# MN K-12 Connectivity Discussion – August 19th – Meeting summary

Meeting attendees (pictures are to help us get to know each other!):

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
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## Meeting Summary and Action Items:

The morning meeting was spent making introductions and framing up the discussion as a preliminary step in assessing where Minnesota K-12 schools are at in relation to national broadband connectivity goals and identifying gaps which may lead to policy or program recommendations. The afternoon focused on reacting to what we heard, sharing expertise and providing guidance on next steps.

See attached for details on Education SuperHighway’s (ES) preliminary findings.

While the ES presentation includes a number of ways the state may choose to engage with them in regards to furthering K-12 connectivity (based on examples from other states that have partnered with ES), this stage of the discussion is focused on getting reliable data upon which we can formulate a state response and possible policy recommendations. The next milestone in this process will be a presentation to the Governor’s Task Force on Broadband on October 14, 2015.

### National K-12 Connectivity Goals:

100Kbps per student by 2014 -> [ 1 Mbps per student -> 1 Gbps transport per school -> Wi Fi in every classroom] by 2018

Presidential ConnectED initiative: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education/k-12/connected>

SETDA Report and Recommendations <http://www.setda.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/The_Broadband_Imperative.pdf>

Nationally: 99% of districts do not meet the 2018 goals, 75% meet the 2014 goal.

Minnesota: Education SuperHighway has reliable data for about 50% of Minnesota’s school districts. They will have enough complete within the next two weeks to make accurate statements about how the state compares on affordability to the national target and what percentage of districts have fiber access.

### Affordability Goals:

**Using national averages, ES has established benchmarks of $3 per Mb for internet connectivity and $750 per transport circuit.**

Preliminary data suggests that, on average Minnesota schools are paying an amount for internet access that would be considered above the national average. Transport costs (connections between schools) appear to be in line with national averages. Detailed results will be available in the final report.

### Strategies and Tactics:

**Education SuperHighway focuses on 3 strategies for achieving national goals:**

1. Fiber connections to every school
2. Wi-fi in every classroom
3. Affordable connectivity for all K-12 schools state-wide

**Tactics Education SuperHighway uses to move the needle on the above 3 strategies:**

1. Catalyze executive sponsorship (Governor, legislature) and codification of state goals
2. Measure existing conditions within a state
3. Inform and consult on e-rate opportunities to construct fiber connections to unserved schools
4. Consult with K-12 stakeholders on group purchasing methods to reduce cost of wi-fi hardware
5. Using public e-rate data, provide pricing transparency to identify inequities
6. Consult on opportunities for aggregated network purchasing to reduce overall costs

### General take-aways from the day’s discussion:

* Minnesota has a strong culture of local control. Any decision that aggregated or group purchasing methods should be adopted will require irresistible benefits and buy-in from the individual districts.
* Minnesota has about 500 non-public schools that are not represented by MDE and consortia numbers.
* Minnesota ratepayers are paying more into the e-rate fund than Minnesota schools are benefitting, with $36M being paid in and about $30M coming back to the state.
* Minnesota is under-realizing the benefits of the federal e-rate program. $84 million of potential Category 2 funding is available for Minnesota over 5 years but of that amount, only $14 million was requested in 2015-16 (year 1 of the program) and only 4% of e-rate applicants used the full amount for their district
* There are opportunities for the next four years to use E-Rate Category 2 funds to construct fiber to districts. These applications will receive a 10% bonus if there is a 10% match from the state.
* USAC determines cost effectiveness of a district constructing fiber using a 10 year ROI calculation.
* Stories are important. Be sure to include real-world stories of how these goals will make real impacts.
* Recommendations should come from task force, in consultation with impacted stakeholders.
* Room for both aspirational goals (ie 1 Meg per student by 2018-20) and defined priority goals that address an emphasis on equity (ie Prioritize districts that are paying high prices for 1.5Mbps connections, service to tribal schools, and larger rural districts without access to a fiber connection). This will help address the question of whether goals should be aspirational goals or SMART goals.
* Noted that there is a need for staff support for small districts without internal technical skills and capacity.
* E-rate filings start July 1st and application window is between January – March. Pricing transparency information needs to be distributed before this time to benefit this round of E-rate applications.
* Telecom Equity Aid exists to assist schools in paying for telecom/broadband expenses that are not covered by e-rate. Currently at $3.7M. This fund is targeted toward consortia where aggregated buying realizes some cost savings. But is also available in a limited fashion to districts who choose not to participate in one of the 17 consortia. This fund is currently under-resourced for existing needs.

### Input from participants on going forward:

* A champion is needed at the highest level (MDE, DEED, Governor)
* Maintain a focus on equity. Don’t forget about those at the bottom.
* We haven’t had a unified voice around this subject. This group could serve as a platform for that voice if it continues.
* Legislators like new ideas, they also like equity.
* Opportunity to tie this into the existing K-12 goal of developing the “World’s Best Workforce”.
* Sen. Wiger and Rep. Loon are legislators who may be interested in engaging on this subject.
* A menu of options for the Governor or legislators to consider may yield the best chance for success.
* Establishing a state match for the E-Rate fiber opportunity is a priority. It is also time bound and addresses state desire to maximize federal funding opportunities.
* 1:1 initiatives are starting to hit a critical mass and are becoming a competitive issue for attracting and retaining students. However, there is still a prevalence of lack of sophistication of those that have implemented 1:1.
* E-rate addresses connectivity at schools but we also need to continue to address connectivity for students at home.
* Collaboration is key.

## Specific Recommendations and action items:

* EducationSuperHighway will continue to clean the e-rate data in preparation for a full presentation to the Governor’s Task Force on Broadband in October.
* EducationSuperHighway and OBD will host a follow-up webinar or presentation to review the final report prior to the presentation to the task force. Attendees of this meeting will be invited. We will also try to engage the organizations that could not be at this meeting.
* OBD will invite the non-public school association to participate in the conversation.
* OBD will lead the effort to determine the best mechanism for establishing an E-Rate matching program that does not jeopardize the current Telecom Equity Aid program, which bridges the gap for districts in connectivity costs not covered by e-rate ($3.7M annually). This item will require input from various stakeholders.
* OBD will offer assistance to Shannon Heim in arranging an afternoon session between FCC E-Rate experts and K-12 stakeholders on September 10th. This presentation will also be delivered to the Broadband Task Force on the same day.