

# The Future is Fast: Broadband in North Dakota: Libraries' role in Broadband in North Dakota



*Strengthen · Connect · Ignite*

Al Peterson  
Outreach Specialist

# Closing the Digital Equity Gap

- Digital Divide
- Digital Equity
- Digital Inclusion



# Closing the Digital Equity Gap

Digital Divide - The digital divide is the gap between those who have affordable access, skills, and support to effectively engage online and those who do not.



# Closing the Digital Equity Gap

Digital Equity is a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy and economy.



# Closing the Digital Equity Gap

Digital Inclusion refers to the activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of Information and Communication Technologies.



# Closing the Digital Equity Gap

Five Elements:

1. Affordable Robust Broadband Service
2. Internet Enabled Devices that Meet the Needs of the Users
3. Access to Digital Literacy Training
4. Quality Technical Support
5. Applications and Online Content Designed to Enable and Encourage Self-Sufficiency, Participation, and Collaboration

# Closing the Digital Equity Gap

*Digital Opportunity*



# Closing the Digital Equity Gap

What are we already doing (and may not realize it).

1. Access to Public Computers
2. Offering Wi-Fi
3. Circulating Hotspots and Laptops or Tablets



# Closing the Digital Equity Gap

Other Ways to Spread Awareness and  
Help Close the Digital Equity Gap

1. Basic Computing Skills

A. Basic Smart Phone Skills



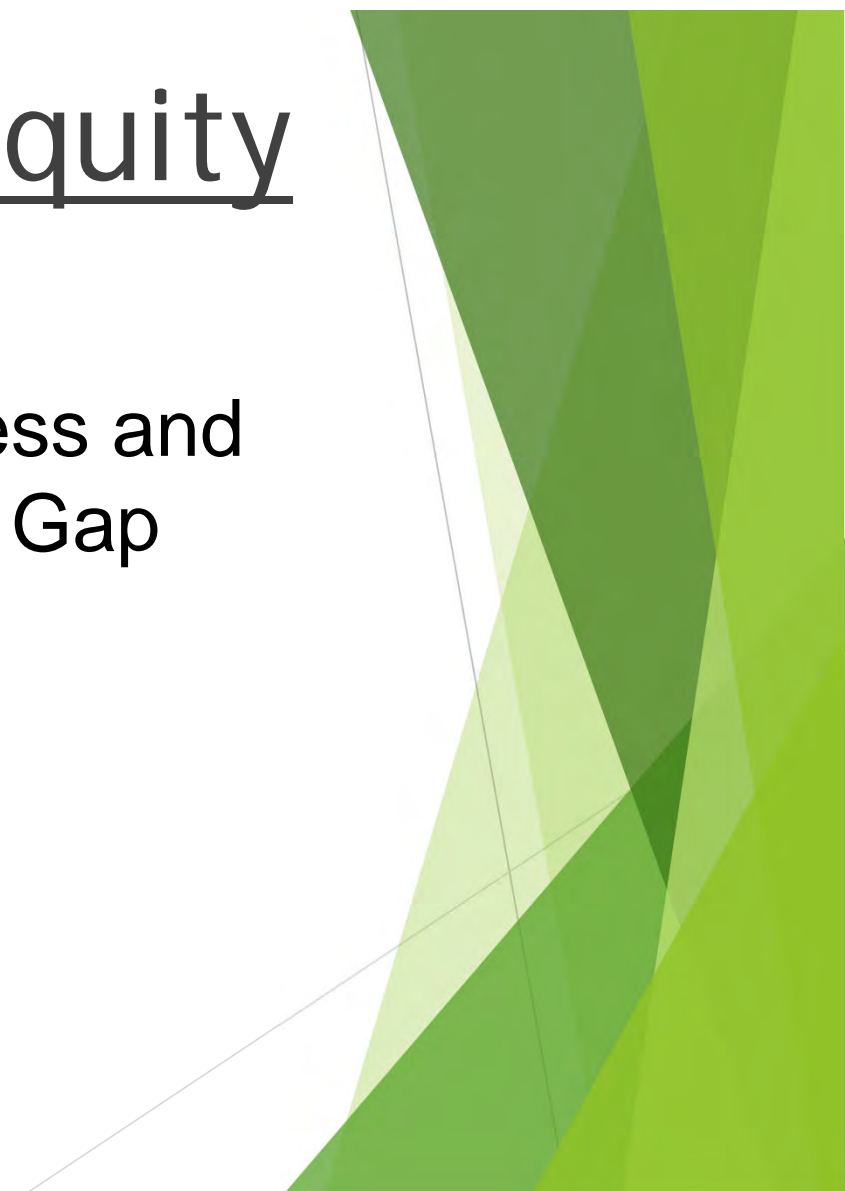
# Closing the Digital Equity Gap

Other Ways to Spread Awareness and Help Close the Digital Equity Gap

## 2. Information Literacy

### A. AI Education

- I. Educate yourself
  - a. WebJunction
  - b. Niche Academy



# Closing the Digital Equity Gap

## 3. Cybersecurity

A. DefeND

B. Educate yourself

a. WebJunction

b. Niche Academy



# E-rate

Universal Service: Schools and Libraries  
Division E-rate Program



# E-rate in North Dakota

North Dakota has applied for E-rate since the inception of the program. From the beginning, North Dakota Information Technology has applied using a State Master Contract.

Funds were used to set up the fiber optic backbone. This backbone was used to branch out throughout the state.

Focus on fiber- fiber optic lines won't change, the routers the lines are connected with upgrade and improve.



# E-rate in North Dakota

Legislative support to fund the undiscounted portions

In the beginning, E-rate funds were used for schools and libraries that were using a T-1 or higher.

388 schools

9 public libraries

22 Public Libraries had a DSL line paid by legislative funding

Telecommunications was not included. Libraries and schools that wanted to E-rate telephone and fax lines had to apply on their own.

# E-rate in North Dakota

Spring of 2006, I became E-rate Coordinator



Plasticrobot. Bankers Box and Folders Isolated. Accessed 07/22/2025.  
<https://www.dreamstime.com/stock-photography-bankers-box-folders-isolated-image11735162>

