



Universal Service
Administrative Co.

E-Rate

E-Rate News Brief

October 22, 2026

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E-Rate Tips

- **Tribal Library E-Rate Advocacy Program (T-LEAP) Information Session kicks off October 27, 2026.** Join USAC's Tribal Liaison and Tribal Library Advocates for the T-LEAP training and information session **on October 27, 2026**. During this webinar, you will learn about the E-Rate program, including eligibility and other program requirements, and how USAC can support your Tribal Library in applying for E-Rate funding. [Register](#).
- **FY2025 Recurring Service Invoice Deadline.** In most cases, **October 28, 2026, is the deadline** to submit an invoice or request a one-time 120-day invoice deadline extension (IDE) **for FY2025** Funding Request Numbers (FRNs) for **recurring services**. To receive an IDE, your request **must be made before or within 15 days of the original invoice deadline date (IDD)**. The deadline to submit an invoice or request an IDE applies to both applicant and service provider invoices – the FCC Form 472 (BEAR Form) and FCC Form 474 (SPI) and (eSPI), respectively. Learn how to request an IDE in the [September 2026 E-Rate News Brief](#).
- **EPC Category Two (C2) Updates.** USAC made updates to EPC to better enable school and library applicants (including Tribal libraries) to request a C2 budget recalculation during the FY2027 EPC Administrative Window if their student counts or library square footage has changed. This is referred to as a "replacement C2 budget" request and is optional. The C2 budget would be recalculated in EPC should any data change. EPC will also remind applicants to request a budget recalculation via a popup message if any data is updated. To

learn how to request a C2 Replacement Budget, watch **Module 6: How to File a C2 Budget Replacement Request** in the [EPC Administrative Window](#) learning module.

- **Applicants: Don't forget to file your [FCC Form 486](#)** if you have received a positive funding commitment and your services have started. USAC cannot process invoices for Funding Year (FY) 2026 services from applicants or service providers without an approved FCC Form 486 on file. Use the [E-Rate FRN Status tool FY2016+](#) to find your funding request numbers (FRNs) and check the "FCC Form 486 Status" column. If your FCC Form 486 appears to be late, we will send you an **FCC Form 486 Urgent Reminder Letter** to remind you of the upcoming deadline. You have 15 days after the date of the reminder letter to submit and certify your FCC Form 486 without having your service start date changed and your funding commitment potentially reduced for that FRN. View the [FCC Form 486 Filing](#) page to learn about submitting the form and actions for late-filed forms.
- **Service Providers: Don't forget to file the [FCC Form 473](#)** in the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC) **to certify your compliance with E-Rate program rules**, which is required for each year you participate in E-Rate. Service providers must submit and certify an FY2026 FCC Form 473 (Service Provider Annual Certification (SPAC)) as soon as possible, if you have not already done so. (See 47 C.F.R. § 54.504(f)). USAC **cannot pay an invoice** from either an applicant (FCC Form 472) or a service provider (FCC Form 474) unless both the FCC Form 486 and the SPAC forms have been certified and approved. The FCC directed USAC to refer service providers to the FCC Enforcement Bureau for further action when they fail to submit the SPAC form, preventing applicants from being able to submit reimbursement requests. See [2025 SPAC Order](#). View **Module 2: File an FCC Form 473** in the [SP Course 1: Submitting and Certifying Invoices in EPC](#) learning module to see step-by-step instructions.
- **More Competitive Bidding Resources.** Over the past few months, we have provided important [FCC Form 470](#) and [competitive bidding](#) tips and reminders (see recent issues on the [E-Rate News Brief](#) page). The [Competitive Bidding & FCC Form 470 FAQs](#) and the [Pre-Commitment Process Webinar](#) (view [slides](#)) provide information on competitive bidding best practices, exemptions, requirements, and reminders. The [Competitive Bidding infographic](#) also guides you through the competitive bidding process and provides best practices.
- **In-Person Training Materials Available.** E-Rate experts provided training, discussed program updates, and answered questions from new and experienced participants in Phoenix, Arizona (September 15) and Washington, D.C. (September 24). Information on these events and presentation materials are available on the [In-Person E-Rate Training Events](#) webpage.
- **Substantial Change.** During the in-person training in Washington, D.C. on September 24, there was confusion regarding **when an applicant is required to file a new FCC Form 470** and restart the 28-day competitive bidding period **when an additional site is added to the overall scope** of a procurement. We clarify that while merely adding a new site to the overall scope of the procurement may not require a restart of the competitive bidding process, all changes are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The standard for determining whether an applicant must post a new FCC Form 470 was laid out by the FCC in FCC 97-420 ([63 Federal Register 2094](#)) and remains in effect. In general, if you

are making one or more substantial changes that are outside the original scope of your competitive bid, you should file a new FCC Form 470. Service providers that are not interested in bidding on the services contained in the original scope of your project may be interested in bidding on your changed scope, and vice versa.

