



Universal Service  
Administrative Co.

E-Rate

## E-Rate News Brief

December 18, 2025

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### E-Rate Tips

- **Vendor Transition Update.** As we look toward 2026, we are committed to strengthening the E-Rate experience for participants. USAC is transitioning to a new vendor to support E-Rate business process operations including all review activities. The **transition to the new vendor is on track for a January 2, 2026 cutover** and should be seamless for E-Rate participants. We expect that by the beginning of January 2026, **all open forms and requests** (including applications, invoices, appeals, and post-commitment requests) **will continue with their current reviewer or may be assigned to new reviewers.** We appreciate the support and cooperation of the E-Rate community as we work with our new vendor on transitioning these services.
- **FY2026 Eligible Services List.** The FCC's Wireline Communications Bureau (WCB) **released the Funding Year (FY) 2026 Eligible Services List (ESL) (DA 25-1069) on December 17, 2025.** You can review the FY2026 ESL on the [Eligible Services List page](#) to learn which services are eligible for E-Rate discounts for the upcoming funding year.
- **Don't forget to update your E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC) profiles.** All applicants can now review their profiles and make updates for changes that occurred after USAC's review of their FY2025 FCC Forms 471. The [EPC Administrative Window](#) **will close** – and applicant profiles will be locked – **on January 16, 2026.** Go to the [EPC Administrative Window learning module](#) to learn more.

- **Visit our updated webpages** including [Suspensions and Debarments](#), [Step 5: Invoice USAC](#) (service provider invoicing), and [Announcements](#).

## Funding Year (FY) 2025 Commitments

**FY2025.** USAC released FY2025 Wave 33 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) on December 4. As of December 17, FY2025 commitments total over \$2.45 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.

## Funding Year (FY) 2026 FCC Form 471 Application Filing Window Opens January 21, 2026

The Funding Year (FY) 2026 FCC Form 471 application **filing window will open on Wednesday, January 21, 2026**, at noon E.T. and **will close on Wednesday, April 1, 2026**, at 11:59 p.m. E.T.

**Wednesday, March 4, 2026 is the last date that you can submit and certify an FY2026 FCC Form 470 and still wait the required minimum 28-day period** before submitting and certifying your FY2026 FCC Form 471 by April 1, 2026, the last date of the FY2026 application filing window.

All applicants can now review their EPC profiles and make additional updates for changes that occurred after USAC's review of their FY2025 FCC Forms 471 (see E-Rate Tips above).

The [EPC Administrative Window](#) will close – and applicant profiles will be locked – on **January 16, 2026** before the FY2026 application filing window opens January 21, 2026. View the EPC Administrative Window [webinar recording](#) and [webinar slides](#) to learn more.

## E-Rate Program Updates

We want to make you aware of recent program updates that will be applied to FY2026 so you can prepare for the FY2026 E-Rate FCC Form 471 application filing window that opens January 21, 2026.

### FY2026 Eligible Services List Adopted

The FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB) released the FY2026 eligible services list (ESL) Order ([DA 25-1069](#)) on December 17, 2025. WCB adopted its proposal 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. The Order permits applicants that had sought funding for software-based BMIC services on a pro-rated basis in prior funding years to request discounts on the remainder of the contract in FY2026 or continue requesting pro-rated support. It also clarifies that applicants that seek support for software- or remote-based services as internal connections in FY2026 that were competitively bid as BMIC services are not violating the competitive bidding rules.

### New BEAR/SPI Selection Added to FY2026 E-Rate FCC Form 471 Application

The FY2026 FCC Form 471 was updated with a new field below the **Narrative** to collect the invoicing method (FCC Form 472/BEAR or FCC Form 474/SPI) for the Funding Request Number

(FRN) for each funding request. Pursuant to section 54.514(c) of the program rules, the applicant decides which method to use on a particular FRN: either the FCC Form 472/BEAR (Billed Entity Applicant Reimbursement) or the FCC Form 474/SPI (Service Provider Invoice). The [Select an Invoicing Method in E-Rate](#) infographic explains the invoicing methods. If you are copying an FRN from a previous funding year that does not have the invoicing method assigned, you will be prompted to select BEAR or SPI once it has been copied. The selected invoicing method will be displayed on the PDF copy of the FCC Form 471 and on the **FRN Record** in EPC.

