



NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
MEMORANDUM

TO: John Hopson Jr., President
Members of the Board

THROUGH: David Vadiveloo, Superintendent DsV

FROM: Reggie Santos, Director Information Technology RS

DATE: November 13, 2024

SUBJECT: Federal Communications Commission Waiver Petition

Memo No. SB25-096
(Action Item)

NSBSD Strategic Plan Summary:

As shown below

Issue Summary:

The District currently enjoys an e-rate subsidy for internet in our schools of 90%. Earlier this year the Lower Yukon School District successfully petitioned the FCC to have their e-rate subsidy extended to staff housing.

The District would like to join a petition submitted by multiple rural Alaskan Districts to have the same subsidy extended to our teacher housing. This petition would be submitted by the same lawyer who represented LYSD. The District successfully used this lawyer for a previous matter in 2021/22.

NSBSD currently does not provide internet to staff housing. If successful, the petition would allow NSBSD to offer substantially discounted internet to staff, resulting in a further recruitment and retention incentive for current and potential staff at minimal cost. For example, if estimated costs for staff internet were \$20,000 per month district-wide, the subsidy would reduce that cost to \$2,000 per month.


The legal cost of the petition is not known. Costs of the petition will be spread across the number of Districts who join the petition. The administration does not expect costs to be more than \$20,000 for the NSBSD, and we will keep the Board apprised of the petition and expenses. We have confirmed with the lawyer that we reserve the right to withdraw from the action at any time.

Background

Teacher retention in the North Slope has been a longstanding challenge, largely due to the remoteness of the region and limited infrastructure. The absence of reliable internet in teacher housing further exacerbates this issue, making it harder to recruit and retain educators.

Currently, the FCC's E-Rate program provides funding for internet in schools and libraries. However, it does not extend to non-instructional facilities, such as teacher housing. The Lower Yukon School District successfully filed a similar petition (DA-24-876A1 FCC Declaratory Ruling) to use E-Rate funds for internet services in teacher housing, setting a precedent that NSBSD can follow.

The petition will argue that providing internet in teacher housing supports educational purposes by enabling teachers to prepare lessons, engage in professional development, and support remote learning during inclement weather or emergencies, especially in rural Alaska's harsh conditions.





Financial Impact

Estimated Costs for Teacher Housing Internet

Based on ASTAC and Starlink service providers:

Provider	Total Monthly Cost	E-Rate 90% Subsidy	NSBSD Share (10%)
ASTAC	\$23,008.33	\$20,707.50	\$2,300.83
Starlink	\$19,080.00	\$17,172.00	\$1,908.00

By leveraging E-Rate funding, the district could provide reliable internet access for teacher housing at a fraction of the total cost. Starlink offers a cost-effective and scalable option with higher speeds (100 Mbps) for remote locations.

Alignment with NSBSD Strategic Plan

1. Staff Support & Professional Development

Goal 6: Build and sustain a thriving workforce aligned with the mission of this District.

Strategies

- *Deliver a Clear, Coherent Narrative About the District as a Place to Work.*
- *Mission Aligned: Hiring Based on Fit.*

Outcomes

- *Attracting and hiring NSBSD mission-aligned recruits.*
- *Developing and retaining qualified, engaged, and committed staff.*
- *Facilitating and increasing staff connectedness, support, and wellbeing.*

Providing internet enhances living conditions, making it easier to recruit and retain teachers.

2. Financial & Operational Stewardship

Goal 7: Standardize high-functioning, efficient, student-focused operations.

Strategies

- *Foster Organizational Congruence, Aligned with the Mission of the District.*

Outcomes

- *Diversified funding outside of State & Federal revenue sources.*

Leveraging federal funding ensures the district meets teacher housing needs without excessive strain on local budgets.

- *Current technology enhancing operations and advancing student outcomes.*

Teachers with internet access can better support remote learning and student engagement during inclement weather or emergencies.

Benefits of Participation

1. Improved Recruitment and Retention:





Reliable internet access addresses a critical gap in teacher housing, making the North Slope more attractive to new hires and improving retention.

2. **Educational Continuity:**

Internet access allows teachers to engage in lesson preparation, online professional development, and remote learning support, directly benefiting students.

3. **Cost-Effectiveness:**

Through E-Rate funding, NSBSD can meet teacher needs while minimizing the financial impact on local resources.

4. **Collaboration and Advocacy:**

Partnering with other Alaska school districts amplifies the collective voice to the FCC and demonstrates NSBSD's commitment to innovative solutions for unique challenges.

Next Steps

If approved, NSBSD will:

1. Join other Alaska school districts in hiring legal counsel to draft the FCC petition for an E-Rate waiver.
2. Collaborate with districts to present a strong case based on the Lower Yukon precedent.
3. Regularly update the Board on the petition's progress and potential implementation strategies.

Recommendation

The Administration recommends that the Board approve NSBSD's participation in this collaborative effort to petition the FCC. Providing internet in teacher housing aligns with the district's Strategic Plan and addresses critical issues in teacher retention, student success, and operational stewardship.

Attachments:

1. DA-24-876A1 FCC Declaratory Ruling
2. Cost Analysis Table (ASTAC and Starlink Options)

Proposed Motion:

"I move that the NSBSD Board of Education approve the administration to join the petition to extend e-rate internet subsidies to staff housing as described in this memo."

Moved by _____ Seconded by _____

Advisory Vote _____ Vote _____

Signature: *Ds Vadiveloo*
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