![Universal Service Administrative Co. | E-Rate]

E-Rate News Brief

February 15, 2024

Funding Year (FY) 2024 FCC Form 471 Filing Window Countdown

The Funding Year (FY) 2024 FCC Form 471 application filing window is now open. The application filing **window will close on Wednesday, March 27, 2024** at 11:59:59 p.m. ET.

Days to window close	**40**
FY2024 FCC Forms 470 filed	**17,867**
FY2024 FCC Forms 471 filed	**7,732**

FCC Forms 470 and 471 counts as of yesterday, 9:00 p.m. EST

Contents

E-RATE TIPS:

• **Wednesday, February 28, 2024,** is the last date to submit and certify an FCC Form 470 and **still wait the required minimum 28-day period before submitting and certifying your FY2024 FCC Form 471 by March 27, 2024**, the last date of the FY2024 application filing window. Go to the competitive bidding infographic to learn about the steps in the competitive bidding process.

• **Unresponsive Bids, "SPAM" Bids and "Robobids."** All bids received should be retained during the competitive bidding process. Disqualification factors can be applied to bids received that do not meet minimum bid requirements, do not include site- or project-specific details, and/or are not responsive to the applicant's requests. Applicants may include language in their FCC Form 470 narrative or request for proposal (RFP), such as, "SPAM and/or robotic responses will not be considered valid bid responses and

will be disqualified from consideration." By doing this, applicants can disqualify bids based on this factor. The decision to disqualify any non-responsive bids should also be memorialized and retained to demonstrate compliance with the E-Rate competitive bidding rules.

• **Pre-Commitment E-Rate Q&A Session on Thursday, February 22, at 2 p.m. ET**. E-Rate experts will answer your questions about the competitive bidding process, Category Two budgets, and the Eligible Services List. View webinar recordings of the pre-commitment and competitive bidding processes on the E-Rate Webinars page. Register for this webinar.

• **Training Recordings Available on Demand**. USAC offered a series of online training sessions for E-Rate program participants, including Tribal applicants, in Fall 2023 and January 2024, to help prepare for the FY2024 FCC Form 471 application filing window. You can watch a recording using the links available under **Previous Trainings** on the E-Rate Webinars page. View the Fall Training 2022 Questions and Answers from all the sessions on the E-Rate Resources page.

E-RATE INVOICING TIPS:

• **Service Providers: Submit Your FCC Form 473**. The FCC Form 473, or Service Provider Annual Certification (SPAC) Form, **must be filed each year** by service providers that participate in the E-Rate program **for each Service Provider Identification Number** (SPIN). This form **must be certified and on file with USAC for each funding year before USAC can pay any invoices** – the FCC Form 472, Billed Entity Applicant Reimbursement (BEAR) Form or the FCC Form 474, Service Provider Invoice (SPI) Form – **for that funding year**.

• **SL Legacy Invoicing Disbursement Schedule**. USAC will run payment files for remaining SL Legacy invoices (FY2015 and prior) submitted before the November 7, 2023 transition to EPC invoicing **that were not migrated into EPC on the first and third Wednesdays of each month** with few exceptions.

• The **Invoice Line Summary Status Report in EPC** provides a quick reference for E-Rate participants on how to use the new EPC Invoicing portal to check on associated entities' invoicing activities so they can assist where needed. See the Invoice Line Summary Status Report section in Applicant Course 2: Invoice Management and Status on the E-Rate Videos page.

• **Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) Requirement for New or Modified FCC Form 498**. All E-Rate applicants with a 498 ID (i.e., that use the Billed Entity Applicant Reimbursement (BEAR) method for reimbursement) or service providers with a Service Provider ID Number (SPIN) are **required to obtain and use** the SAM.gov UEI **when making changes to their existing** FCC Form 498 **or submitting a new** FCC Form 498. Visit the Obtain an Applicant 498 ID page or the Step 1: Obtain a SPIN page to learn more about how to obtain your UEI through SAM.gov today.

Commitments for Funding Year (FY) 2023

FY2023. USAC released FY2023 Wave 42 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) on February 8. As of February 14, FY2023 commitments total over $2.58 billion.

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

Interested in E-Rate? Learn About the Program Benefits and How to Apply

The E-Rate program **provides discounts of up to 90 percent** for eligible internet access services, data transmission services, and internal connections (e.g., Wi-Fi equipment, cabling, and basic maintenance services) that are competitively bid and approved on the E-Rate application (FCC Form 471). The discounts are available to eligible schools (K-12), libraries, and groups of eligible schools and libraries (e.g., consortia, school districts, library systems), to help reduce the costs of obtaining eligible equipment and services through the E-Rate program.

For example: A school or library with a 90 percent discount rate that purchases eligible broadband services for $1,000 would pay its 10 percent non-discounted share of costs (i.e., $100) to the service provider. The E-Rate program would pay the remaining 90 percent (i.e., $900) to the service provider. **Apply by March 27, 2024 for FY2024** (for services and equipment to be provided between July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025). Learn more about eligibility and program benefits in the E-Rate Program Overview.

