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E-Rate

E-Rate News Brief

August 28, 2024

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E-RATE TIPS:

- **Complete and Certify Any In-Process FY2024 FCC Forms 470 by September 18.** Some applicants currently have uncertified FY2024 FCC Forms 470 within the EPC system. To prepare for the deployment of the FY2025 FCC Form 470 on September 19, USAC must delete uncertified FY2024 FCC Forms 470 the day before. **Any applicant who wants to rely on an uncertified FY2024 FCC Form 470** that is currently in the EPC system **should certify that form no later than September 18.** The FY2024 FCC Form 470 will then be posted to USAC's website and can then still be cited, for example, to open a competitive bidding process for FY2025.
- **Summer Deferral Period Ends September 6.** Our summer deferral contact period is defined as the Friday before Memorial Day through the Friday after Labor Day. For 2024, the summer deferral contact period began May 24, and **will end Friday, September 6.** If participants were unable to respond during this period, the form or request was placed in a deferred status until the deferral period ends, at which time we will continue our regular review process. USAC will make additional attempts to contact applicants and will then continue the review with the information provided, which may result in a reduction or denial of funding.

- **E-Rate Disbursement Schedule Change.** (**CORRECTED** from 8/28/2024 posting). E-Rate payment files will be run on September 23 and October 3 (and not September 26 and September 30 as is our current schedule). **Beginning October 7, 2024, USAC will change the E-Rate disbursement schedule to one time per week** (Mondays). If a Monday is a holiday, disbursements will go out the following Thursday. USAC currently processes E-Rate disbursements twice a week (Monday and Thursday). The move to invoicing in EPC last November allows USAC to include more invoice line items in each payment batch and thus, reduces the need for multiple disbursement waves to handle the volume of invoice lines.

- **FY2025 Eligible Services List Comment Period.** The FCC Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB) released a Public Notice ([DA 24-743](#)) July 31 requesting comments on the proposed FY2025 eligible services list (ESL). WCB proposes revisions to the draft FY2025 ESL to reflect changes adopted by the FCC in the Wi-Fi Hotspot Report and Order ([FCC 24-76](#)) released July 29, 2024 as well as some changes to the language related to eligibility of off-campus wireless service on a school bus, cost allocation of off-campus use of E-Rate-funded services, and the cost-effectiveness test required for data plans and air cards. **Comments are due on or before August 30 and reply comments on or before September 16, 2024.**

- **Webinar Recordings Now Available.** USAC held multiple training webinars in August to help applicants understand the competitive bidding process, the eligibility of Wi-Fi hotspots, service provider trainings, and how to use USAC's Open Data sets available to the public. Go to the E-Rate [Webinars](#) page to view a recording or to view webinar slides for each session.

Commitments for Funding Year (FY) 2024

FY2024. USAC released FY2024 Wave 18 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) on August 22. As of August 27, FY2024 commitments total over \$2.05 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).

You can use the [E-Rate Search Commitments Tool](#) to look up prior-year commitment data.

FY2025 FCC Form 470 Available in EPC Starting September 19, 2024

The FY2025 FCC Form 470, which is used to start the competitive bidding process, **will become available September 19 in the E-Rate Productivity Center** (EPC). Applicants will be able to complete and certify this form in EPC.

The FY2025 FCC Form 470 changed from last year. Below we provide you with information on the changes made to the FY2025 form, preparing for the FY2025 competitive bidding process, and FCC Form 470/competitive bidding resources that you can find on the E-Rate website.

Changes to the FY2025 FCC Form 470

This year, the FCC Form 470 includes the new features below. A detailed walkthrough of the form is available in the [How to File an FCC Form 470](#) learning module.

