



E-Rate News Brief

May 21, 2026

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E-Rate Tips

- **June 30, 2026 is the last day to receive recurring services for FY2025.** If the same service provider will continue to provide your recurring service after June 30, 2026, you must use the Funding Request Number (FRN) approved for FY2026 when you are invoicing for recurring services that start on or after July 1, 2026.
- **Responding to PIA Inquiries.** It's important that you respond to Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) questions about your FCC Form 471 applications fully and in a timely manner. The E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC) generates emails and creates tasks in EPC for any inquiries sent by USAC. You can access these questions from the **News** tab in EPC that brings you to the **Summary** page of your application where you will find the **Review Inquiries** link. EPC provides a dashboard view of pending inquiries and submitted answers so you can easily see the status of questions related to your application(s). You can also request an extension if you need more time to respond. You can **read a more detailed article** about responding to PIA inquiries in the [May 2025 E-Rate News Brief](#).
- **How to Modify Your FY2026 Invoicing Method.** If you need to modify the [invoicing method](#) (FCC Form 472/BEAR or FCC Form 474/SPI) on your FY2026 funding requests (FRNs), you can submit a [RAL Modification Request](#) during the

review of your FCC Form 471 application. The RAL modification **must be submitted before** you receive funding commitment decision letters (FCDLs) from USAC. **After you receive an FCDL**, you can request invoicing method changes via the [FCC Form 500](#) using the new "Invoicing Method" change request. This change request must be submitted before any invoice is submitted for the FRN. Please note that if you are changing from BEAR to SPI, you will also need documentation that your service provider has agreed to the invoicing mode change to submit with your invoice mode change request.

- **BEAR Filers and Service Providers: Update your FCC Form 498.** Beginning August 2026, USAC will use SAM.gov banking information to pay all Universal Service Fund invoices and will stop using existing banking information from the FCC Form 498. To continue receiving USF disbursements, all service providers and E-Rate participants who use the BEAR invoicing method (FCC Form 472) to receive USF disbursements **must have an active SAM.gov account, a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) on their FCC Form 498, and have a valid bank account associated with their SAM.gov account.** The transition to SAM.gov will not affect an entity's ability to submit invoices or any required forms. However, USAC will hold payments (i.e., you will not be paid) until a UEI is added to the FCC Form 498 and there is an active SAM.gov account associated with the invoice filer. For more information, visit USAC's SAM.gov and UEI Requirement [webpage](#).
- **FCC Form 498 E-Learning Module for Applicants Now Available.** USAC created an e-learning module on [How to File an FCC Form 498 for Applicants](#) that shows you how to submit a new FCC Form 498 or modify an existing one to add a SAM.gov-generated UEI before the August transition. This module is for applicants that invoice USAC using the BEAR invoicing method (FCC Form 472) and is available in the [E-Rate Videos](#) section of USAC's website.
- **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 who fail to submit the SPAC form and prevent applicants from being able to submit BEAR 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.
- **Interim SPIN and RAL.** If you used the interim Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN) 143666666 to submit your FY2026 funding requests, **submit a Receipt Acknowledgement Letter (RAL) modification request** to provide the actual SPIN. View the [FCC Form 471 Receipt Acknowledgment Letter Modification Guide](#). USAC will not issue a funding commitment decision letter until the Interim SPIN has been updated to the selected service provider.

Funding Year (FY) 2026 Commitments

FY2026. USAC released FY2026 Wave 1 May 1 and Waves 2 and 3 on May 7 and May 14, respectively. As of May 20, FY2026 commitments total over \$1.05 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 Adopts E-Rate Competitive Bidding Portal and Provides Additional Guidance on Program Rules

On April 30, 2026, the FCC adopted a Report and Order and Order on Reconsideration ([FCC 26-30](#)) to strengthen E-Rate program integrity by creating a competitive bidding portal, streamlining program rules, and clarifying rules for transitioning services, cost allocations, and competitive bidding. In future funding years, it also eliminates the FCC Form 486 (Receipt of Service Confirmation and Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) Certification Form) and moves that form's CIPA certifications to the FCC Form 471. Some of the key changes are highlighted below.