Do you know an eligible applicant that's not currently participating in the E-Rate program? The Find Your Library Discount Guide can help you look up the benefits you may receive through the E-Rate program. Learn more about getting started.

Enhanced E-Rate Benefits for FY2024

- **Libraries**: The FCC implemented **a competitive bidding exemption for all libraries** seeking E-Rate support for **Category Two (C2) equipment/services that total a pre-discount price of $3,600 or less** per library per funding year (FY2024 and forward). Visit the E-Rate Library FAQs page to learn more.

- **School Bus Wi-Fi Equipment/Services Now Eligible**: The FCC expanded E-Rate eligible services to include equipment and services for Wi-Fi, and other similar access technologies, on school buses starting in FY2024. This includes right-to-use licenses and software needed to operate bus Wi-Fi devices. Learn more in the School Bus Wi-Fi updates in the Eligible Services FAQs.

- **Tribal Entities**: The FCC updated program definitions, defined Tribal entities, made Tribal College and University (TCU) libraries that also serve as a public library, eligible for E-Rate, increased the discount rate for C2 services for **Tribal libraries** to the **highest discount level (90 percent)** beginning FY2024, and **increased the C2 budget floor (now $55,000)** for Tribal libraries (see FCC 23-56 issued on July 21, 2023). Learn more through the E-Rate Tribal Library FAQs.

- **Tribal Library Pilot Program Extended for FY2024**: USAC will provide one-on-one support, group training sessions for participants, and E-Rate program trainings covering the program basics and processes for Tribal Pilot participants. Contact the USAC Tribal Liaison at TribalLiaison@usac.org for more information.

2024 E-Rate Training and Conference Schedule

Visit E-Rate staff at one of the conferences we will be going to or attend one of our in-person training sessions this year to learn about the E-Rate program and how to apply or to ask our staff questions you may have. USAC will announce more events in the E-Rate News Brief as we confirm details. You can also find information on the E-Rate Training Events page.

Computers in Libraries 2024 Conference
March 12-14, 2024
Arlington, Virginia

- Visit USAC at Booth 117. [Event link](#).

Public Library Association (PLA) 2024 Conference
April 3-5, 2024
Columbus, Ohio

- Visit USAC at Booth 1022. [Event link](#).

Consortia for School Networking (CoSN) 2024 Conference
April 8-10, 2024
Miami, Florida

- Visit USAC at Booth TBD. [Event link](#).

Upcoming February 27 Invoicing Deadline for FY2022 Recurring Services

February 27, 2024 is the deadline to submit an invoice **for FY2022 recurring services** if the applicant or service provider requested and received a one-time extension of the earlier October 30, 2023 deadline. Any invoices submitted after February 27, will be denied as untimely and will require a waiver of the invoice filing deadline rule from the FCC. Parties requesting a waiver must demonstrate extraordinary circumstances to justify a waiver of the invoice filing deadline date.

Requesting an invoice filing deadline extension
If you need additional time to complete your invoicing process and have not already requested and received a 120-day extension, you can [request an extension of the invoicing deadline](#). If the request is received before your invoice deadline and approved, you will receive an additional 120 days to complete your invoicing process. USAC cannot approve an additional extension if you have already requested and received a 120-day extension of the invoice filing deadline for your funding request numbers (FRNs).

All invoices and invoice deadline extension requests must be submitted on or before your invoice filing deadline date. If you do not know your invoice filing deadline date, the new [E-Rate FRN Invoice Deadline Tool](#) provides the ability to search, view, and download data related to FRN(s) and the applicable invoice filing deadline date(s).

Reminders for Filing an FY2024 FCC Form 471

Below are reminders for some of the actions you should take before the FY2024 application filing window closes on **March 27, 2024**.

Wait the required, minimum 28-day period before selecting your service provider(s), and before submitting and certifying your FCC Form 471.
You must wait the required, minimum 28-day period after your [FCC Form 470](#) is certified and posted before choosing a service provider, signing a contract (if applicable), and submitting and certifying your FCC Form 471. Changes to the FCC Form 470 beyond certain [allowable changes](#) require applicants to restart the minimum 28-day waiting period from the date of the change before selecting a service provider, signing a contract, or submitting and certifying an FCC Form 471.

Additionally, if you upload your RFP (request for proposals) or RFP documents after you certified and submitted your FCC Form 470, you are required to wait a minimum 28-day period from the date you uploaded your RFP or RFP documents. The required, minimum 28-day waiting period is based on the date of your certified and posted FCC Form 470 or uploaded RFP, whichever was filed later, if they are not posted together on the same date.

- EPC will not allow you to create a contract record if the FCC Form 470 you try to cite for the contract was not posted for at least 28 days.

