



Universal Service  
Administrative Co.

E-Rate

## E-Rate News Brief

November 22, 2023

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#### E-Rate Tips:

- The **E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC) Administrative Window** is now open so applicants should **review and update their entity profile data including student counts**. If a new school, library, or non-instructional facility (NIF) is needed, please open a customer service case in EPC.
- If you are updating your entity profile during the EPC Administrative Window, **check the Tribal Box to validate your Tribal status in EPC**. If you are affiliated with a federally recognized tribe, select your affiliation from the dropdown list that appears or select **Other** and type it in the **Additional Information** box.
- The FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB) is **seeking comments on adding WiFi on school buses to the FY2024 eligible services list**. Specifically, WCB seeks comment on the specific services and equipment needed to provide Wi-Fi service, or similar access point technologies, on school buses. WCB released its public notice ([DA 23-1011](#)) on October 25. After extending the deadline, **comments are now due November 30**.
- Visit our **recently updated web content** on the following pages: [Competitive Bidding](#)

[Exemptions](#), [Discount Matrix](#), [How to File FCC Form 472](#), [How to File FCC Form 474](#), [Invoice Deadline Extensions](#), and [Obligation to Pay](#).

#### **E-Rate Invoicing Tips:**

- **USAC completed the E-Rate systems consolidation on November 7** to move the E-Rate Legacy systems into the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC), including all invoicing functionality. All your E-Rate transactions can now be completed through EPC. Read the [November 7, 2023 Special Edition E-Rate News Brief](#) to learn about the features and access learning resources.
- **Applicants and Service Providers: Ensure your account administrator is up to date.** Applicants update their account administrator in their organization's EPC profile. Service providers update their account administrator by updating their FCC Form 498, Block 13 Company Contact for Schools and Libraries.
- **Account administrators should confirm EPC user permissions for invoicing** by selecting **Manage User Permissions** (applicants) on the entity summary tab or **Manage Service Provider User Permissions** (service providers) on the SPIN summary tab. Users without invoicing permissions in EPC will not have the option to invoice.
- **Use the E-Rate Invoicing Requirements Guide to ensure your funding request is ready to invoice** before beginning an FCC Form 472 or FCC Form 474.
- Carefully review the **filing resources for service providers** using [electronic invoicing](#) (ESPI), and the [ESPI File Formatting Guidelines](#) before submitting your ESPI invoice.
- **Did you know that you can see an invoice's paid or unpaid status in EPC?** Go to **My Forms and Requests** and check the **FCC Form 472 Status** or **FCC Form 474 Status** column. If the status is **Processed**, all invoice lines on the invoice have been completed. If the status is **Certified**, some but not all invoice lines have been completed.
- **Course Summaries for all eLearning Modules are linked** on the [How to File FCC Form 472](#) and [How to File FCC Form 474](#) pages.

#### **Commitments for Funding Year (FY) 2023 and FY2022**

**FY2023.** USAC released FY2023 Wave 30 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) on November 16. As of November 20, FY2023 commitments total over \$2.38 billion.

**FY2022.** USAC released FY2022 Wave 64 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) on November 17. As of November 20, FY2022 commitments total over \$2.78 billion.

On the date that FCDLs are issued, you can access your FCDL notification from the **Notifications** section of your landing page in EPC.

#### **New EPC Features**

USAC rolled out several new features into EPC recently.

**Canceling a Certified FCC Form 470.** EPC users with full rights to the FCC Form 470 can cancel a certified FCC Form 470 that has not yet been cited on a funding request number (FRN) that is included on a committed FCC Form 471. Additionally, all EPC users will be able to filter and view cancelled FCC Form 470 records.

Users with partial or full rights to file FCC Form 471 funding applications for an organization are no longer able to certify the FCC Form 471 if one of the FRNs on the form is citing a canceled FCC Form 470. In that scenario, they will see a validation message preventing them from certifying the FCC Form 471. View the [FCC Form 470 Filing EPC System Guide FY2022-FY2024](#) to learn more.

