

FY13 Appropriation Request

Connecting Members

MOREnet manages nearly 1,000 member connections statewide. These connections are the essential paths needed to connect each member site to the MOREnet shared network and to connect students, teachers and citizens to the rest of the state and the world. The purpose of the FY13 request is to assist in leveling the playing field for specific K-12 schools and higher education institutions that currently pay connectivity costs that exceed the median cost per megabit, as compared to the connectivity costs paid by other MOREnet members.

Cost Containment

MOREnet has worked to contain costs through administrative efficiency, competitive bidding and innovative technological solutions. However, some rural or underdeveloped K-12 and higher education communities still lack affordable connectivity options compared to other communities in Missouri. With this essential funding from the state, MOREnet can help to create uniformity in rates throughout the state, regardless of rural or urban location. Failure to provide financial assistance to these K-12 and higher education members that are experiencing higher-than-average telecommunications costs will continue to support the inequality in telecommunication rates and will result in reduced connectivity for those members, as they are unable to afford the bandwidth they need to support their missions.

Annual median cost per megabit (Mb) for the MOREnet shared network and site connection:

- Higher education sites: \$1,315/Mb
- K-12 school sites: \$1,216/Mb

Leveling the Playing Field

The \$316,718 in requested funding would specifically assist 277 MOREnet member sites, including 20 higher education sites (at a total cost of \$101,423) and 257 K-12 school sites (at a total cost of \$215,296). By using the median cost per megabit as the funding qualifier, MOREnet is able to concentrate the benefit of the funding on Missouri's smaller, underserved communities.

Educational Tools and the Internet

Affordable connectivity for Missouri's K-12 and higher education communities will allow students and faculty to access the basic needs of the education community for routine research and access to content to supplement outdated textbooks. Demand for capacity has grown steadily as schools have begun to depend on Internet connectivity to enhance and facilitate classes and other services. Adequate connectivity is necessary to continue to support the significant educational advancements enabled by educational resources -- tools such as class delivery by video, online information resources, Web resources and research tools and virtual field trips. These educational tools are particularly important for K-12 students who otherwise may not have access to classes or facilities due to illness, disabilities, rural locations, under-resourced school districts, etc. and for working adults who would not be able to pursue higher-education opportunities without courses and degree programs enabled by access to the Internet.