The order establishes a **competitive bidding portal for FY2028** that will require prospective service providers to submit bids in the USAC-managed portal and will require applicants to upload bid evaluation and vendor selection documentation, including contract(s), after selecting service providers. The portal will also serve as a document repository for applicants and service providers, which will reduce recordkeeping burdens. The FCC will require that the portal be used for competitive bidding communications, with exceptions based on local/state law requirements, and directs USAC to create a process for bidders to submit questions (with an option to submit anonymously) and for applicants to respond through the portal so all bidders may see the questions asked and the responses provided.

The FCC directed USAC to create a process for applicants that are **transitioning services** to file a post-commitment request that changes the service start and end dates and permits, if the applicant meets certain criteria, increases in the commitment amount. USAC may approve a post-commitment increase if the applicant filed partial funding year requests for funding from both service providers (or service offerings, in the case of a transition to a different service from the same service provider) during the application filing window using the best estimates of the transition dates, indicated on the FCC Form 471 that the requests were for a transition of service, and if there are available funds below the E-Rate program funding cap. This process will require form changes and will go into effect in a future funding year after approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

For **cost allocations**, the FCC clarified that the ancillary use presumption explained in [FCC 23-56](#) applies to all Category One (C1) services including data transmission services, wide area network services, ethernet, etc. That is, if at least 90% of an applicant's requested recurring C1 service will be used for an eligible purpose during the funding year, the remaining ineligible use of the C1 service at eligible locations will be presumed to be ancillary and cost allocation is not required.

The FCC also provided a **limited exception** to the competitive bidding rules so applicants can submit a service substitution **request to increase bandwidth** during the funding year at the existing commitment amount (i.e., total price of the current bandwidth service). Applicants would be responsible for any costs over the existing commitment amount. The applicant would need to file a new FCC Form 470 and seek competitive bids for the increased bandwidth service

to continue receiving the service for the next funding year.

The FCC also **removed the requirement that applicants file the FCC Form 486** for future funding years, beginning in FY2028, and directed USAC to transfer the CIPA compliance certifications to the FCC Form 471. The FCC noted that applicants with open commitments or approved appeals from prior funding years will continue to use the FCC Form 486 to certify CIPA compliance. **Note:** Please be sure to file the FCC Form 486 in FY2026 and FY2027.

The FCC eased certain restrictions around the invoice filing deadline including allowing applicants and service providers to **request a single 120-day extension** of the original invoice filing deadline from USAC **if the request is made within 15 days of the original invoice filing deadline** and providing for **a one-time, 60-day grace period** for applicants and service providers **to resubmit corrected versions of invoices** that were timely filed before the invoice filing deadline but rejected by USAC.

There are more details in the order, and we encourage you to read it carefully. USAC is working through the order to implement its requirements and will communicate program and process updates on its website and through future news briefs.

FCC Provides Relief for Program Participants Located in Disaster Areas Affected by Typhoon Sinlaku

On April 23, 2026, the FCC Wireline Communications Bureau (WCB) waived several E-Rate rules and deadlines, on a temporary basis, to assist participants and providers located in the areas affected by Typhoon Sinlaku and its immediate aftermath (collectively, the Sinlaku Weather Events) (see [DA 26-396](#)).

For applicants located in affected disaster areas, WCB provided up to 150 calendar days from the April 23, 2026 release date of the order (i.e., to September 21, 2026) to submit the following:

1. Requests for review or waiver of decisions by USAC, directed to USAC or the FCC; and
2. FCC Forms 486, 472, and 474.

The FCC also waived the following:

- **Service Implementation Deadline for Non-Recurring Services** – WCB extended the FY2025 implementation deadline for non-recurring services **to September 30, 2027**, for applicants in the affected disaster areas, and the WCB **extended the deadline for all other applicants that have non-recurring service funding requests with September 30, 2026 as the deadline** and are located in the affected disaster areas **to September 30, 2027**.
- **Service and Equipment Substitutions** – FCC rules allow applicants to substitute a service or product if certain conditions are met (e.g., the service or product has the same functionality, the substitution does not violate any contract provision, does not result in an increase in the percentage of ineligible services or functions, and is within the scope of the controlling FCC Form 470). For applicants in the affected disaster areas, the WCB waived the requirement that the substituted service or product(s) must have the same functionality as the service or product being replaced (section 54.504(d) of the FCC's rules) to allow applicants greater flexibility based on their local needs without being constrained by categories of service or service types. Applicants must request approval of service and/or equipment substitutions by submitting a [Service Substitution](#) request to USAC.