- **Ability To Upload RFP and RFP Documents After Certification.** Applicants can upload an RFP (request for proposals) or RFP documents after the FCC Form 470 is submitted and certified in EPC but cannot remove RFP documents attached to your FCC Form 470.
 - Details about this change can be found in the **Uploading RFPs After Certification** section of the [How to File an FCC Form 470](#) learning module.
- **Ability To Cancel FCC Forms 470 and View Canceled Forms.** 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 committed FCC Form 471 Funding Request Number (FRN).
 - Users with **FCC Form 471 partial or full rights** to file FCC Form 471 funding applications 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**. A validation message appears preventing you from certifying the FCC Form 471 in these cases.
 - Applicants can view canceled FCC Forms 470 in EPC under **Records -> FCC Forms 470** by selecting "Canceled" under the **Status** filter. Service providers can select **Search FCC Forms 470** on their landing page and then select the Funding Year, date range for posted FCC Forms 470, and Category of Service. You can also access the search from the **Actions** tab by selecting **Search and Export Certified FCC Forms 470**. Canceled FCC Form 470 information can also be found in the [E-Rate FCC Form 470 Download Tool](#) by looking in the **FCC Form 470 Status** column.
- **Wi-Fi Hotspot Devices/Wireless Internet Services for Off-Premises Use.** The FCC released a report and order ([FCC 24-76](#)) July 29 that permits eligible schools and libraries to receive E-Rate support for the off-premises use of Wi-Fi hotspots and wireless mobile internet services by students, school staff, and library patrons. The FY2025 FCC Form 470 includes options to request bids for Wi-Fi hotspot devices and wireless mobile Internet access services for these devices.
 - Details about filing for **Hotspot Devices for Off-Premises Use** equipment/services can be found in the **C1: Wi-Fi Hotspots for Off Premises Use (Equipment)** and the **C1: Wi-Fi Hotspots for Off Premises Use (Data Transmission)** sections of the [How to File an FCC Form 470](#) learning module.
- **Bus Wi-Fi Network Equipment/Mobile Service for Buses.** These equipment and services were available in FY2024, but the FCC Form 470 was not updated in time to include specific selections for them. **USAC has updated the FY2025 FCC Form 470** to include selections for seeking bids **for School Bus Wi-Fi mobile services and the equipment** needed to make the services functional.
 - Details about filing for **School Bus Wi-Fi Mobile Service/Network Equipment for Buses** can be found in the **C1: Mobile Services on School Buses** and the **C1: School Bus Wi-Fi Network Equipment** sections of the [How to File an FCC Form 470](#) learning module.

FCC Form 470 and Competitive Bidding Resources

USAC posted the [How to File an FCC Form 470](#) learning module and interactive user guide along with the [FY2025+ FCC Form 470 Services Guiding Statements Table](#) on the USAC website to help you get started with your FY2025 competitive bidding process. The learning module walks you through the steps for submitting Category One and Category Two bid requests for School Bus Wi-Fi and Wi-Fi Hotspots for Off-Premises Use equipment and services and the new EPC calculations for Allowable Contract Date (ACD). The guiding statements document provides a table to help you determine which dropdown menus to select on the FCC Form 470 when requesting specific types of equipment and services.

Start your competitive bidding process on the right foot by viewing the [Competitive Bidding Infographic](#).

THE COMPETITIVE BIDDING PROCESS

allows applicants to identify and request products and/or services so that potential service providers can review those requests and submit bids for them.

The process consists of five steps:

- 1 Get Ready to File**
 - Perform a needs assessment
 - Review your state and local procurement rules
 - Review the [Eligible Services List](#)
- 2 File and certify an FCC Form 470**
 - Provide sufficient information for potential vendors to provide a comprehensive bid (e.g., for managed internal broadband services specify the exact equipment/services to be managed)
 - Potential bidders (service providers) cannot help you file FCC Form 470
 - You have the option to submit a Request for Proposals (RFP) with your form
 - There are [competitive bidding exemptions](#) for certain Category 1 and Category 2 (libraries only) equipment/services
 - After you certify your FCC Form 470, USAC issues a Receipt Notification Letter (RNL) with your Allowable Contract Date (ACD) – the earliest date you can enter into an agreement or sign a contract
- 3 Ensure an open and fair process**
 - Provide any FCC Form 470, RFP and other information/updates in EPC for all potential bidders for at least 28 days
 - "Open" means there are no secrets in the process and that all bidders know what is required of them
 - "Fair" means that all bidders are treated the same and that no bidder has project information others do not
 - Abide by the [Gift Rules](#)
- 4 Wait at least 28 days before selecting a service provider**
 - The ACD (included on your RNL) is 28 days after the FCC Form 470 is **certified**
 - The day you **certify** the FCC Form 470 is day 1
 - If the FCC Form 470 is certified on the 1st of the month, you may select a service provider **on or after** the 29th of the month
 - If you later **change the information** needed to respond to the bid, you must restart the 28 days
 - If you issue an RFP on a later date, you must restart the 28 days
 - State or Local procurement rules may require a longer waiting period
- 5 Select a service provider**
 - Select a service provider after your ACD and before certifying the FCC Form 471
 - Consider all responsive bids
 - Use a [Bid Evaluation Matrix](#)
 - Ensure price is the primary evaluation factor (highest weighted factor). Only the costs of eligible goods/services should be evaluated in this criterion
 - Enter into a legally binding agreement and document selection date (after the minimum 28-day waiting period)
 - Upload your legally binding agreements and contracts to EPC