- Once the minimum 28-day waiting period has ended and a service provider is selected, the applicant must have a binding agreement prior to the submission of the FCC Form 471. Note that a verbal agreement is not considered a contract or legally [binding agreement](#) under E-Rate program rules.

- For services provided under tariff or on a month-to-month basis, EPC will not allow you to finish entering a funding request for those services if the cited FCC Form 470 was not posted for at least 28 days.

Make sure that you have access rights in EPC to be able to work on an FCC Form 471.
Your account administrator must grant you user rights to complete and/or certify the FCC Form 471. Note that new users must first accept the terms and conditions for EPC by clicking the **Tasks** tab from the menu at the top of the landing page and choosing the appropriate task.

After your rights have been assigned, click the **FCC Form 471** link at the top of your organization's landing page to start your form.

If you have access to the form but cannot enter information or take other actions, call our Customer Service Center (CSC) at (888) 203-8100 for assistance.

Start your FCC Form 471, even if you are not ready to provide all funding request details.
After you start your form, you can see your progress through the form by referring to the progress bar at the top of each page. If you need to stop before you have finished, the system will create a task for you under the **Tasks** tab to allow you to resume your work at the point you left. Be sure to review the following as you work through your form:

- Your organization's information (e.g., name, address, telephone number, attributes).

- Your related entities' information (e.g., name, address, urban/rural status, attributes, student counts for schools, library square footage, and library main branch designation for libraries).

- Your organization's urban/rural designation and discount calculation.

Because entity profiles are locked, you will not be able to make any entity changes at this point. However, by making a note of any necessary updates, you will be ready to submit a **RAL Modification Request** (see article below) to inform us of those updates.

Create a contract record for each new contract or legally binding agreement.
You must have a contract record in your profile for each contract or legally binding agreement you intend to use on your FY2024 FCC Form 471. You then cite to the contract record for the services that will be provided under that contract when you are creating a funding request on your form.

- If you created a contract record in an earlier year for a multi-year contract that covers your services for FY2024, cite to that contract record for this year.

- If you created a contract record in an earlier year for a contract with voluntary extensions, you do not need to create a new contract record if the extension will cover services for all of FY2024. First, work with your service provider to exercise the extension for your FY2024 services. Then, when you cite to that contract record for the funding request for these services, enter the last date of service for all of FY2024 (i.e., June 30, 2025) in the contract end date field for that request. You do not have to create a new contract record simply because you exercised an option to extend the contract.

- Learn How to Create a Contract Record:

    o [How to Create a Contract Record](#) video.

    o [How to Create a Contract Record for Commercially Available Broadband/Low-Cost High-Speed Internet Access](#) (which is exempt from competitive bidding) video.

You are encouraged – but not required – to upload a copy of your contract into your contract record in EPC. 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.

Do not wait until the end of the application filing window to contact us with questions or issues. You can open a customer service case in EPC or call CSC at (888) 203-8100 as soon as possible if you need assistance. If you choose to open a customer service case, you will also be able to upload one or more documents that provide additional information we need to process your request.

Interim SPIN Will Be Available March 13, 2024 for FY2024 FCC Form 471 Submissions

Some service providers who are new to the E-Rate program may have applied for, but not yet received, a [Service Provider Identification Number](#) (SPIN). Some applicants, whose service providers have multiple SPINs or are undergoing a merger or acquisition, may not be sure which SPIN to include on an FCC Form 471 funding request.

In such cases, USAC enables an "interim SPIN" (143666666) shortly before the close of the FCC Form 471 application filing window. **The interim SPIN will be available starting March 13, 2024**. However, we encourage applicants to provide the correct SPIN for their FCC Form 471 funding requests, whenever possible, to speed USAC's review of their application.

Applicants can file an FCC Form 471 funding request and use this interim SPIN as a placeholder so they can timely file their form during the application filing window. They can then **update the SPIN through a Receipt Acknowledgment Letter (RAL) Modification Request** (see article below) or during the review of their application.

Use the RAL Modification Request to Update Certified FCC Form 471 Information

USAC issues an FCC Form 471 Receipt Acknowledgment Letter (RAL) to both the applicant and service provider(s) in EPC after an FCC Form 471 application is certified. The letter contains many of the details submitted on the FCC Form 471 and provides a means to correct any errors or mistakes. If you were not able to make all the appropriate updates to your profile in EPC before the close of the EPC FCC Form 471 administrative window, **you can provide updated profile information by filing a RAL Modification**

Request after submitting and certifying your FCC Form 471 application(s), but before you receive funding commitment decision letter(s).

Applicants receive the RAL in their EPC **News** feed after certifying an FCC Form 471. The RAL modification function in EPC allows you to provide specific information in an organized format, which makes it easier for Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) reviewers to locate and understand the changes you want to make. Go to the Ministerial & Clerical Errors page to see the types of changes that are allowed and not allowed for the FCC Form 471. To learn how to submit modification requests for your FCC Form(s) 471, you can also view the FCC Form 471 Receipt Acknowledgment Letter Modification Guide.