- **Document Retention Requirements** – WCB also waived section 54.516(a) of the FCC rules **for destroyed records**. Applicants and service providers will not be penalized for failure to retain or produce records destroyed by the hurricane. Applicants and service providers that rely on this waiver as a basis for not retaining or producing records, upon request from USAC or the FCC, will be required to certify that the records, and any copies of such records, were destroyed by the weather events. Record retention and production requirements continue to apply to all records that were not destroyed.

Summer Contact Period ("Summer Deferral") Starts May 22, 2026

USAC processes program forms and requests as promptly as possible to issue timely decisions. If information is missing or incomplete, we may request additional information and/or documentation about your form or request. During this time of year, our most common reason for initiating contacts is to obtain more information about your FY2026 FCC Form 471 to complete PIA reviews.

Starting May 22, 2026, if our first attempt to contact you is **on or after** May 22, and we do not receive a response to our questions, we will put your application(s) on a deferred status and will continue the review of your application(s) sometime **after September 11, 2026**. This period is known as the "summer deferral period." During this period, which runs from the Friday before Memorial Day (i.e., May 22, 2026) through the Friday following Labor Day (i.e., September 11, 2026), please note the following:

- You can always contact us or respond to our pending questions to restart the review of your application(s) if you become available before September 11, and we encourage you to do so to expedite the review of your application(s).
- If the PIA reviewer has already contacted you and you wish to designate someone to answer questions in your absence, be sure to send your designee's contact information to your PIA reviewer. If the PIA reviewer has not contacted you and your designee will be checking your messages, be sure that you have provided written authorization for your designee to answer questions about your application(s).
- If the PIA reviewer makes contact with someone representing your organization but that person is not in a position to answer PIA questions, they should clearly state to the PIA reviewer that the review of your application(s) should remain on hold until you are available.

PIA questions are posted in EPC, and you will also receive an email from EPC notifying you to respond to the questions. Full- and partial-rights users on the organization's account can see and respond to the PIA questions.

If our first attempt to contact you was **before May 22**, the automatic summer deferral period does not apply, and you will be required to timely respond to PIA requests. Please respond promptly to any PIA requests for information or documentation. During the summer deferral period, USAC will only continue reviews of forms and requests where documentation has already been received, or participants have responded to information requests sent in EPC. If participants do not respond during these periods, the form or requests will be placed in a deferred status until the deferral period ends, at which time we will continue our regular review process.

Filing the FY2026 FCC Form 486

After applicants have received a Funding Commitment Decision Letter (FCDL) with a positive funding commitment and services have started for the funding year, they must [file an FCC Form 486](#) (Receipt of Service Confirmation and Children's Internet Protection Act Certification Form).

The FCC Form 486 notifies USAC that services have started and certifies the status of the applicant's compliance with the [Children's Internet Protection Act](#) (CIPA).

Applicants can file an FCC Form 486 for FY2026 as soon as they receive a funding commitment from USAC. Be sure to verify your status under CIPA and, if you are a member of a consortium, that you have completed your [FCC Form 479](#) (Certification by Administrative Authority to Billed Entity of Compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act Form) and provided it to your consortium leader.

