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For Immediate Release

FCC PARTNERS WITH INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES TO ADDRESS DIGITAL DIVIDE ON TRIBAL LANDS

Agencies to Work Together to Bring Connectivity to Tribal Libraries

WASHINGTON, February 2, 2022 —The Federal Communications Commission today announced that it is partnering with the Institute of Museum and Library Services to expand broadband connectivity to Tribal libraries. The agencies will team up to raise awareness about the E-Rate program among Tribal libraries and organizations, which can use program funds to increase broadband access to serve their communities. To kick off this partnership, the agencies recently reached out to all 574 Tribal leaders to provide information about the E-Rate program and opportunities for Tribal libraries to participate.

The partnership coincides with the adoption of an [FCC order](#) updating rules in the E-Rate program to clarify that Tribal libraries can access funding to provide affordable internet access in their communities. The Order updates the definition of “library” in the E-Rate program rules to make clear that it includes Tribal libraries, resolving a longstanding issue that limited their access to affordable broadband connectivity through the program. The Order also paves the way for Tribal libraries to apply for the E-Rate program application filing window that opened on January 12, 2022 and closes on March 22, 2022.

“The E-Rate program is a powerhouse that helps bring broadband to schools and libraries in every state across the country,” said Chairwoman Rosenworcel. “But for Tribal libraries, it was often difficult to make use of this funding because of the way the rules were written. We’ve now put new rules in place that make it clear Tribal libraries are eligible to participate, and we are eager to get the word out. I’m excited to partner with IMLS so we can raise awareness in Tribal communities about this important funding opportunity.”

“The FCC’s update to the E-Rate eligibility for Tribal libraries is critical in supporting the technology needs of Tribal communities, especially during what has been one of the most challenging moments in modern history,” said Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Director Crosby Kemper. “IMLS, in partnership with the FCC, is proud to support initiatives and opportunities that empower Tribal communities and help expand their digital infrastructure.”

The E-Rate program was established in 1996 as a universal service support mechanism to ensure that schools and libraries can obtain affordable broadband service. Discounts for support depend on the level of poverty and whether the school or library is in an urban or rural area. The discounts range from 20 percent to 90 percent of the costs of eligible equipment and services.

For more information about the FCC's Order expanding opportunities for Tribal libraries to apply for E-Rate support, please visit: <https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-connecting-tribal-libraries-through-e-rate-program-0>. For information about how Tribal libraries can apply for E-Rate support, visit: <https://www.usac.org/e-rate/>.

Information about IMLS' efforts to support Tribal libraries can be found at: <https://www.imls.gov/grants/available/native-american-library-services-basic-grants>.

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).