

Henderson ISD
Board of Trustees Q&A Handout
E-Rate FY2026 Network Upgrade

1. Why do we need to replace the wireless access points now?

Our current access points are aging, approaching end-of-life, and no longer meet the demands of modern instruction, online testing, and the number of devices on our network. Replacing them now ensures reliable connectivity and prevents service disruptions that could impact classrooms.

2. How long will the new equipment last?

The Aruba AP 635 access points have an expected lifecycle of five to seven years. This refresh positions us well for future instructional needs and aligns with our long-term technology plan.

3. What is the district's total out-of-pocket cost?

The total project cost is \$227,867.50. With our 85% E-Rate discount, the district pays 15%, which is projected to be \$34,180.13. E-Rate covers the remaining \$193,687.37.

4. What happens if E-Rate funding is denied?

The contract includes a funding-contingency clause, which means the district has no financial obligation if E-Rate does not approve the project. We can cancel the agreement without penalty.

5. Did we follow all required procurement rules?

Yes. We posted Form 470 for the required 28-day bidding period, conducted a competitive mini-bid among DIR-CPO-5381 vendors, evaluated all responses based on cost-effectiveness, and documented the selection process. This fully satisfies federal and state procurement requirements.

6. Why was this vendor selected over others?

Next Step Innovation offered the most cost-effective solution that met all technical requirements. Their pricing was firm, fixed, and compliant with the DIR contract, and they provided the best overall value to the district.

7. Does this project include installation, or is it equipment only?

This procurement covers equipment and licensing only. Installation will be handled internally by our technology team, which saves the district money and is common for wireless refresh projects.

8. Will this upgrade disrupt instruction?

No. Installation will be scheduled outside instructional hours or during low-impact times. Access points can be swapped quickly, and we do not anticipate any significant downtime.

9. How does this project support student learning?

Reliable wireless access is essential for digital curriculum, online assessments, classroom devices, and instructional technology. This upgrade ensures students and teachers have consistent, high-quality connectivity across all campuses.

10. Is this equipment compatible with our current network?

Yes. The Aruba AP 635 access points integrate seamlessly with our existing switching infrastructure and network management systems. No additional upgrades are required.

11. What is the timeline for funding approval and installation?

We will submit the Form 471 this spring. Funding approval is expected in summer or early fall. The purchase order will be issued after funding is confirmed, and all equipment must be delivered and accepted by September 30, 2027, per E-Rate rules.

12. Are there any recurring costs we need to plan for?

The only recurring cost is the five-year cloud-management license, which will not need renewal until the end of that term. Future renewals can also be E-Rate eligible.

13. What happens if the vendor cannot deliver the equipment?

The contract includes protections for the district. If the manufacturer discontinues a product or cannot supply it, the district may approve an alternative or cancel the affected portion of the order. Pricing cannot change under any circumstances.

14. Why didn't the district select Wi-Fi 7 access points?

Wi-Fi 7 is a new technology, but very few student or staff devices support it today, and we would not see meaningful performance benefits from the additional cost. The Aruba AP 635 access points support Wi-Fi 6E, which is the current stable standard used in K–12 environments and fully meets our instructional and testing needs. Selecting Wi-Fi 6E provides excellent performance at a significantly lower cost and aligns with E-Rate's requirement to choose the most cost-effective solution. Wi-Fi 7 can be evaluated in a future refresh cycle once device support and pricing mature.

15. Why would the district choose to use a Texas DIR State Master Contract instead of issuing a traditional RFP?

Texas DIR contracts allow the district to purchase technology through a procurement pathway that is already competitively bid and awarded by the State of Texas. This gives the district several advantages:

- Pre-negotiated, competitive pricing — DIR contracts are competitively solicited at the state level, which means the district benefits from statewide pricing that is often lower than market rates.
- Reduced administrative burden — Because the State has already completed the full RFP process, the district does not need to conduct its own lengthy solicitation for the same products or services.
- Faster acquisition timelines — DIR contracts allow the district to move from need identification to purchase more quickly, which is especially important for technology refresh cycles, network upgrades, and time-sensitive projects.
- Audit-ready compliance — DIR contracts meet Texas Education Code procurement requirements, and when paired with the federal Form 470 process, they also meet E-Rate competitive bidding rules. This reduces procurement risk and strengthens audit defensibility.
- Multiple vendor options — Many DIR contracts include several awarded vendors, allowing the district to conduct a short, focused “mini-bid” to ensure best value while still benefiting from the state's pre-bid contract structure.
- Standardized terms and protections — DIR contracts include state-approved terms, conditions, and service requirements that protect public entities and reduce legal exposure.