Funding Year (FY) 2026 Commitments

FY2026. USAC released FY2026 Wave 25 on October 15. As of October 21, FY2026 commitments total over \$2.17 billion.

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

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

New Program Recovery Payments System

USAC has updated the way Universal Service Fund (USF) participants return funds to USAC if program rules require them to return funds. Beginning September 25, 2026, users will be directed to USAC's One Portal dashboard when they click the blue **Sign In** button on any usac.org page and log in using their existing credentials. From [One Portal](#), users can log into EPC and other USAC systems, including the new **Program Recovery Payments** system for returning funding to USAC.

For several reasons, your company or organization may need to return program funding to USAC. USAC may have disbursed funds to you in error. Or during a review of your funding commitments (audits, appeals, whistleblower calls, etc.), we discover that funds were committed in error. If so, we will send both the applicant and service provider a Commitment Adjustment/Demand Letter (COMAD). The letter will include a funding commitment report with information about the funding adjustment(s).

The screenshot shows the USAC One Portal dashboard. At the top, there is a blue header with the USAC logo and the text "Universal Service Administrative Co." and a "Sign Out" button. Below the header, the main content area is titled "Dashboard". On the left, there is a section titled "Upcoming Dates" with a calendar icon. It lists three dates: "10/01 2026 Annual 54.314 Certification Due", "10/01 2026 Category Two Budgets", and "10/14 2026 October 2026 Monthly Webinar". Below these dates is a link "see full calendar". In the center, there is a section titled "Schools and Libraries" with a sub-header "E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC)". The text describes EPC as the online system for E-Rate program participants to submit applications, manage program processes, and communicate with USAC. It also mentions FCC Form 472 BEAR, FCC Form 473 SPAC, and FCC 474 SPI. Below this, there is a section titled "Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) INT" which describes the ECF Portal and how schools and libraries can access it. On the right, there is a red-bordered box titled "Program Recovery Payments" with a blue button labeled "Return Funding". Below this box, there is a note: "Note: Make USF contributions by going to Manage FCC Forms 499." At the bottom right, there is a "Help?" section with a link "Send us a message" and a link "Click here".

E-Rate program participants who receive a COMAD or RIDF (recovery of improperly disbursed funds) letter must return funding using the new **Program Recovery Payments system** available in One Portal. For more information about returning funding or how to navigate the system, visit the [Return Program Funding](#) webpage.

In the new Program Recovery Payments system, users will be able to search for and select statements that they want to pay, rather than manually entering information about their accounts, funding requests, and invoices.

If you would like to **voluntarily return funds**, please fill out the Voluntary Return Request Form for [E-Rate](#) or the [Cybersecurity Pilot Program](#), and submit it to PIDVoluntaryReturns@usac.org. USAC will review the request and notify users by email within 7-10 calendar days of submission that they may proceed with payment in the Program Recovery Payment system. Payment must be received by USAC within 60 days of the Invoice Statement date indicated in USAC's email. If your payment is not received within 60 days, your account will be put on "Red Light" status.

For additional assistance, contact the E-Rate Customer Service Center (CSC) at (888) 203-8100 or create a case in [EPC](#). You can also view the [Return Program Funding video](#) for more information.

Competitive Bidding – Set Yourself Up for Success

The competitive bidding process is the foundation of the E-Rate program that ensures that schools and libraries can receive cost-effective eligible equipment and services. The process must be "open and fair," and requires the applicant to select the most cost-effective provider based on its bid evaluation factors. The price of the eligible equipment and services must be given the most weight during the bid evaluation process.

The process starts when an applicant certifies and submits an [FCC Form 470](#) and USAC posts the form on its website. FCC Forms 470 can be found using the [E-Rate FCC Form 470 Download Tool](#), which service providers can use to find equipment and services to bid on. You can view and export FCC Form 470 data and download PDF versions of the FCC Form 470 and any Request for Proposal (RFP) attachments.

Your FCC Form 470 and any RFPs should **provide sufficient information for potential bidders to provide a comprehensive bid** (e.g., for managed internal broadband services, specify the exact equipment/ services to be managed) and you should ensure that no potential bidders help you prepare and submit the form or RFP. Any assistance from a potential bidder is an FCC rule violation that would result in a recovery of funds, potentially over a number of years if a multi-year contract resulted from that process.

