

# New Jersey Digital Readiness for Learning & Assessment Project

The power of cooperative technology purchasing



## **Piscataway, New Jersey, Year Nine Update, June 20, 2024**

The Educational Services Commission of New Jersey (ESCNI) is entering the tenth year of its New Jersey Digital Readiness for Learning & Assessment Project (NJDLAP). This summary provides the latest facts and figures with information current through *Year Nine* of the initiative.

NJDLAP was launched in 2014 with backing from the NJ Department of Education to improve broadband access for K-12 schools across the state. Today, NJDLAP has become a model of success for using cooperative purchasing to bridge the digital divide. The NJDLAP initiative has helped hundreds of schools and municipalities save millions of dollars while significantly increasing their Internet access, and it is still getting better. Here are the most recent results.

## 2023 Highlights

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- **Thirty-four new organizations** in education and local government used the NJDLAP co-op to purchase high-speed broadband service since the previous report, **an increase of 6%**. That brings the total to **480 NJDLAP participants statewide**, another co-op record.
- K-12 institutions continue to take advantage of the convenience and low pricing of NJDLAP, with **20 new school districts & two independent schools** joining the program.
- NJDLAP remains the most popular and trusted broadband service contract for public schools, with **358 districts** using the co-op. That's **60% of all New Jersey school districts**.
- The ESCNJ helps its members maximize funding from the federal E-rate program. To date, NJDLAP participants have received **\$22.1 million in E-rate funds** with ESCNJ assistance.
- **Twelve new local agencies** joined NJDLAP last year, bringing the total to **60 municipal organizations** using the co-op for Internet access and advanced telecommunications.
- NJDLAP now has **seven service providers** helping co-op customers connect: Comcast, CherryRoad, DNS, Lightpath, PenTeleData, Planet Networks, and Xtel Communications.
- The ESCNJ renewed and improved the NJDLAP program for 2024. The new statewide contracts **increased average Internet bandwidth by 22% while cutting costs by 9%**.

## Key Facts about NJDRLAP

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Here are some important statistics about the NJDRLAP program, current as of June 20, 2024.

- No district is left behind. The NJDRLAP program offers **high-speed Internet access to every school district in New Jersey**, plus fiber connectivity to hundreds of schools statewide.
- Average available speeds are faster than ever before, now exceeding 2 Gigabits per second. Compared to the previous NJDRLAP contracts, **K-12 bandwidth is now 2,078 Megabits per second (Mbps)**, up from 1,697 Mbps in the previous go-around, a new statewide record.
- While bandwidth is up, costs are down. The **average monthly price for Internet access is \$126 less than the prior contract**, cutting prices from \$1,450.08 to \$1,324.25 per month.
- The co-op delivers tremendous value for critical technology tools. The current contract reduces the average monthly price per Mbps for Internet access by 25% from \$1.26 to just 94 cents. **That's enough to save NJDRLAP participants another \$4 million per year.**<sup>1</sup>

## Equitable Access

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One of the main objectives of the NJDRLAP co-op is to make high-speed Internet access available to every student in New Jersey. The program is well on its way to achieving that goal.

In the first year of the program, 137 school districts signed up for faster and cheaper broadband access through the NJDRLAP program, a promising start for the cooperative. As of this report, 358 school districts were using the program, more than **60% of New Jersey school districts**.

In addition, **62 public charter schools, non-public schools and educational non-profits** have taken advantage of the program. Participants are from every county in the state, representing schools big and small, rural and urban, wealthy and poor, from pre-kindergarten to high school.

Altogether, that's **480 educational and government institutions** using the NJDRLAP co-op. The contract has helped thousands of citizens get better government services and **benefited approximately 876,000 students** by delivering world-class Internet access to their classrooms.

NJDRLAP also helped schools adapt to Covid-19. Through its creative partnerships with local broadband providers, New Jersey school districts were able to use the co-op to provide new opportunities for at-home teaching and learning. For example, NJDRLAP provider **Altice helped 84 New Jersey school districts connect 195,000 student devices** during the pandemic.

The ESCNJ has consultants available to help K-12 schools navigate the complexities of E-Rate. So far, **879 E-rate funding requests have been disbursed** using NJDRLAP E-rate applications.

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<sup>1</sup> The \$0.32 differential in price per Mbps applied to the 1,076,300 Mbps total bandwidth proposed to the 518 school entities in the regional buying groups equates to \$4.1M in new annual savings compared to the previous contracts.

