Universal Service Administrative Co.

E-Rate

E-Rate News Brief

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E-Rate Tips

- **FY2025 Window is Open – File Early**. The FY2025 FCC Form 471 **application filing window is now open and will close on March 26**. The earlier applicants submit and certify their FCC Form 471, the sooner USAC can begin reviewing your application. Please do **not wait until the last minute to submit and certify your form**, especially if you need help or have questions about what information to include on your form. Visit the FCC Form 471 Filing page to learn more.
- **FCC Form 471 Learning Module Available**. USAC created a learning module for How to File the FCC Form 471, which guides users through all aspects of preparing, submitting, and certifying your form. Topics include how to submit Category One (C1) and Category Two (C2) funding requests, funding requests for data transmission, fiber, and special construction under C1, and internal connections, basic maintenance of internal connections, and managed internal broadband services under C2.
- **Service Providers: Don't forget to file the FCC Form 473** (Service Provider Annual Certification) in the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC) for FY2025 to **certify your compliance with E-Rate program rules**, which is required for each funding year you participate in E-Rate. Service providers must submit and certify an FY2024 FCC Form 473 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. 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.

- **FCC Form 471 Training Site Available**. You can practice filling out an FCC Form 471 on USAC's EPC training site by requesting a training account for FCC Forms 470 and 471. There are four full-rights profiles available depending on if you are an independent school, independent library, school district, or library system. After we process your request, we will send an email with the appropriate username(s) and password(s) to access the system. You can then use the Entity Profile Set-Up instructions to set up your profile(s) and practice filling out the form.
- **FCC Form 470 Tools for Service Providers**. Service providers seeking to provide E-Rate equipment and services can view filed FCC Forms 470 either through EPC or on the USAC website. EPC has a search and download function that allows service providers with accounts in EPC to search for certified FCC Forms 470. You can download the form data from the search results as a set of CSV (comma separated value) files. Additional information can be found in the FCC Form 470 Search User Guide. The E-Rate FCC Form 470 Download Tool also allows service providers to view and export FCC Form 470 data found in EPC for Funding Year 2016 and onwards. You can also download PDF versions of the FCC Form 470 and any Request for Proposal (RFP) attachments.
- **FCC Form 471 Bulk Upload tool**. Applicants with large numbers of eligible services and/or large numbers of recipients of service may want to prepare FY2025 funding request data by completing the FCC Form 471 bulk upload templates and then uploading the data to their FCC Form 471. The FCC Form 471 bulk upload template **cannot be used for fiber, School Bus Wi-Fi, or Wi-Fi Hotspots**.
- **Invoicing Changes for Standard Fixed-Price Basic Maintenance of Internal Connections (BMIC) Funding Requests**. The BMIC invoicing process allows fixed-price BMIC funding requests (bug fixes, security patches, licenses, and technical support) **to be paid in full**.
    - **Reminder,** if you have a multi-year fixed-price contract for BMIC services (e.g., three-year licenses) that is eligible for one-time payment:
        - Please ensure that all eligible one-time BMIC costs are listed on your FCC Form 471 as annual/one-time costs and not monthly/recurring costs;
        - Please ensure that you have a contract that cites the establishing FCC Form 470 on file and associate the contract with the funding request on your FCC Form 471 in EPC; and
        - Remember that you will only be reimbursed for one year of services at a time, for the funding year covered by the invoiced FRN (i.e., one-third of the total cost for a license covering three years).
    - There is **no change for BMIC commitments that are billed at an hourly rate** (e.g., on-site maintenance).

- **Visit our updated webpages** including : Funding Year 2025 Filing Window and the new E-Rate News Brief Archive that covers News Briefs from 2006 to 2021 (with search instructions).

WCB Provides Relief for Program Participants Located in Disaster Areas Affected by California Wildfires

On January 16, the FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB) waived several E-Rate rules and deadlines, on a temporary basis, to provide relief to E-Rate participants located in areas of California that are affected by the spread of wildfires and straight-line winds (California Wildfires). See DA 25-63.

WCB **extended the FY 2025 FCC Form 471 application filing window deadline until September 26, 2025** for schools and libraries located in the California Wildfires disaster areas and directed USAC to treat those applications as timely filed.

After the closure of the FY 2025 FCC Forms 471 submission window on March 26, 2025, USAC will track out-of-window submissions of FCC Forms 471 that originate from entities that are located in affected disaster areas. Consistent with the order, USAC will move these applications to in-window status.

Applicants located in the affected disaster areas will not need to request a waiver of the FY 2025 application filing window deadline from the FCC.

