



2017 Legislation & Budget Request Form

Please use this form to submit proposed budget requests for the 2017 Legislature. Please submit forms to Jennie by end of day, Friday, March 11, 2016.

Date: March 14, 2016

Staff Person: Jennie Stapp & Sarah McHugh

Proposal Name: Broadband grant program to public libraries

Brief description of proposal:

If funded, this grant program would fund a statewide contract for broadband services to public library administered by the State Library. The program would assume that libraries that participate in statewide broadband consortium make use of E-rate to maximize federal funding. Pending contract negotiations with providers, participating libraries would receive a minimum of 10 Mbps/internal connection or 100 Mbps of broadband, whichever is greater. Internal connections are defined as the total number of public access computers, staff computers, and the average hour wireless connections as reported by libraries in their public library statistics. Libraries desiring higher rates of bandwidth would fund additional bandwidth locally.

In addition, the grant program would fund a hardware replacement account. Libraries would receive grant funds on a five-year cycle to replace computers, network hardware, and other related technology. Administrative rules would be created to allocate funds appropriately.

Administrative costs would also be funded from the grant appropriation.

How will the proposal positively impact the communities we serve?

The State Library hears on a regular basis that access to sufficient, affordable broadband continues to be a significant barrier for many libraries. Additionally, the ability for libraries to afford to update computers and other technology remains a significant funding challenge. For example, several libraries in Montana still make use of PCs with Windows XP which is an unsupported operating system that leaves them vulnerable to hardware failure and/or malicious activity. Many libraries rely on grant funds such as Gates Foundation funds to fund hardware replacement. The Gates Foundation announced that they are phasing out support to libraries meaning that regular grants for hardware replacement will no longer be forthcoming. When the State Library had broadband technology

opportunity program funds, approximately 42 libraries benefited from funding for increased broadband as well as hardware and networking. The ending of this program was a significant loss for those libraries that benefited from it for the three years it existed as was evidenced by data collected by the Library Development Study Task Force.

For many libraries whose broadband is insufficient to begin with, more, and more affordable, broadband would mean that libraries and their patrons could work and make use of the Internet in a more efficient and effective manner. For example, the Fort Peck Tribal Library, a branch of the Roosevelt County Library, would be able to use the Montana Shared Catalog to circulate materials during afterschool hours without worrying about the network impact from public computer users.

Beyond everyday efficiencies, access to adequate high speed broadband creates possibilities for online opportunities that we can only begin to imagine: entrepreneurs using libraries as small business centers to engage in e-commerce around the globe; students collaborating with one another around the state to create and share learning objectives; young musicians practicing with band members in real time from hundreds of miles away. The possibilities are truly limitless.

How does this proposal support MSL's [long range plan](#) and/or other planning documents such as the Library Development Study Task Force recommendations?

With more adequate, affordable broadband, libraries would have improved capacity to:

- Create new content such as digital collections of local and historic resources that can be shared through the Montana Memory Project;
- Provide improved access for their patrons to e-content provided by the State Library including MontanaLibrary2Go and the MMP. Additionally, this proposal would ensure that libraries have adequate broadband capacity to support rich lifelong learning programs and opportunities without broadband constraints;
- Make use of online continuing education opportunities as an efficient way to improve skills and library development services;
- Collaborate with libraries around the state to improve resource sharing, library programming, and opportunities for community partnerships.

FTE Required? Yes No

Estimated Number?

Cost of proposal and proposed source of funding:

- \$1.15M state general fund
- (\$1.5M federal e-rate funds)

Please list other entities involved in developing the proposal:

- Montana Telecommunications Association

Please identify interested constituencies or persons who may be called upon to testify in support this proposal:

- Montana Library Association
- Montana Association of Counties
- Montana Telecommunications Association
- Other telecommunications providers

Other relevant information to consider when evaluating this proposal:

There are different ways to scale this proposal:

- An option to bring all libraries 100 Mbps or 1 Gbps of broadband depending on population served, an option which aligns with the recommendations from the FCC's Erate Modernization order, would cost approximately \$850,00;
- The cost to fund our initial discussion about of 5 Mbps per internal connection or 25 Mbps would be \$755,000.

It is likely that the Governor's Office will support legislation for a broadband grant program. Initial conversations with their office indicate support to include library broadband affordability funding in that proposal.