**New Tribal Library Certification on FCC Form 470.** When an applicant or consultant certifies an FCC Form 470 for a library or library system, the first certification statement on the form will have updated text that reflects the new Tribal College/University Library (for public use) eligibility.

### **What to Do if You Missed Your October Invoice or FCC Form 486 Filing Deadline**

October 30, 2023, was the deadline for most program participants to:

- [Submit an invoice](#) for FY2022 recurring services.
- [Request an invoice deadline extension](#) for FY2022 recurring services.

#### **Missed Invoice Deadlines for FY2022**

If you missed your invoice filing deadline and your deadline to request an invoice deadline extension for FY2022 recurring services, you must file a waiver request with the FCC before submitting your invoice to USAC to be processed. The USAC [Appeals](#) page provides information on how to submit appeals and waiver requests to the FCC. The FCC must grant your waiver request before USAC can extend the invoice filing deadline.

If your invoice was submitted by the deadline but USAC reduced or denied the amount invoiced, you must [submit an appeal to USAC](#) if you disagree with USAC's decision.

You can verify whether your invoice filing deadline was extended by searching for your Funding Request Number(s) (FRNs) in EPC and clicking the **SDD/IDD History** tab. You can also use USAC's [Open Data](#) platform to confirm these deadlines. This data is in the [FRN Status Tool FY2016+](#). Please [reference the video](#) on how to use the tool to determine your deadlines.

#### **Missed FCC Form 486 Deadline for FY2023**

October 30, 2023 was also the deadline for most program participants to [certify an FCC Form 486](#) (Receipt of Service Confirmation and Children's Internet Protection Act Certification Form) for FY2023 for program participants that received a funding commitment decision letter (FCDL) and have a service start date of July 1, 2023.

If you missed your deadline to file the FCC Form 486 for FY2023 services, certify your form as soon as possible to minimize or avoid potential penalties (see below).

### **FY2023 FCC Form 486 Urgent Reminder Letters**

USAC started sending FCC Form 486 Urgent Reminder Letters for FY2023 on October 31. These emails are sent to account administrators, and the contact person on the FCC Form 471, and the letter is posted and available in the organization's **News** tab in EPC.

As a reminder, if you received a positive funding commitment from USAC, the next step is to file an FCC Form 486 no later than 120 days after services have started. **If this date is missed, USAC will adjust the service start date** reported on the FCC Form 486 to the date 120 days before the certification date of the FCC Form 486 and will not pay invoices for services delivered before the adjusted date.

To avoid missing your 120-day deadline, look for the FCC Form 486 Urgent Reminder Letter. The letter is sent based on the service start date reported on the FCC Form 471. Applicants then have 15 days from the date of this letter to certify an FCC Form 486 without penalty.

The letter will appear in the organization's **News** tab in EPC. You can also find it in the **Notifications** section of the organization's landing page.

To view the letter, follow these steps:

- Log in to [EPC](#).
- From the **Notifications** section of your organization's landing page, choose **Notification Type** "FCC Form 486 120 Day Notification" and **Funding Year** "2023".
- In the right-hand column of each notification, choose **Generate Notification**. The status will then change to **View Notification**.
- Click **View Notification** to view your letter.

Applicants who receive this letter should certify their FCC Form 486 online **no later than 15 days after the date of the notification** to prevent adjustment of the service start date.

You can check if you have an approved or partially approved FCC Form 486 for your funding requests in the [E-Rate FRN Status Tool FY2016+](#) in the "FCC Form 486 Status" column.

## **EPC Tribal Updates**

On July 21, 2023, the FCC released an Order ([FCC 23-56](#)) to further enhance Tribal applicants' access to the E-Rate program through program simplifications and other changes aimed to encourage greater Tribal participation. Specific updates to the E-Rate definition of "Tribal" include:

### **Tribal Entity**

An entity is 'Tribal' for purposes of E-Rate funding if it is a school operated by or receiving funding from the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), or if it is a school or library operated by any Tribe, Band, Nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska native village, regional corporation, or village corporation (as defined in, or established pursuant to, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. § 1601 et seq.)) that is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians.