WCB also **provided a 120-day invoice deadline extension for funding requests** of entities located in the affected areas **that have an invoice deadline that falls within 60 days of the release of the order** (**i.e., between January 16, 2025 through March 17, 2025**).

WCB also said that it would consider requests for specific relief to address individual circumstances of participants in the E-Rate, Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF), and Cybersecurity Pilot Program that are not addressed by this order as these participants respond to the crisis and assess damage to buildings.

Funding Year (FY) 2024 Commitments

FY2024. USAC released FY2024 Wave 40 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) on January 23. As of January 29, FY2024 commitments total over $2.56 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.

Preparing for the Funding Year (FY) 2025 Application Filing Window

The FCC Form 471 application filing window **opened Wednesday, January 15, 2025**, and will **close Wednesday, March 26, 2025** at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time (E.T.).

Wednesday, February 26, 2025 is the **last date that you can submit and certify an FCC Form 470 for FY2025 and still have time to wait the required minimum 28-day period** before submitting and certifying your FCC Form 471 before the filing window closes on March 26.

The FCC Forms 470 and 471 must be filed in EPC. The dates and times above apply to the time the form is certified in EPC. If you complete all the required information on the FCC Form 471 before the filing deadline but certify it after the deadline, the form will not be considered as timely filed and will be marked as out-of-window.

Below are the next steps for new applicants who have not accessed EPC; applicants who are ready to start the competitive bidding process; and applicants who have completed their competitive bidding process and signed a contract.

Applicants who have not accessed EPC.
In 2021, we added an additional step to the login process. To access EPC, you must first log in to One Portal, our multi-factor authentication (MFA) system. MFA is a method of authenticating a computer user during the login process by requiring the user to enter two or more separate pieces of information, such as a password known to the user and a code we generate and send to the user by email or text.

Existing EPC users can click the blue **Sign In** button at the top of any USAC page and follow the instructions. To see a demonstration of the login process, you can watch the Forgot Password video. (The process of logging in for the first time and the process of resetting your existing password are essentially the same.)

Newly created EPC users will automatically be set up with a One Portal account using their email address as their username. As above, click the blue **Sign In** button to get started. If you need assistance, call our Customer Service Center (CSC) at (888) 203-8100.

Applicants who are just starting the application process for FY2025.
Applicants begin the process of applying for discounts on eligible equipment and services by completing and certifying an FCC Form 470 (Description of Services Requested and Certification Form) in EPC.

This opens the competitive bidding process, the process by which applicants identify and request the products and services needed so that potential service providers can review those requests and submit bids for them.

The entity that will run the competitive bidding process must be prepared to receive and evaluate bids and negotiate with service providers.

You do not have to file an FCC Form 470 for FY2025 if:

- You will be purchasing services from a state master contract where your state filed an FCC Form 470 and conducted a competitive bidding process, and that resulting state master contract covers the equipment and services for all of FY2025 (i.e., July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026); or
- You posted an FCC Form 470 for a previous funding year and conducted a competitive bidding process that resulted in a multi-year contract that covers your equipment and services for all of FY2025; or

- You are purchasing a commercially available, high-speed business-class Internet service that meets ALL of the requirements listed in the **Exemption from Filing an FCC Form 470** section of the Applicant Step 1: Competitive Bidding guidance document on the USAC website.
    - This **exemption does NOT apply to Internet access services for school buses**, as this exemption only applies to funding for services delivered to a school or library building.
- You are a library purchasing $3,600 or less in total Category Two equipment in FY2025.

Remember that you must wait at least 28 days after you submit and certify your FCC Form 470 before you can evaluate bids, select a service provider, sign a contract, and submit and certify your FCC Form 471.

Applicants who have completed their competitive bidding process and signed a contract. If you are using a new or existing contract on your FCC Form 471, you must have a contract record for that contract in your EPC profile. A contract record provides specific details about a contract – e.g., the establishing FCC Form 470, the number of bids received, the service provider, the contract term and associated dates – so that the contract information can be auto-populated from your profile to the appropriate funding request on your FCC Form 471.

You can create contract records in your EPC profile by going to the organization page for the parent organization (independent school, school district, independent library, library system, or consortium), and clicking **Contracts** from the menu choices at the top of the page, then select **Manage Contracts**, and then click **Add a New Contract**. For more information, please see How to Create a Contract Record on E-Rate's video webpage.