Your competitive bidding process must be [open and fair](#). "Fair" means that all bidders are treated the same and that no bidder has information that others do not have. "Open" means there are no secrets in the process and that all bidders know what is required of them. To ensure your process is open and fair, you must provide any FCC Form 470, RFP and other information/updates in EPC for all potential bidders for at least 28 days.

You must wait at least 28 days from the posting date of your FCC Form 470/RFP before selecting a service provider. The **day you certify** the FCC Form 470 is day 1. For example, 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. This is the allowable contract date (ACD) found on your FCC Form 470 Receipt Notification Letter (RNL) sent to you when you certified your form.

After waiting the [required 28 days](#), you next evaluate the bids received against your evaluation criteria, which must include the price of eligible services/equipment as the primary evaluation factor (highest weighted factor). Only the costs of **eligible** goods/services should be evaluated in this criterion. Creating a [bid evaluation matrix](#) can help you consider all responsive bids and [select a service provider](#) that meets your needs.

Once you select a bidder and enter into a [contract](#), you can upload those contracts to EPC so that the information is available to reviewers when it comes time to submit your funding requests on the FCC Form 471 application during the annual funding year window. Go to the [Competitive Bidding Infographic](#) to learn more.

Tips for the EPC Administrative Window

The FY2027 EPC administrative window opened October 21, 2026. The EPC administrative window is 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. The administrative window **will close shortly before the FY2027 FCC Form 471 application filing window opens in early 2027**. Applicant entity profiles will then be locked and changes cannot be made.

Prepare to update your entity profile information in EPC during the administrative window:

- Make sure you have an active Account Administrator.
- Account Administrators:
 - Add new users and deactivate users that no longer work at your organization;
 - Review and update user rights by form/transaction; and
 - Add or remove consulting firms.
- Update entity relationships for child entities or consortia members.
- Update student counts and library square footage.
- Update entity subtypes.

Need to add an entity? Do it now.

To add a new entity (e.g., an individual school to a school district or a library branch to a library system) to your organization's profile, open a customer service case in EPC or call the Customer Service Center (CSC) at (888) 203-8100. After the administrative window closes, the CSC can still create the entity for you, but generally, you must file a [Receipt Acknowledgment Letter \(RAL\) modification request](#) to add it to your organization's profile. Read more about FY2026 RAL modifications or appeals below.

Have RAL modifications or appeals for FY2026 applications? Submit those before you update your EPC profiles.

Submit any FY2026 RAL modification requests or FY2026 appeals before you add new entities or new entity subtypes to your organization's profile information. This will allow us to process your FY2026 RAL modification or appeal more quickly.

Check the fields below for accuracy:

All Billed Entities

- Verify that your FCC Registration Number (FCC RN) is correct. If your application includes child entities (individual schools in a school district or library branches in a library system), you do not need FCC RNs for those child entities.
- Review your address and contact information and make any necessary updates. If you have child entities, review and update their information as well.

School districts

- Update the student counts for the students attending each of your schools.
 - Use the most recent validated student information available, which may mean entering or keeping last year's numbers if you do not yet have this year's numbers.

Independent schools

- Update your student counts.
 - Use the most recent validated student information available, which may mean entering or keeping last year's numbers if you do not yet have this year's numbers.
 - Be sure to review your entry for the "peak part-time student counts." This is the greatest number of part-time students at a single point during the school day, NOT the total number of part-time students that attend the school during the course of the entire school day.

Library systems

- Review the entries for the square footage of each of your library branches to make sure they are correct.
- Verify that you have identified the library branch that serves as the main branch for your library system.
- Review the entries for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) locale codes for each of your library branches and provide entries for those that are blank.

Independent libraries

- Review the entry for the square footage of your library to make sure it is correct.
- Identify yourself as the library that serves as the main branch.
- Review the entry for the IMLS locale code for your library and provide an entry if it is blank.

Consortia

- Review your list of consortium members to make sure it is accurate. You can add or remove consortium members through the **Manage Organization Relationships** function in your profile.

- Remind your members to update their EPC profiles so that the discount calculations and other program information will be accurate.

View the [How to Update Your E-Rate EPC Profile During the Administrative Window](#) learning module to learn how to update user permissions, update organization entity profiles, and add/remove/update organization relationships including signing up for a consortium or adding a consulting firm.

Use Open Data to Confirm Invoicing and Service Delivery Deadlines

In some cases, your Invoice Deadline Date (IDD), and/or Service Delivery Deadline (SDD) for non-recurring services may have changed.

You can use USAC's [Open Data](#) platform to confirm these deadlines. This data is located in the [E-Rate FRN Status Tool FY2016+](#). Please reference the [video](#) on how to use the tool to determine your deadlines. You can also check your SDD and IDD in EPC under **Records** → **Funding Requests**.

