



E-Rate News Brief

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E-RATE TIPS:

- **FY2024 Window Open – File Early.** The FY2024 FCC Form 471 **application filing window is now open and will close on March 27**. The earlier applicants submit and certify their FCC Form 471, the sooner USAC can begin reviewing your application. Please **do not wait until the last minute to submit and certify your form**, especially if you need help or have questions about what information to include on your form. Visit the [FCC Form 471 Filing](#) page to learn more.
- **Fall 2023 Training - Recordings Available on Demand.** USAC offered a series of online training sessions for E-Rate program participants, including Tribal applicants, in October and November to help prepare for the FY2024 FCC Form 471 application filing window. You can view a webinar recording using the **Watch** button next to the topic available under the **Previous Trainings** section on the E-Rate [Webinars](#) page.
- **Service Providers: Find FCC Forms 470 to bid on.** You can search and download FCC Form 470 data, Forms 470 as PDFs, and any Request for Proposals (RFP) documents using the new [E-Rate FCC Form 470 Download Tool](#). You can also use the [View an FCC Form 470](#) tool to view documents or the [Download 470 Information](#) tool to download data about the forms. Service providers with E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC) accounts can also search for and download certified FCC Forms 470 in EPC. Additional information can be found in the [FCC Form 470 Search User Guide](#).
- **Quarterly Disbursement Report (QDR) issue resolved.** QDR is a report issued by USAC to the applicant detailing all invoicing activity (both FCC Form 472/BEAR and FCC Form 474/SPI forms) for all funding years that occurred during the previous quarter. On January 5, 2024, some stakeholders did not receive their QDRs. USAC fixed this problem and any unsent QDRs were emailed to recipients on

January 16. We will continue to monitor the QDRs to ensure they are sent in a timely manner. If you need assistance, call our Customer Service Center (CSC) at (888) 203-8100.

- **EPC Enhancement for Viewing Contracts.** Consultants who have full or partial rights to the FCC Form 471 for an applicant entity can now view all the contracts for that organization, even if the consultant is associated with only one or less than all the service providers linked to the contracts.
- **FCC Form 471 Bulk Upload tool.** Applicants with large numbers of eligible services and/or large numbers of recipients of service may want to prepare funding request data by completing the FCC Form 471 [bulk upload templates](#) and then uploading the data to their FCC Form 471. The FCC Form 471 bulk upload template **cannot be used for fiber or School Bus Wi-Fi related requests.**
- **Visit our updated web pages** including [E-Rate Library FAQs](#), [Discount Matrix](#) updates, [School Bus Wi-Fi updates](#) in the Eligible Services FAQs, and [Wi-Fi on Buses – Summary Overview](#).

E-Rate Commitments for Funding Year (FY) 2023

FY2023. USAC released FY2023 Wave 39 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) on January 18. As of January 24, FY2023 commitments total over \$2.55 billion.

On the date that FCDLs are issued, you can access your FCDL notification from the **Notifications** section of your landing page in the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC).

Preparing for the FY2024 Application Filing Window

The FCC Form 471 application filing window **opened Wednesday, January 17, 2024, and will close Wednesday, March 27, 2024** at 11:59 p.m. ET.

Wednesday, February 28, 2024 is the last date that you can submit and certify an FCC Form 470 for FY2024 and still have time to wait the required minimum 28-day period before submitting and certifying your FCC Form 471 before the filing window closes on March 27.

The FCC Forms 470 and 471 must be filed in EPC. The dates and times above apply to the time the form is certified in EPC. If you complete all the required information on the FCC Form 471 before the filing deadline but certify it after the deadline, the form will not be considered as timely filed and will be marked as out-of-window.

Below are the next steps for applicants who have not accessed EPC in the last six months; applicants who are ready to start the competitive bidding process; and applicants who have completed their competitive bidding process and signed a contract.

Applicants who have not accessed EPC in the last six months.

In 2021, we added an additional step to the login process. To access EPC, you must first log in to One Portal, our multi-factor authentication (MFA) system. MFA is a method of authenticating a computer user during the login process by requiring the user to enter two or more separate pieces of information, such as a password known to the user and a code we generate and send to the user by email or text.

For existing EPC users, we have created accounts for you in One Portal. To set up your credentials in One Portal, click the blue **Sign In** button at the top of any [USAC](#) page and follow the instructions. To see a demonstration of the login process, you can watch the [Forgot Password](#) video. (The process of

logging in for the first time and the process of resetting your existing password are essentially the same.)

Newly created users in EPC will automatically be set up with a One Portal account using their email address as their username. As above, click the blue **Sign In** button to get started. If you need assistance, call our Customer Service Center (CSC) at (888) 203-8100.

Applicants who are just starting the application process for FY2024.

Applicants begin the process of applying for discounts on eligible equipment and services by completing and certifying an [FCC Form 470](#) (Description of Services Requested and Certification Form) in EPC. This [opens the competitive bidding process](#), the process by which applicants identify and request the products and services needed so that potential service providers can review those requests and submit bids for them.

The entity that will run the competitive bidding process must be prepared to receive and evaluate bids and negotiate with service providers.

