TO: Chief School Administrators  
Charter School Lead Persons  
School Business Administrators  
Nonpublic School Administrators  

FROM: Evo Popoff, Assistant Commissioner/Chief Innovation Officer  
Division of Charter Schools, School Choice, Technology, Turnarounds  

SUBJECT: Regional Broadband Purchasing Cooperatives RFP Awards/Deadline December 12  

As part of the New Jersey Department of Education’s (NJDOE) efforts to reduce broadband costs for school districts across the state, we are pleased to inform you that on November 21, 2014, the Middlesex Regional Educational Services Commission (MRESC) announced the results of its Wide Area Network (WAN) and Internet cooperative purchasing initiative (the “Broadband Initiative”).

Here is why you should pay attention:

MRESC and its partners, Bergen County Technical Schools and the Educational Information and Resource Center, with the support of the NJDOE, established the Broadband Initiative to improve Internet access for districts and charter and nonpublic schools in every region of the state. In response to the request for proposals (RFP), New Jersey’s telecommunications service providers have submitted outstanding proposals that will result in tangible benefits for participating districts and schools.

These benefits could be significant.

If all 400+ districts and schools that indicated interest in the Broadband Initiative by submitting service order forms take part in the awarded RFP contracts, we should see a 300% increase in broadband statewide, while realizing aggregate savings of more than 50%. While actual savings will vary, many districts and schools could save 50% or more, even while substantially increasing their bandwidth enabling the use of technology to support instruction, collaboration and operations.

To realize these benefits, districts and schools - including those that submitted service order forms - must now officially sign onto the awarded contracts. This week, the MRESC sent emails to every institution eligible to purchase network and Internet services from the Broadband Initiative with information including the next steps for signing onto one of the awarded contracts.

All districts, charter schools and nonpublic schools in the state are eligible to participate in the Broadband Initiative regardless of where they are located, even if they did not initially submit a service order form and/or have not received an email from MRESC.
If you did not receive an email and wish to participate in the Broadband initiative, please send an email to coop@mresc.k12.nj.us immediately so you can get the information you require. As described in the email, the MRESC is seeking confirmation of district and school interest in participating in the Broadband Initiative by December 12th so vendors can start working with participants before the holidays. This will enable the MRESC to circulate contracts in January and ensure that all contractual arrangements, including any necessary board resolutions, are completed by March.

We understand that you may have lots of questions about this process and the particular services awarded for your school district. The MRESC has a procurement website with additional information, including vendor-specific items and opportunities to attend informational meetings and webinars throughout December. You may contact the MRESC directly with questions at: coop@mresc.k12.nj.us or get information via their website located at: http://www.mresc.k12.nj.us/pages/Middlesex_Regional/News/DRLAP_Broadband_Component.

This is an exciting project that can benefit students and educators across the state while providing substantial cost savings, and the Department is proud to support the work of the MRESC and its partners. If you have immediate questions regarding the Internet cooperative purchasing initiative, please contact MRESC Business Administrator/Board Secretary Mr. Patrick M. Moran at (732) 777-9848, ext. 3120, or pmoran@mresc.k12.nj.us.

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c: Members, State Board of Education
    David C. Hespe, Acting Commissioner
    Senior Staff
    Executive County Superintendents
    Executive Directors for Regional Achievement Centers
    Executive County Business Officials
    Charter Schools Office
    County Test Coordinators
    District Test Coordinators
    District PARCC IT Contacts
    Directors of Approved Private Schools for the Disabled
    NJ LEE Group
    Garden State Coalition of Schools