- You do not need to create a new contract record for a multi-year contract or a contract with voluntary extensions if you previously created the contract record in EPC for that contract.
    - For a contract that has been voluntarily extended through FY2025, you can include the existing contract record on the appropriate funding request on your FCC Form 471, and then enter the extended date in the field labeled "What is the date your contract expires for the current term of the contract?"
- If you have a new contract or need to make changes to an existing contract record, **you must create a new contract record**. EPC does not allow edits to a contract record after it has been submitted. You are encouraged – but not required – to upload a copy of your contract into your contract record. 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. In addition, FCC document retention rules require you to retain and provide documentation when requested by USAC for at least 10 years after the end of the applicable funding year or last date of service, whichever date is later.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate that they **had a contract or other legally binding agreement in place at the time they submitted and certified an FCC Form 471**. Find more information on the Contracts page or view the How to Create a Contract Record video.

Upcoming E-Rate Application Filing Webinars

During the FY2025 FCC Form 471 application filing window, USAC will conduct a series of webinars focused on E-Rate topics related to FCC Forms 470 and 471 and the FY2025 Eligible

Services List. Below is the schedule of upcoming webinars with the topic, the time, and the recommended audience. We also list the specific materials that attendees should review in advance of the Question and Answer (Q&A) webinars.

If you are interested in attending, register for the webinar and review all materials referenced for the webinar in advance of the Q&A session (see links below). Attendees will use the webinar's chat function to ask questions. We will identify questions of general interest that are submitted through the chat function, read and respond to them, and answer specific questions individually using the chat function. As with our regular webinars, we will give preference to questions about the topic under discussion.

Upcoming Webinars

E-Rate Service Provider Selection and the FCC Form 471 Q&A Session (Thursday, January 30 from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. E.T.). Register.

E-Rate subject-matter experts will provide an overview of how to apply for program discounts on the FCC Form 471 for applicants of all experience levels. Materials to review before the session include:

- How to File the FCC Form 471 learning module
- FCC Form 471 video series
- E-Rate Pre-Commitment Process webinar recording and slides
- Step 2: Selecting Service Providers page
- FCC Form 471 Filing page
- FCC Form 471 Checklist (PDF)

E-Rate Pre-Commitment Process (FCC Forms 470, 471, ESL, etc.) Q&A Session (Tuesday, February 11 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

Recent Webinars

Below are on-demand recordings and accompanying slides from our recent webinars. To watch a webinar recording, click **Watch** next to the session on the Webinars page.

- **E-Rate Eligible Services Q&A Session** (January 16, 2025). E-Rate subject-matter experts provided an overview of FY2025 E-Rate eligible services for applicants and service providers of all experience levels. View webinar slides.
- **E-Rate Competitive Bidding (FCC Form 470) Q&A Session** (January 23, 2025). E-Rate subject-matter experts walked through competitive bidding and the FCC Form 470 with a focus on the FCC Form Guiding Statements document for all experience levels. View webinar slides.

AUP Audit Confirmation Letters

Each year, USAC undergoes an agreed-upon-procedures (AUP) review. The firm performing the review this year will email a number of balance verifications ("confirmations") to applicants and service providers. The purpose of these confirmations is to verify that the balances reported by USAC on specific Funding Request Numbers (FRNs) match the balances in the records of the applicants and service providers.

In February 2025, the firm will send the confirmations to a number of applicants and service providers. Each confirmation features the balance reported by USAC on a specific FRN **as of October 31, 2024**.

Applicants and service providers should review their records and respond by either:

- Agreeing with the balance featured on the confirmation, or
- If it is different, noting the balance as of October 31, 2024 on their records and explaining how they determined that balance.

A common error that occurs is that the recipient of the confirmation checks their FRN balances when they receive the letter, instead of looking back to what the balance was as of October 31, 2024. Be sure that you **check the confirmation letter balance as of October 31, 2024 before responding**.

The confirmations are being sent from dalton.herb@pwc.com. We ask that you add this email address and domain to your safe senders list, check your email filters for messages from this email address, and respond promptly to any confirmation requests you receive.

FCC Selects Participants for the Schools and Libraries Cybersecurity Pilot Program

On January 15, the Federal Communications Commission released a Public Notice announcing the schools, libraries, and consortia selected to participate in the Schools and Libraries Cybersecurity Pilot Program (Pilot Program). In total, more than 700 schools, libraries, and consortia were selected to receive up to $200 million over a three-year period to purchase a wide variety of eligible cybersecurity services and equipment.

The Pilot Program will evaluate whether and how universal service funds should be used to support cybersecurity services and equipment to protect school and library broadband networks and data on a permanent basis. Additional FCC Form 484 Part 1 applications will not be accepted for the Pilot Program.

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USAC | 700 12th Street NW | Suite 900 | Washington, DC 20005