Publication Date: 8/28/2024

Available for Public Use



Retain all competitive bidding documentation, including the Bid Evaluation Matrix, for ten years after the last day you receive services or the end of that funding year, using whichever date is later.

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Here are more resources on the FCC Form 470 and the competitive bidding process:

- [Step 1: Competitive Bidding](#)
- [FY2025+ FCC Form 470 Services Guiding Statements Table](#)
- [FCC Form 470 Filing](#) page
- Filing the FCC Form 470 and the Competitive Bidding Process [Webinar](#) (August 2024) and [webinar slides](#)
- [How to File an FCC Form 470](#) learning module
- Practice submitting FCC Form 470 on the [EPC Training Site](#)

Requesting Service Delivery Deadline Extensions for FY2023 Non-Recurring Services (Other Than Special Construction)

The **deadline for delivery and installation of non-recurring services** (e.g., installations, equipment purchases) is September 30 following the close of the funding year. **For FY2023, the deadline** for non-recurring services, other than special construction, **is Monday, September 30, 2024.**

This [service delivery deadline](#) (SDD) can be extended for up to one year under certain circumstances, through an extension request. In some cases, the extension will be automatically made based on the Funding Commitment Decision Letter (FCDL) date or the revised FCDL (RFCDL) date.

Requesting extensions

Service providers who are (1) unable to meet their service delivery deadline for reasons beyond their control such as supply chain delays or are (2) unwilling to complete delivery and installation because USAC withheld invoice payments on the services for more than 60 days, **can ask the affected applicants to request a one-year extension** with USAC, which must be approved.

Applicants **can request the one-year extension** by completing and certifying an [FCC Form 500](#) (Funding Commitment Adjustment Request Form) **on or before September 30, 2024** for FY2023 non-recurring services. If your service delivery deadline for a Funding Request Number (FRN) is approved and the deadline extended to September 30, 2025, USAC will automatically extend the invoice deadline for that FRN to January 28, 2026. There is **no need to submit an invoice deadline date (IDD) extension request** for an extended FRN when submitting an SDD extension request. If you do submit an IDD extension request at the same time, it will count towards your one-time invoicing extension, and you will not be able to request a second IDD extension request in the future if you need it.

If, as a service provider, you are aware of the need to request an SDD extension, work with your customer (the applicant) to get the FCC Form 500 completed and certified **no later than September 30, 2024**.

Automatic extensions

If USAC issues an FY2023 FCDL on or after March 1, 2024, the SDD is automatically extended for one year to September 30, 2025. This also applies to RFCDLs issued on or after March 1, 2024, for one of the following:

- Approval of an appeal for a funding request that originally denied or reduced funding,
- Approval of a Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN) change, or
- Approval of a service or equipment substitution.

The FCDL or RFCDL contains the extended SDD date when it is issued. You can also find the SDD by searching for the FRN using the [E-Rate FRN Status Tool FY2016+](#).

E-Rate Data Tool Updates

USAC is consolidating all data tools into the USAC [Open Data](#) platform. The platform makes program data available to the public in a variety of formats and methods including CSV (comma separated values) for MS Excel, RSS, RDF, XML, API, and ODATA. Below is a summary of recent Open Data tool changes as well as sunset information for legacy tools currently outside of Open Data.

