



Universal Service
Administrative Co.

E-Rate

E-Rate News Brief

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Contents

- [E-Rate Tips](#)
- [Funding Year \(FY\) 2025 Commitments](#)
- [FCC Rescinds E-Rate Eligibility for School Bus Wi-Fi and Wi-Fi Hotspots](#)
- [What to Do if You Missed Your October Invoice or FCC Form 486 Filing Deadline](#)
- [Competitive Bidding – Set Yourself Up for Success](#)
- [Tips for the EPC Administrative Window](#)
- [Use Open Data to Confirm Invoicing and Service Delivery Deadlines](#)
- [2025 Training and Outreach](#)

E-Rate Tips

- **Category Two Budget Tool Updates.** USAC updated the [Category Two \(C2\) Budget Tool FY2021+](#) to include forecast data for the FY2026-2030 C2 budget cycle. The tool was updated October 10, 2025, to reflect forecasted C2 budgets for the FY2026-2030 cycle based on current data available in an applicant's E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC) profile. Applicants can update their information (i.e., student counts, library square footage) during the [EPC Administrative Window](#). Go to the [Category Two Budgets](#) page to learn more.
- **FY2026 Eligible Services List Comment Period.** The FCC Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB) released a Public Notice ([DA 25-921](#)) on September 30, 2025, requesting comments on the proposed FY2026 eligible services list (ESL). WCB **proposes revising the FY2026 ESL to treat all currently eligible software- or remote-based services**, including bug fixes, security patches, software-based technical assistance, and configuration changes **the same** and have applicants **request all software- and remote-based services with the internal connections equipment** that they support. WCB also seeks comment on whether changes should be made regarding managed internal broadband services (MIBS). The Commission extended the comment and reply comment due dates in [DA 25-937](#) and [DA 25-943](#). Comments are due on or before November 18, and **reply comments are due on or before December 3, 2025**.
- **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.

- **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) 2025 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. For FRNs with a service start date of July 1, 2025, and where the funding commitment decision letter (FCDL) was issued before July 2025, the **deadline to submit the FCC Form 486 was October 29, 2025**. 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 FY2025 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 who fail to submit the SPAC form and prevent applicants from being able to submit reimbursement requests to the FCC Enforcement Bureau for further action. 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.
- **In-Person Training Materials Available.** E-Rate experts provided training, discussed program updates, and answered questions from new and experienced participants in Denver, Colorado (September 9) and Washington, D.C. (September 16). Information on these events and presentation materials are available on the [In-Person E-Rate Training Events](#) webpage.
- **Visit our updated webpages** including the [Category Two Budget Management Guide](#), [How to File FCC Form 472 in EPC](#) and [How to File FCC Form 474 in EPC](#) learning modules, and [Eligible Services List](#).

Funding Year (FY) 2025 Commitments

FY2025. USAC released FY2025 Wave 30 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) on November 13. As of November 17, FY2025 commitments total over \$2.34 billion.

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

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

FCC Rescinds E-Rate Eligibility for School Bus Wi-Fi and Wi-Fi Hotspots

The FCC rescinded the eligibility of school bus Wi-Fi, or other similar access point technologies, including the equipment needed to provide such service on school buses in a Declaratory Ruling adopted September 30, 2025 ([FCC 25-63](#)). The eligibility decision applies beginning with FY2025 funding requests, and going forward applicants will not be able to apply for Wi-Fi on school buses. **Pending FY2025 funding requests for school bus W-Fi will be denied. However, FY2024 funding requests are not impacted.**

The FCC also made off-premises use of Wi-Fi hotspots and internet services for those hotspots ineligible for E-Rate support in an Order on Reconsideration issued September 30, 2025 ([FCC 25-62](#)). Pending FY2025 funding requests for this equipment and services will be denied. Going forward, applicants will not be able to request funding for off-premises Wi-Fi equipment and services.

Due to the two Commission decisions, the WCB also released an [amended FY2025 Eligible Services List](#) (ESL) on September 30, 2025 removing the eligibility of services related to school bus Wi-Fi and Wi-Fi hotspots.

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

October 30, 2025 was the deadline for most program participants to:

- [Submit an invoice](#) for **FY2024** recurring services.
- [Request an invoice deadline extension](#) for **FY2024** recurring services.

Missed Invoice Deadlines for FY2024

If you missed your invoice filing deadline and your deadline to request an invoice filing extension for FY2024 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 [E-Rate FRN Status Tool FY2016+](#). Please [reference the video](#) on how to use the tool to determine your deadlines.

Missed FCC Form 486 Deadline for FY2025

October 29, 2025 was 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 FY2025 for program participants that received a funding commitment decision letter (FCDL) and have a service start date of July 1, 2025.

If you missed your deadline to file the FCC Form 486 for FY2025 services, please certify your form as soon as possible to minimize or avoid potential reductions in your funding commitments.

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 FY2026 EPC administrative window opened October 15, 2025. 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 FY2026 FCC Form 471 application filing window opens in early 2026**. 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 FY2025 RAL modifications or appeals below.

Have RAL modifications or appeals for FY2025 applications? Submit those before you update your EPC profiles.

Submit any FY2025 RAL modification requests or FY2025 appeals before you add new entities or new entity subtypes to your organization's profile information. This will allow us to process your FY2025 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**.

2025 Training and Outreach

USAC is resuming its Fall Training Series webinars to get applicants and service providers ready for the Funding Year 2026 application filing window, which will open in January.

Fall 2025 Training Series Webinars

- **Invoicing Webinar** on **November 19, 2025**, from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. E.T. This webinar is designed to help E-Rate program participants (applicants and service providers) understand the invoicing process. Topics for the invoicing webinar will include the steps necessary to prepare for invoicing, filing an FCC Form 498, filing invoicing forms FCC Form 472 (BEAR) and FCC Form 474 (SPI), the invoicing review process, Basic Maintenance of

Internal Connections (BMIC) as it relates to invoicing, record keeping, and Open Data. [Register](#).

- **Category Two (C2) Budgets** on **November 20, 2025**, from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. E.T. This applicant-focused webinar provides an overview of Category Two (C2) budgets, including guidance for the upcoming FY2026-2030 budget cycle. Attendees will learn how C2 budgets work and will have the opportunity to ask questions at the end of the webinar. [Register](#).
- **E-Rate Post-Commitment Process** on **November 25, 2025**, from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. E.T. USAC will discuss the applicant's roles and responsibilities in the E-Rate Post-Commitment Process and other post-commitment activities including filing the FCC Form 486, the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), service substitutions, commitment adjustments, appeals, and more. After the presentation, there will be time for questions and answers. [Register](#).
- **The EPC Administrative Window** on **December 2, 2025**, from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. E.T. This webinar discusses 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. It also discusses how to update your EPC profiles, and some Administrative Window best practices. After the presentation, we will conduct a Q&A session. [Register](#).
- **Eligible Services 101** on **December 3, 2025**, from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. E.T. This webinar will review E-Rate eligible services. After the presentation, we will conduct a Q&A session. There are no prerequisites for this webinar. [Register](#).

Webinar Recordings

- **E-Rate Pre-Commitment Process** (September 25, 2025). This [webinar](#) discusses the E-Rate Pre-Commitment process including how to get started, competitive bidding, applying for funding, and Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) review. View [webinar slides](#).

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