Applicants should notify their service providers of the invoicing method early in the process of preparing the funding requests. Program participants will be able to request a different invoicing method prior to requesting reimbursement that will be available later in the year, but we encourage applicants to have these conversations early to reduce the need to file additional forms.

The FCC Form 471 was also updated to reflect the FY2026-2030 [Category 2 Budget](#) cycle. The **Entity Details** section on the **Category Two screen** now shows FY2026-2030 Category Two budget cycle data based on the latest entity profile information entered by applicants during the FY2026 [EPC Administrative Window](#). The FCC Form 471 PDF copy for Category Two applications was updated to reflect this latest entity profile data for student counts (schools/school districts) and square footage (libraries/library systems) for the FY2026-2030 budget cycle.

### **Bus Wi-Fi/Wi-Fi Hotspots services are not eligible for FY2026**

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 decision applies beginning with FY2025 funding requests and goes forward.

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 adopted September 30, 2025 ([FCC 25-62](#)). Applicants cannot request funding for off-premises Wi-Fi equipment and services in FY2026. These services are not included on the FY2026 FCC Form 471.

The [FCC Form 470 Services Guiding Statements Table \(FY2025-2026\)](#) and the [FCC Form 470/Competitive Bidding eLM and User Guide](#) have been updated to reflect these changes to the program. Since the FY2026 FCC Form 470 was released before these rulings were adopted, applicants and service providers may notice that these services are still included on the FY2026 competitive bidding form. The services will not be included on the FY2026 FCC Form 471 application. The FCC Form 470 will be updated when the FY2027 form is released.

Go to the [Eligible Services List page](#) to learn which services are eligible for E-Rate discounts for the upcoming funding year.

### **Customer Service Center Holiday Hours**

The Customer Service Center (CSC) provides customer service across USAC programs with specialized agents trained to answer your E-Rate program questions. At the end of December, CSC will be reducing its open hours around the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

CSC will be open during its **customary hours through Wednesday, December 24** (Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. E.T.) as well as **Wednesday, December 31**.

CSC's holiday schedule is as follows:

- Thursday, December 25, 2025 – CLOSED

- Friday, December 26, 2025 – OPEN
- Monday, December 29, 2025 – OPEN
- Tuesday, December 30, 2025 – OPEN
- Wednesday, December 31, 2025 – OPEN
- Thursday, January 1, 2026 – CLOSED

**CSC will resume its customary hours** starting at 8 a.m. E.T. **on Friday, January 2, 2026.**

### **Winter Deferral Period Starts December 19, 2025**

Many E-Rate program participants are unavailable during the winter holiday season, and USAC recognizes that participants may need additional time to respond to requests for information. Winter deferral extends from the Friday before Christmas Day through the Friday following New Year's Day.

During the winter deferral period - **Friday, December 19, 2025 through Friday, January 2, 2026** - USAC will only continue reviews of forms and requests where documentation was received or where participants respond to information requests sent in EPC.

If USAC does not receive a response during this period, the form or request will be placed in a deferred status until January 2, 2026. However, we will be reviewing applications during the winter deferral period, if you have answers to our questions. For those of you who can respond to our questions, please do so. This will allow us to continue reviewing applications and issue funding decisions more quickly.

### **FY2024 Invoicing Reminders**

There are two important invoice deadlines for FY2024 recurring and non-recurring services coming up early in 2026. We are reminding you now to take the necessary steps to file and certify your invoices (for non-recurring services) on or before these deadlines or request a one-time 120-day invoicing deadline extension (for recurring services).

