

California Allocates \$26.7 Million to Support Network Connectivity Infrastructure Grants

Role of County Offices of Education

Good afternoon

Recognizing the need for adequate infrastructure to support computer-based assessments, the Governor approved the 2014-15 State Budget that included \$26,689,000 of one-time Proposition 98 General Fund dollars to support broadband infrastructure grants.

In addition to the broadband infrastructure grants, the SB 852 language requires the completion of a statewide report of network connectivity infrastructure by the California K-12 High-Speed Network (K12HSN) in consultation with the Department of Education (CDE) and the State Board of Education (SBE).

In the next few months, K12HSN will begin distributing broadband infrastructure grants to help public school districts and direct-funded charter schools with the most severe infrastructure deficits.

These broadband infrastructure grants will fund projects critical for the implementation of the 2014-15 computer-based assessments. First priority for critical need grants will go to local educational agencies that will be unable to administer computer-based assessments at their school site in 2014-15.

Public school districts, county offices of education and direct funded charter schools are eligible to apply for these network connectivity infrastructure grants. As you might imagine, some of the sites that have the critical need these funds are intended to address are not well-staffed. For that reason, we are asking County Offices of Education to engage in support for these sites. The K12HSN program understands that your staffs are also carrying heavy loads and there will be compensation for the support we are asking you to undertake.

We envision the role of County Offices of Education to be two-fold:

1. Help with the Broadband Infrastructure Grant (BIG) Program

- a. Assist K12HSN in identifying hardship sites early in the program (early August)
- b. Disseminate information about the broadband infrastructure grant opportunity with their districts and encourage eligible sites to apply.
- c. Provide technical assistance to school districts who intend to apply for the grant to include assistance with design, determining cost estimates for infrastructure projects and mapping out project plans.

2. Help with the Broadband Needs Assessment needed to complete the a Statewide report due on March 1, 2015

- a. Assist K12HSN in identifying sample school sites in order to collect connectivity data.
- b. Coordinate data collection for the needs assessment from the sample school sites within their respective County.
- c. Enter the collected data using the online survey tool for each of the sites.

K12HSN is in the process of developing an agreement that fairly offsets costs that County Offices may encounter for the efforts needed in collecting and submitting the sample data.

Timelines

Broadband Infrastructure Grant Timeline:

- **August 18, 2014** - Request For Application (RFA) Release Date
- **August 29, 2014** – Due Date for Letter of Intent (Highly recommended but not mandatory)
- **September 26, 2014** - Deadline to submit Grant Applications
- **October, 2014** – BIG Applications – Review and Score
- **November 3, 2014** - Grant Awards Announcement
- **November 4, 2014** - Implementation period begins

Statewide Network Connectivity Report Timeline:

- **August - December 2014** - Statewide data collection effort
- **March 1, 2015** - Statewide Report due to the Legislature

The RFA will be available on August 18, 2014 at:

www.k12hsn.org/big

Districts may submit one application per school site.

Please note that as a condition of receiving grant funding, all local educational agencies must commit to supporting ongoing costs associated with the improved Internet infrastructure. Applicants will also be expected to leverage other funding sources such as E-rate.

We will provide additional information about the RFA and grant application soon. The K12HSN staff will conduct an application webinar to provide an overview of the grant and application process and offer potential applicants an opportunity to ask clarifying questions in August.

In the meantime, it would be very helpful for us to receive a list of the school sites in your county that:

- Could not administer the 2013-14 field test for connectivity reasons
- Administered the field test but had to transport students to a different testing site
- Administered the field test but had to shut down other online activities/operations at the site

We understand you may not be aware of all the hardship cases in your County but we would appreciate it if you could send us a list of those school sites that you are aware of that experienced the circumstances listed above. The list should include the school name, CDS Code, a technical/administrative contact, phone number and physical address.

The time provided to accomplish this work is very short. We would appreciate it if we can get a response back from you by, **Monday, August 11, 2014.**

Having this information will help us ensure that all of the critical needs school sites are applying for the Broadband Infrastructure Grant.

We are looking forward to awarding network connectivity infrastructure grants to the districts and charter schools with the greatest infrastructure needs.

Please let us hear from you either by phone, (760) 312-6512, or by email, tsanders@icoe.org if, based on your assessment of your capacity to assist, you believe you cannot fill the role we have described for your county above. We anticipate that in some counties we will need to find a different solution and hearing your input quickly will be very helpful.