined and the school or library notified. It is not possible to predict when all the work will be done but the intent is to complete all 700+ bandwidth upgrades within 12 months after the first site upgrades.

If you have any questions, please contact Bob Bocher (608-266-2127, [robert.bocher@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:robert.bocher@dpi.wi.gov)). If Bob has no clue what the answer is, he'll find someone who does.

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