The deadlines are generally:

- **January 28, 2026 for FY2024 non-recurring services.** Applicants and service providers must certify their invoices or ask for an [invoice deadline extension](#) by this date.
- **February 25, 2026 for FY2024 recurring services, if the applicant or service provider requested and received an invoice deadline extension of the original October 28, 2025 invoice deadline.** Applicants and service providers must certify their invoices by this date, as USAC cannot grant a second invoice deadline extension.

Applicants and service providers who have not completed the invoicing process for their FY2024 recurring services should gather the customer bills and other documents now that they will need to accurately invoice USAC. Applicants must have filed an [FCC Form 486](#) to notify USAC that services have started before invoicing can start.

Regardless of the invoicing mode, **service providers** must file their [FCC Form 473](#) (Service Provider Annual Certification (SPAC) Forms) in EPC before any invoicing can occur. Service providers are reminded that they are **required to file an annual SPAC form** pursuant to section

54.504(f) of the FCC's rules. You can verify SPAC status by locating the record for your service provider in the [E-Rate Service Provider Download](#) tool. The funding years for which the service provider has filed a SPAC Form are listed in the **FCC Form 473 SPAC Filed** column. See **Module 2: File an FCC Form 473** in the [EPC invoicing for Service Providers](#) learning module.

If you are a service provider filing an FCC Form 474 (Service Provider Invoice (SPI) Form), you must have billed the applicant for its **non-discount share of costs of the eligible services and equipment**. There is a presumption that your customer (the applicant) will pay your bill within 90 days after receipt of the invoice.

If you are an applicant filing an FCC Form 472 (Billed Entity Applicant Reimbursement (BEAR) Form):

- File and certify an [FCC Form 498](#) if you have not already done so. You must have certified – and USAC must have reviewed and approved – an FCC Form 498. Be sure to follow up with the required documentation (canceled check, bank statement, or similar document) that verifies your bank account information. Call USAC at (888) 641-8722 and choose option 4 (contributors) if you have questions.
- You must have paid the service provider in full for the cost of the eligible services and equipment.

Here are resources for additional assistance in filing these forms:

### Applicants

- [FCC Form 472 Filing](#) (Billed Entity Applicant Reimbursement (BEAR) Form) webpage
- [How to File FCC Form 472 in EPC](#) webpage
- [E-Rate Invoicing Requirements Guide](#) PDF
- [EPC Invoicing for Applicants](#) learning module
- [Obtain an Applicant 498 ID](#) webpage
- [FCC Form 498 Applicant User Guide](#)

### Service Providers

- [FCC Form 473](#) (Service Provider Annual Certification (SPAC) Form) webpage
- [Step 5: Invoice USAC](#) (Service Provider Invoice (SPI) Form) webpage
- [EPC invoicing for Service Providers](#) learning module
- [How to File FCC Form 474 in EPC](#) webpage
- [Electronic Invoicing \(eSPI\) Process](#) webpage

## 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.

### Webinars

- **E-Rate Pre-Commitment Process**  
**Thursday, January 22, 2026** from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. E.T. [Register](#).

This webinar 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. This webinar is intended for program participants of all levels and will include a question-and-answer session.

- **E-Rate Pre-Commitment Process Question & Answer (Q&A) Session**  
**Thursday, February 19, 2026** from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. E.T. [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 session include:

- [E-Rate Pre-Commitment Process Webinar](#)
- [Filing the FCC Form 470 and the Competitive Bidding Process Webinar](#)
- [FCC Form 470 Services Guiding Statements Table \(FY2025-2026\)](#)

### 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](#).
- **Invoicing Webinar** (November 19, 2025). This [webinar](#) is designed to help E-Rate program participants (applicants and service providers) understand the invoicing process. Topics for the invoicing webinar included 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. View [webinar slides](#).
- **Category Two (C2) Budgets** (November 20, 2025). 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. View [webinar slides](#).
- **E-Rate Post-Commitment Process** (November 25, 2025). This [webinar](#) discusses 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. View [webinar slides](#).
- **The EPC Administrative Window** (December 2, 2025). 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. View [webinar slides](#).

- **Eligible Services 101** (December 3, 2025). 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. View [webinar slides](#).

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