- [E-Rate FRN Status Tool FY2016+](#): This tool is used to look up FRN (Funding Request Number) related data. USAC **recently added several new fields** to the tool including CRN/Consulting Firm/Consultant Email (concatenated); Account Administrator; USAC Contract ID; Contract Award Date; and Extended Contract Expiration Date. USAC's legacy [FRN Status Tool](#) outside of Open Data **will be sunset in October 2024**.
- [E-Rate Service Provider Download Tool](#): This new Open Data tool **provides service provider information** including contact information, address, FCC Form 473 certification data by Funding Year, and the last approved date for the FCC Form 498 (Service Provider and Billed Entity

Identification Number and Contact Information Form). The legacy [Service Provider Download Tool](#) will be sunset in October 2024.

- [E-Rate FCC Form 470 Download Tool](#): This Open Data tool **allows you to view and export FCC Form 470 data** as well as **download PDF versions of the FCC Form 470**. The legacy FCC Form 470 search and download tools were sunset in spring 2024.

2024 Training and Outreach

USAC is coming to an event near you in 2024. Below are some events we will attend in the next few months. Visit the [In-Person E-Rate Training Events](#) page to learn more about the events we'll be attending where we can answer your E-Rate questions. Also, keep an eye on the E-Rate [Webinars](#) page for information on upcoming training opportunities.

Webinars

- **Open Data Training: Creating Reports and Visualizations on August 29, 2024**, from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. ET. This webinar explains how to create an Open Data account, the benefits of creating custom reports and simple chart visualizations, and a demo on how to use Open Data tools. This is the second installation of a two-part Open Data series. Please view Part One (Open Data Overview) on the [Webinars](#) page as a prerequisite. [Register](#).
- **E-Rate Program Overview on September 5, 2024**, from 2 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. ET. USAC will provide an overview of the E-Rate application process and explain basic program concepts. We will also highlight the recent Wi-Fi Hotspot Order, FCC Form 470 updates, and managing your FY2021–2025 Category Two budget to capture unused funds for FY2025. After the presentation, we will conduct a Q&A session. There are no prerequisites for this webinar. [Register](#).
- **E-Rate Pre-Commitment Process on September 19, 2024**, from 2 p.m. - 3 p.m. ET. USAC will discuss the E-Rate Pre-Commitment process. This includes how to get started, competitive bidding, applying for funding, and Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) review. After the presentation, we will conduct a Q&A session. [Register](#).
- **Eligible Services 101 on September 24, 2024**, from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. ET. This webinar will review FY2025 equipment and services that are eligible for E-Rate discounts. This includes programmatic updates such as School Bus Wi-Fi, Wi-Fi hotspots for off-premises use, details on Basic Maintenance of Internal Connections (BMIC), and basic fiber concepts. After the presentation, we will conduct a Q&A session. There are no prerequisites for this webinar. [Register](#).

2024 In-Person Training

E-Rate experts will provide training and discuss program updates. There will be time at the end of the sessions for USAC to answer questions from both new and experienced participants. Each session will cover the E-Rate program lifecycle beginning with the opening of the EPC Administrative Window, running a competitive bidding process, applying for funding, and invoicing for approved equipment and services.

Registration **opened on April 23 at 3 p.m. Eastern Time** (ET). Register for a training by selecting a link below.

- **E-Rate Training**: September 17, 2024 from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Central Time in **Dallas, Texas**. [Register](#).

- **E-Rate Training:** October 7, 2024 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern Time in **Washington, D.C.** [Register](#).
- **E-Rate Training:** October 29, 2024 from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Central Time in **Fayetteville, Arkansas.** [Register](#).
- **Tribal-Focused E-Rate Training:** November 12, 2024 in **Palm Springs, California.** This Tribal-focused training will be held in conjunction with the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, & Museums' (ATALM) annual conference. To attend the E-Rate program training, you must be registered for the conference. [Event link](#).

Conferences

- Visit us at the **Association for Rural & Small Libraries 2024 Conference September 11-14, 2024** in Springfield, Massachusetts. [Event Link](#).

To subscribe, click here: [Subscribe](#).

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