You do not have to file an FCC Form 470 for FY2024 if:

- You will be purchasing services from a state master contract where your state filed an FCC Form 470 and conducted a competitive bidding process, and that resulting state master contract covers the equipment and services for all of FY2024; or
- You posted an FCC Form 470 for a previous funding year and conducted a competitive bidding process that resulted in a multi-year contract that covers your equipment and services for all of FY2024; or
- You are purchasing a commercially available, high-speed business-class internet service that meets ALL of the requirements listed in the **Exemption from Filing an FCC Form 470** section of the [Applicant Step 1: Competitive Bidding](#) guidance document on the USAC website.
 - This **exemption does NOT apply to Internet access services for school buses**, as this exemption only applies to funding for services delivered to a school or library building.
- You are a library purchasing \$3,600 or less in total Category Two equipment in FY2024.

Remember that you must wait at least 28 days after you submit and certify your FCC Form 470 before you can select a service provider, sign a contract, and submit and certify your FCC Form 471.

Beginning in FY2024, School Bus Wi-Fi equipment and services are eligible for E-Rate funding. Read the [December 15, 2023 E-Rate News Brief](#) to learn how to prepare and submit your FCC Form 470 if you want to get bids on equipment and services for Wi-Fi and read the article below for tips on submitting FCC Form 471 requests for School Bus Wi-Fi equipment and services.

Applicants who have completed their competitive bidding process and signed a contract.

If you are using a new or existing contract on your FCC Form 471, you must have a contract record for that contract in your EPC profile. A contract record provides specific details about a contract – e.g., the establishing FCC Form 470, the number of bids received, the service provider, the contract term and associated dates – so that the contract information can be auto-populated from your profile to the appropriate funding request on your FCC Form 471.

You can create contract records in your EPC profile by going to the organization page for the parent organization (independent school, school district, independent library, library system, or consortium), and clicking **Contracts** from the menu choices at the top of the page, then choose **Manage Contracts**, and then choose **Add a New Contract**.

- You do not need to create a new contract record for a multi-year contract or a contract with voluntary extensions if you previously created the contract record in EPC for that contract.
 - For a contract that has been voluntarily extended through FY2024, you can include the existing contract record on the appropriate funding request on your FCC Form 471, and then enter the extended date in the field labeled "What is the date your contract expires for the current term of the contract?"
- If you have a new contract or need to make changes to an existing contract record, **you must create a new contract record**. EPC does not allow edits to a contract record after it has been submitted. You are encouraged – but not required – to upload a copy of your contract into your contract record. If you do not upload your contract, be sure to keep a copy handy in case USAC requests it during the review of your application. In addition, FCC document retention rules require you to retain and provide documentation when requested by USAC for at least 10 years after the end of the applicable funding year or last date of service, whichever date is later.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate that they **had a contract or other legally binding agreement in place at the time they submitted and certified an FCC Form 471**. Find more information on the [Contracts](#) page or view the [How to Create a Contract Record](#) video.

Submitting Requests for School Bus Wi-Fi Equipment and Services

In the [December 15, 2023 E-Rate News Brief](#), we provided information on how to prepare and submit your FCC Form 470 if you want to get bids on equipment and services for Wi-Fi, and other similar access technologies, on school buses.

This month we are providing more details on how to submit the FCC Form 471 to request equipment and services for Wi-Fi on school buses. After waiting at least 28 days and selecting the most cost-effective service provider(s), the next step is to submit and certify the [FCC Form 471](#) during the FY2024 application filing window. USAC made updates to the FCC Form 471 in EPC that will allow applicants to apply for **Wireless School Bus Service**.

When submitting an FCC Form 471 for school bus Wi-Fi funding requests and to help streamline reviews, applicants should:

- **Submit a separate FCC Form 471** for Wireless School Bus Services.
- **Submit a separate funding request number (FRN) for each contract or vendor** for these services.
- Use **"School Bus Wi-Fi"** or similar name as the **FCC Form 471 nickname**.
- **List all schools as recipients of service** that will be served by the buses.

Applying for School Bus Wi-Fi in EPC

School Bus Wi-Fi equipment and services are submitted in EPC on the FCC Form 471 as Category One (C1) – Data Transmission and/or Internet Access requests. On the FCC Form 471, after selecting C1 on the **Category of Service** screen, you will progress through the form until you get to the **Funding Request** screen and click **Add FRN**. In the **Funding Request Key Information** screen, we recommend that you enter a form nickname that includes "School Bus Wi-Fi" along with other identifying information for your situation.

Next, on the **FRN Contract** screen, select **Month-to-Month** if that is your arrangement with the service provider or select **Contract** if you have a signed contract, and then associate the contract to the funding request on the next screen. On the next screen, you will select **No** to designate that the FRN does not include a Fiber or Wireless request.

On the next screen, for the **FRN Narrative**, you will enter "Applicant seeks support for wireless school bus service, and, if applicable, associated equipment to make the service functional" along with make and model information, the number of buses serviced, and any other relevant information. Then click **Save & View FRNs** or **Save and Add/Manage FRN Line Items**.

