



Executive Summary Finance Committee Meeting

DATE: March 26, 2026

TOPIC: E Rate Category II – SHI Network Equipment

PREPARED BY: Jordan Stephen

Recommended for:

- Action
- Discussion
- Information

Purpose/Background:

The Technology Department continues to prioritize the upgrade and modernization of the District's network infrastructure. Over the past several years, the District has leveraged Category 2 E-Rate funding to replace switches, firewalls, wireless access points, and other critical networking equipment. This year marks the beginning of a new E-Rate funding cycle for network equipment. Coupled with the upcoming Illinois Century Network (ICN) speed upgrades, this funding window provides a timely opportunity to invest in necessary infrastructure improvements.

Over time, the District has extended the useful life of its firewall and several core and building-level switches, many of which have been in service for more than ten years. With the increased bandwidth provided through the ICN connection, core switches will need to be replaced to support higher speeds and ensure network reliability.

This project was formally bid through the E-Rate program, with seven vendors submitting proposals. Based on the evaluation process, SHI received the highest overall score. Attached are SHI's proposal, the required letters of intent, and SHI's Contract. In the summary below, SHI appears twice, as we requested a separate proposal specifically for the firewall portion of the project. Additionally, the original E-Rate filing included more equipment than we ultimately expect to purchase in order to preserve flexibility as we align final decisions with future upgrades.

After reviewing the proposals in full, the administration recommends proceeding with the new firewall, including all required filtering and support licenses, for a full five-year term. We are electing not to move forward on wireless network upgrades at this time. It was recently identified that certain wireless components included in the proposal may reach end-of-life prior to the end of the 2026 calendar year. Given that, there is no sound rationale to move forward with that purchase. Removing those items reduces the second SHI proposal substantially.

It is important to note that E-Rate Category 2 funds do not need to be expended all at once. The District has a five-year window within the current funding cycle to utilize the allocated funds strategically and responsibly.

The District Legal Counsel has agreed that because of our past Contracts with SHI and since the terms and conditions have remained unchanged from past years, there is no reason to review. Since SHI is a hardware vendor, SOPPA does not apply to this, as these items are a general commercial product and not a school-focused product.

Vendor	Total
CWDG	\$38,649.51 *
Electronaca	\$404,330.22 *
Optimus Network	\$177,686.46
Provision Data	\$112,341.00 *
Questivity Network	\$166,487.65
SHI Quote 1 - Networking	\$131,455.00
SHI Quote 2 - Firewall	\$58,935.00
STL Business and Technology Solutions	\$177,211.42

* - Denotes incomplete bid or incorrect equipment provided within proposal

Fiscal Impact:

The total cost of the selected equipment from both SHI quotes totals \$68,950. The District should anticipate an E-Rate reimbursement of \$27,580.

Recommendation:

The Finance Committee concurs with the Administration’s recommendation to the Board of Education to approve this Contract from SHI for the purchase of a Palo Alto Firewall along with all licensing for 5 years, as well as a Cisco Core switching equipment along with all Cisco licensing for 3 years in the amount of \$68,950.