

To: All Montana Schools

From Governor Steve Bullock, Superintendent Arntzen, Department of Commerce Director Pam Haxby-Cote, SAM Executive Director Kirk Miller

Subject: Take Action Before Your E-rate Funding Expires

Dear <First Name>,

The Governor's Office, Office of Public Instruction, Department of Commerce, and School Administrators of Montana are excited to announce our continued partnership with the national non-profit EducationSuperHighway on the Broadband for Montana Schools Program.

Over the past three years, our work with EducationSuperHighway has resulted in increased Internet speed and scalable connections for thousands of students across the state. West Valley School District and Yaak Elementary School, for example, both took advantage of the services offered through the Program, applying to upgrade to high-speed fiber infrastructure capable of fully supporting their digital learning plans.

There are two critical opportunities that your district may want to take advantage of this year:

FIBER/BROADBAND CONNECTIONS

In 2017, Governor Bullock and the Legislature secured a \$2 million appropriation through House Bill 390 to serve as a "state match" by leveraging additional funding from the Federal Communications Commission's E-rate program. **The remaining \$1 million in this funding pool must be used this year.** If you are seeking to upgrade to a fiber broadband connection like West Valley and Yaak, we encourage you to contact the Department of Commerce to explore your options and learn how to access this funding source. Please visit <http://comdev.mt.gov/Programs/BROADBAND> or email docbroadband@mt.gov to learn more.

INTERNAL NETWORKS AND WI-FI

The effectiveness of broadband coming to a building is only as good as the internal network and Wi-Fi within the building. That is why in 2014, the FCC made \$150 per student of funding for Wi-Fi and internal connections upgrades available over five years. Montana **schools have \$4.1 million left to spend. Those districts that have not spent any of their E-rate Category 2 funds in the last five years and those that started spending in 2015 must act this year before these funds expire.** EducationSuperHighway will contact you in the coming weeks to make sure you have everything you need to upgrade your schools.

Both the Department of Commerce and EducationSuperHighway stand ready to help you take advantage of these funding opportunities. **All assistance is provided free of charge.**

We look forward to working with you to ensure every classroom in the state has the bandwidth necessary to take advantage of the promise of digital learning.

Thank you,

Governor Steve Bullock
Superintendent Elsie Arntzen
Department of Commerce Director Pam Haxby-Cote
SAM Executive Director Kirk Miller