# E-rate in North Dakota

E-rate Today

The State Master Contract (STAGENet) is filed by  
EduTech

Dave Skogen

Three Year Contract

2026 is the start of a new contract

Currently the discount percentage is 62%-63% of  
the total cost.



# E-rate in North Dakota

Current Master Contract has 422 entities including 23 public libraries.

DSL Service at the speed we were paying for is being phased out.

I worked with NDIT, EduTech, and USAC to get the DSL libraries added to the State Master Contract.

The State Library pays the non-discounted portion of library bills with funds provided by the Legislature through NDIT.



# E-rate in North Dakota

If a library wants to join the State Master Contract

Let me know by December 2025 or sooner!

We will need to get a...

- A. Bill Entity Number (BEN)
- B. FCC Registration Number (FRN)
- C. EPC Account\*
- D. Form 479 - CIPA Compliance
- E. Letter of Agency Signed

# E-rate in North Dakota

If a library wants to apply for E-rate on your own...

You would need to apply for e-rate for any Category 1 Services beyond Internet or Category 2 equipment and services.

You definitely need an EPC Account is needed to file all forms.

Eligible Services List <https://www.usac.org/e-rate/applicant-process/before-you-begin/eligible-services-list/>

# Other Universal Service Programs

## Tribal Library E-Rate Advocacy Program (T-LEAP)

The Tribal Library E-Rate Advocacy Program (T-LEAP) was established to provide additional support to Tribal and TCU libraries when applying for E-Rate program funding. Tribal and TCU libraries can now receive direct support in navigating the E-Rate application process, including one-on-one assistance when preparing applications, applying to the program, and receiving E-Rate support.

To Apply, contact USAC directly:

<https://www.usac.org/e-rate/tribal-e-rate-advocacy-program/>

# Other Universal Service Programs

Lifeline- a federal program through the FCC dedicated to making phone and internet service more affordable for low-income households.

Qualifying applicants apply on their own by creating an account and filling out a form online.



# Other Universal Service Programs

Up to \$9.25 Monthly discount on phone/internet bill

Lifeline provides up to \$34.25 a month if you live on qualifying Tribal lands.



GIPHY. Big Deal Whatever GIF by CBS 12/20/2022. Accessed on 7/22/2025.  
<https://giphy.com/gifs/cbs-ghosts-cbs-ghostscbs-8TTT3WAXI2hzFBrGTE>

# Other Universal Service Programs

Look into what services vendors are offering for Lifeline.

<https://www.usac.org/lifeline/>

Qualifications are based on the Federal Poverty Guidelines or if you qualify for Federal or Tribal Assistance Programs.

Safe Connections Act - survivor of domestic violence human trafficking or related crimes.



Questions?





Contact

Al Peterson

701-328-4661

[alpeterson@nd.gov](mailto:alpeterson@nd.gov)

# Thank You!



*North Dakota  
State Library*

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