The FRN Line Item level is where you will add more details about the specific equipment and/or services for School Bus Wi-Fi. Start by clicking **Add New FRN Line Item**. On the **Product and Service Details for the FRN Line Item** screen, for **Purpose** you will select "Internet access service that includes a connection from any applicant site directly to the Internet Service Provider." In the **Function** text box, you will enter "Wireless School Bus Service" and from the **Type of Connection** dropdown menu you will select "Wireless data service", "Equipment", "Installation", etc., as applicable.

After selecting "Wireless data service" from the **Type of Connection** dropdown, you will be asked to enter "Number of Buses Being Serviced" in the text box that appears. On the next screens, you will provide bandwidth speeds, some connection information such as whether the request includes firewall services or if the connection provides a wide area network, the costs associated with the line item, and the recipients of service (at least one has to be a school). Once you have provided all the information, you will be returned to the **Add New FRN Line Item** screen where you can add more line items as needed or continue with your form.

Learn About the Updated Community Eligibility Provision Threshold

In September 2023, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service amended the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) [regulations](#) by lowering the minimum identified student percentage (ISP) from 40% to 25%, effective October 26, 2023. The rule gave states and schools greater flexibility to offer meals to all enrolled students at no cost when the district confirms that 25% or more of their students are eligible under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the costs are financially viable.

Beginning with FY2015, schools and school districts participating in the [Community Eligibility Provision \(CEP\)](#) use their approved direct certification percentage to determine their NSLP percentage. This percentage along with the applicant's urban/rural status determines their E-Rate discount percentages. Visit the [Alternative Discount Mechanisms](#) page for more information about using CEP to determine your E-Rate discount.

If Your CEP Percentage is less than 40%

On the FCC Form 471 in EPC, applicants (individually or as part of a group) are currently not allowed to enter a CEP percentage lower than 40%. If you want to report a CEP percentage less than 40%, you must enter your regular NSLP numbers (without CEP multiplier calculations) and **use the FCC Form 471 narrative field to communicate your request for the PIA reviewer to enter the proper CEP percentage**.

USAC reviewers will have the capability to make this adjustment during PIA review. If an applicant neglected to indicate this information in the narrative prior to submission of the FCC Form 471 application, they can submit a Receipt Acknowledgement Letter (RAL) request for the reviewer to make this update for them. View the [FCC Form 471 Receipt Acknowledgment Letter Modification Guide](#).

In the narrative, the applicant should communicate their desire to use CEP, the entities using CEP and include each entities' CEP percentages. This will alert the reviewer to perform outreach to request any needed documentation. Any entities with a CEP percentage of 40% or higher are not impacted by the system limitation so they can follow normal processes. Applicants will have the ability to enter the CEP percentage themselves in FY2025.

Upcoming E-Rate Application Filing Webinars

During the FY2024 FCC Form 471 application filing window, USAC will conduct a series of webinars focused on E-Rate topics related to FCC Forms 470 and 471 and the [FY2024 Eligible Services List](#). Below is the schedule of upcoming webinars with the topic, the time, and the recommended audience. We also list the specific materials that attendees should review in advance of the Office Hours webinars.

If you are interested in attending, register for the webinar and review all materials referenced for the webinar in advance of the office hours question and answer session (see links below). Attendees will use the webinar's chat function to ask questions. We will identify questions of general interest that are submitted through the chat function, read and respond to them, and answer specific questions individually using the chat function. As with our regular webinars, we will give preference to questions about the topic under discussion.

Upcoming Webinars

Service Provider Selection and the FCC Form 471 Q&A Session Thursday, January 25 at 2 p.m. ET (Today)

- [Register](#)

E-Rate subject matter experts will provide an overview of how to apply for program discounts on the FCC Form 471 for applicants of all experience levels. Materials to review before the training include:

- E-Rate Pre-Commitment Process [webinar recording](#) and [slides](#)
- [Step 2: Selecting Service Providers](#) page
- [FCC Form 471 Filing](#) page
- [FCC Form 471 Checklist](#) (PDF)
- [FCC Form 471 video series](#)

Pre-Commitment (FCC Forms 470, 471, ESL, etc.) E-Rate Q&A Session Thursday, February 22 at 2 p.m. ET

- [Register](#)

E-Rate subject matter experts will answer questions about the competitive bidding process, Category Two budgets, and the Eligible Services List. This is recommended for applicants and service providers of all E-Rate experience levels. Materials to review before the training include:

- [E-Rate Pre-Commitment Process Webinar](#)
- [Filing the FCC Form 470 and the Competitive Bidding Process Webinar](#)

Recent Webinars

Below are on-demand recordings and accompanying slides from our fall webinars. To watch a webinar recording, click **Watch** next to the session on the [Webinars](#) page.

- **E-Rate Eligible Services Q&A Session** (Thursday, January 18)

E-Rate subject matter experts will provide an overview of FY2024 E-Rate eligible services for applicants and service providers of all experience levels.

- **Competitive Bidding (FCC Form 470) Q&A Session** (Tuesday, January 23)

E-Rate subject matter experts will walk you through competitive bidding and the FCC Form 470 with a focus on the FCC Form Guiding Statements Document for all experience levels.

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