USAC has created a new [E-Rate Post Commitment Deadline Tool](#) for applicants and service providers to **better track critical post-commitment deadlines** applicable to the E-Rate program. Specifically, the tool allows users to track invoicing deadlines, the FCC Form 473 (*Service Provider Annual Certification*, or SPAC) status, and the FCC Form 486 status in a unified interface to ensure applicants and service providers have visibility into the final stages of the funding lifecycle. You can learn more in the [August 2026 E-Rate News Brief](#) or view the [PC Deadline Tool User Guide 2026](#).

E-Rate Outreach and Training

USAC is resuming its Fall Training Series webinars to get applicants and service providers ready for the Funding Year 2027 application filing window, which will open in January.

Fall 2026 Training Series Webinars

Eligible Services 101
November 3, 2026
 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. E.T.

[Register](#)

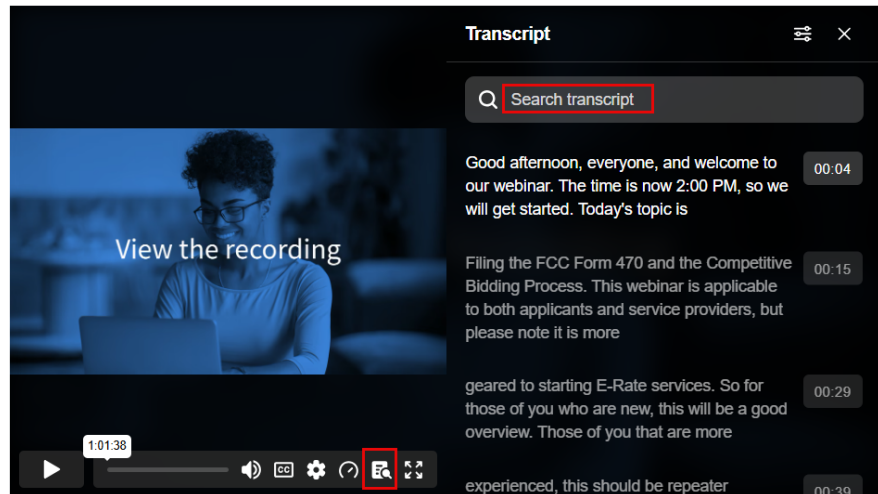
This webinar will review E-Rate eligible services and discuss the Eligible Services List (ESL). It is suitable for both applicants and service providers. After the presentation, we will conduct a Q&A session to help participants better understand E-Rate service eligibility.

Webinar Recordings

- **Category Two Budgets** (October 1, 2026). In this applicant-focused [webinar](#), USAC provided an overview of C2 budgets and C2 budget guidance for the FY2026-2030 C2 budget cycle. This webinar is intended for program participants of all experience levels. View [webinar slides](#).
- **EPC Administrative Window** (October 15, 2026). In this [webinar](#), USAC discussed the EPC Administrative Window – the period during which applicants can make updates to their EPC profile information to prepare for the upcoming FCC Form 471 application

filing window. We discuss how to update your EPC profiles, and some Administrative Window best practices. View [webinar slides](#).

Did you know you could search USAC webinar transcripts? All you need to do is click the search transcript icon (document with a magnifying glass) in the viewer tools at the bottom of the recording window and use the search bar. You may receive an error saying “there was a problem loading the transcript.” If so, close and reopen the webinar page. This usually happens the first time the page is opened.



Conferences

- **New England Library Association Conference** (Vermont) from **October 25-27, 2026**. [Event link](#).

E-Rate Tribal Training

Tribal Library E-Rate Advocacy Program (T-LEAP) Kick-Off and Information Session

October 27, 2026

4 p.m. to 5 p.m. E.T.

Intended Audience: New Tribal libraries and TCU (Tribal College and University) libraries.

[Register](#)

Join USAC's Tribal Liaison and Tribal Library Advocates for the Tribal Library E-Rate Advocacy Program (T-LEAP) training and information session. During this webinar you will learn about the E-Rate program, including eligibility and program requirements, and how USAC can support your Tribal Library in receiving E-Rate funding by participating in T-LEAP. In advance of the Tribal teleconference, you may email questions to

TribalLiaison@usac.org.

November 2026 E-Rate and Tribal Teleconference

November 10, 2026

4 p.m. to 5 p.m. E.T.

Intended Audience: Tribal Stakeholders, advocates, and applicants.

[Register](#)

Join USAC's Tribal Liaison and E-Rate staff for our November 2026 Tribal Teleconference. The E-Rate team will review program updates, information about Competitive Bidding, and other timely information. In advance of the Tribal teleconference, you may email questions to TribalLiaison@usac.org.

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