## Better Infrastructure

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Before the NJDRLAP program began, more than 17% of participating schools were struggling with copper lines to connect to the Internet. Today, at least **98% of K-12 districts are on fiber**.

By bundling the demand for advanced telecom services, the ESCNJ co-op helps local telecom providers make more productive investments in the New Jersey economy, which benefits businesses, hospitals, and individual citizens, as well as schools and government organizations. The NJDRLAP co-op is on-track to facilitate another **\$20 million in new telecom contracts** for the shared benefit of its co-op members, approved service providers, and New Jersey citizens.

## Faster Speeds

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The NJDRLAP program has significantly enhanced the availability of high-speed Internet access to K-12 schools across the state. Before the program began, the average Internet connection for participating school entities was 348 Mbps. Today, NJDRLAP contracts average 2,078 Mbps. That's almost **six times more Internet bandwidth available per co-op participant**.

Besides providing Internet access at average speeds exceeding 2 Gigabits per second, the NJDRLAP initiative enables schools and municipalities to connect multiple campus locations and government buildings together for super-fast information exchange. The NJDRLAP program delivers **fiber-optic circuits of at least 1,000 Mbps to hundreds of organizations**. These upgraded circuits are meeting the "need-for-speed" for public entities across New Jersey.

## Lower Costs

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The ESCNJ works hard to deliver the **lowest-possible prices to public organizations**, and the NJDRLAP program has been successful in reducing technology costs for taxpayers statewide.

Even as the co-op has driven up bandwidth for schools and municipalities across the state, **NJDRLAP has reduced Internet costs by 63%** for participating organizations. Schools paid an average of \$26.17 per Mbps for Internet access prior to NJDRLAP. **Now, it's available for \$0.94.**

## Bottom Line

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As prices have increased for just about everything that schools and municipalities need to buy, the ESCNJ co-op has delivered price reductions on critical technology services, once again. On average, **NJDRLAP cut Internet costs by 9% while increasing available bandwidth by 22%.**

## Learn More

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The ESCNJ is continually working to improve the NJDRLAP program. Co-op members can purchase a range of services from the various NJDRLAP contracts, from residential broadband for at-home work and learning to ultra-fast connections to connect enterprise locations.

**The NJDRLAP broadband contracts are secure for years to come.** Contracts for Internet access and advanced telecommunications are ready now for the next three years. Co-op members can buy services with confidence knowing they have the best pricing available.

**NJDRLAP works with E-Rate.** Eligible school districts can receive deep discounts on their Internet purchases using the Universal Service Administrative Company discounts offered by the Federal Communications Commission. NJDRLAP contracts have their own E-Rate Forms 470s already posted to make purchasing safe and convenient for schools.

**Purchasing from the NJDRLAP co-op contract is easier than ever.** Visit the ESCNJ's new member's website (<https://www.escnj.us/members>) and select "Telecommunications" from the drop-down menu to access all the NJDRLAP contracts. Or you may contact a representative from the ESCNJ using the contact information on the next page.

## Contact Information

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Nadia Romano, Superintendent  
Educational Services Commission of NJ  
[nromano@escnj.us](mailto:nromano@escnj.us)  
(732) 777-9848

Kevin Dellicker, NJDRLAP Consultant  
Dellicker Strategies, LLC  
[kevin@dellicker.com](mailto:kevin@dellicker.com)  
484-788-1221

## About Us

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### The Educational Services Commission of New Jersey | Leading the Way in Shared Services

The Educational Services Commission of New Jersey operates the most trusted and most comprehensive cooperative purchasing consortium in the state (NJ State-Approved Co-op #65MCESCCPS). **Every NJDRLAP purchase is an investment in NJ kids.** Visit: [www.escnj.us](http://www.escnj.us)

### Dellicker Strategies | We Get Results

Dellicker Strategies is the consultant to the NJDRLAP program and an approved co-op provider (RFP ESCNJ 23/24-13). The company delivers Internet and technology services with a 10% discount for co-op members. Dellicker Strategies specializes in helping organizations **upgrade their technology infrastructure, improve their cybersecurity, and manage complex technology programming.** The company is veteran-owned with 19 years of experience serving 3,000 schools, municipalities, and businesses. Visit: <https://dellicker.com/escnj-contract>.