### **Tribal Library**

A Library is determined by the following:

Tribal government entity documentation can be used to establish Tribal status such as a charter or ordinance or letter from the Tribal Council, as well as documentation that shows that the applicant has characteristics of a library, including regular hours, staff, and materials. A signed letter from a state library agency can be used to establish E-Rate eligibility for a library, but it cannot be used to establish Tribal status.

USAC has made updates in EPC based on the FCC's Tribal order including eligibility and Category Two updates. You can view the [Tribal Library Eligibility Changes in EPC](#) video to learn more.

## Fall 2023 Training-Recordings Available on Demand

Below are on demand recordings and accompanying slides from our Fall webinars.

**E-Rate Program Overview (October 3):** E-Rate experts provided a high-level overview of the application process from beginning to end and explained basic program concepts for applicants and service providers, followed by a Q&A session.

- Watch a Recording (on the [Webinars](#) page, click **Watch**)
- [Slide Deck](#)

**E-Rate Pre-Commitment Process (October 5):** Presenters discussed the E-Rate Pre-Commitment Process (getting started, competitive bidding, applying for support, and Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) review), followed by a Q&A session.

- Watch a Recording (on the [Webinars](#) page, click **Watch**)
- [Slide Deck](#)

**Eligible Services 101 (October 12):** USAC provided an overview of E-Rate eligible services followed by a Q&A session.

- Watch a Recording (on the [Webinars](#) page, click **Watch**)
- [Slide Deck](#)

**Category Two Budgets (October 17):** Presenters discussed Category Two (C2) budgets. We provided an overview of C2 budgets and C2 budget guidance for Funding Year (FY) 2024, followed by a Q&A session.

- Watch a Recording (on the [Webinars](#) page, click **Watch**)
- [Slide Deck](#)

**EPC Administrative Window (October 19):** Presenters discussed the administrative window – the period during which applicants can make updates to their entity profile information in EPC to prepare for the upcoming FCC Form 471 application filing window for FY2024, followed by a Q&A session.

- Watch a Recording (on the [Webinars](#) page, click **Watch**)
- [Slide Deck](#)

**E-Rate Post-Commitment Process (November 7):** Presenters discussed the E-Rate Post-Commitment Process (starting services and invoicing) and other post-commitment activities (service substitutions, appeals, and more), followed by a Q&A session.

- Watch a Recording (on the [Webinars](#) page, click **Watch**)
- [Slide Deck](#)

**Invoicing (November 9):** This webinar was designed to help E-Rate program participants (applicants and service providers) understand the invoicing process. We discussed the FCC Form 472 (BEAR Form)

and the FCC Form 474 (SPI Form), invoice deadlines, invoicing reviews, and more. This session did not cover the new invoicing functionality in EPC.

- Watch a Recording (on the [Webinars](#) page, click **Watch**)
- [Slide Deck](#)

### **PQA Information Requests Going Out Soon**

The 2024 Payment Quality Assurance (PQA) assessment program is underway. PQA is a program that assesses E-Rate payments made on invoices submitted during the past 12 months to verify that the payments were properly made – in other words, that all program rules were followed correctly when the payment was authorized and disbursed.

For disbursements made each month, a certain number of payments will be chosen, and applicants will be asked to provide specific documentation – for example, customer bills that support invoices submitted to USAC – to verify that those payments were made correctly. It is important that you maintain proper documentation to be able to respond correctly and completely to PQA requests.

The email request notifying applicants whose payments have been selected for PQA were being sent during the first and second week of November from the domain name [PQA@USACcms.i-sight.com](mailto:PQA@USACcms.i-sight.com). Please check your email and respond promptly if you receive an email from USAC's PQA program. Also check your spam folder or junk email folder to see if it contains an email from this domain. This will help expedite your review.

- Do not hesitate to contact your reviewer if you have questions. Contact information is provided in the email.
- Contact your PQA reviewer if you are unable to respond by the deadline.

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