Applicants can file an FCC Form 486 early – that is, before services have started, under certain conditions. For the applicant to file early, all the following must be true:

- **Receipt of positive funding decisions.** You must have received an FCDL with at least one positive funding commitment. In EPC, you will not be able to file an FCC Form 486 for an FCC Form 471 Funding Request Number (FRN) unless USAC has issued a commitment for that FRN.
- **Service start dates and contracts.** You must confirm with your service provider(s) that the service(s) for your approved funding commitments will start in July of the funding year. You must also confirm that those services will be provided to the eligible entities identified on the FRNs. Except for services to be delivered under non-contracted, tariffed, or month-to-month arrangements, applicants must have a [contract or other legally binding agreement](#) with the service provider(s).
- **Certifications.** You must certify that there are signed contracts covering all the services listed on the FCC Form 486, except for those services provided under tariff or on a month-to-month basis. You must also certify that you are authorized to submit the FCC Form 486 on behalf of the billed entity; that you have examined the form; and that to the best of your knowledge, information, and belief, all statements of fact provided on the form are true.

You can review the text of all the certifications on the FCC Form 486 after you have completed your entries for the required information on the form. Please review the certifications carefully to make sure that you can accurately make them as of the start of the receipt of discounted services. **Do not forget** to check the **Early Filing** box if you are filing on or before July 31 and services have not yet started.

CIPA Reminders

In general, school and library authorities must certify that: (1) they have complied with the requirements of CIPA; (2) they are undertaking actions, including any necessary procurement procedures, to comply with the requirements of CIPA; or (3) CIPA does not apply because the services do not require compliance with CIPA.

The administrative authority – the relevant authority with responsibility for the administration of the school or library – must report the status of compliance with CIPA.

- If you are the administrative authority for the school or library and you are the billed entity, you certify your status of CIPA compliance on your FCC Form 486.
- If you are the administrative authority but not the billed entity (e.g., a member of a consortium and the consortium files for discounted services on your behalf), certify your CIPA compliance status on the [FCC Form 479](#) and provide a copy of that form to your consortium leader. Your consortium leader must have copies of FCC Forms 479 on file

from all its members before it can accurately make the appropriate CIPA certifications on the FCC Form 486 on behalf of its members.

The [CIPA](#) page explains the requirements and actions you must undertake to demonstrate CIPA compliance, including having an Internet safety policy, using a technology protection measure, and holding a public hearing/meeting to present the Internet safety policy. It also has information on the timing of CIPA compliance and the documentation required to demonstrate CIPA compliance.

E-Rate Outreach and Training

During 2026, USAC will conduct webinars and training focused on E-Rate topics. Below is the schedule of upcoming training events and webinars with the topic, the time, and the recommended audience. We also list the specific materials that attendees should review, if applicable.

If you are interested in attending, register for the training or webinar you want to attend, and review all materials referenced below for the webinar.

In-Person Training

USAC is coming to an event near you in 2026. E-Rate experts will provide training, discuss program updates, and answer questions from new and experienced participants. **Registration is still open for these in-person training events.**

Below are events that we will attend where we can answer your E-Rate questions.

- **E-Rate Training – Phoenix, AZ: September 15, 2026** at the Salvation Army Kroc Center, 1375 E. Broadway Road, Phoenix, AZ. [Register](#).
- **E-Rate Training – Washington, DC: September 24, 2026** at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) headquarters, 45 L Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. [Register](#).
 - The training will also be available live on the FCC’s YouTube page at <https://www.youtube.com/@FCC>.

Upcoming Webinars

Beginning E-Rate Services Webinar

June 9, 2026 from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. Eastern Time (E.T.). [Register](#).

- This webinar provides E-Rate participants with a high-level overview of the next steps in the E-Rate process after equipment and services are funded. It is recommended for E-Rate participants at all levels.

Open Data Webinar Part 1: Open Data Overview

June 16, 2026 from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. E.T. [Register](#).

- Enhance your E-Rate program experience with Open Data, USAC’s data sharing platform. This webinar is the first in a two-part series and provides an overview of the E-Rate specific tools and datasets in Open Data.

E-Rate Invoicing Applicant and Service Provider Webinar

June 18, 2026 from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. E.T. [Register](#).

- This webinar is designed to help E-Rate applicants and service providers of varying levels better understand the invoicing process, including the differences between the BEAR and SPI invoicing methods (FCC Form 472 and FCC Form 474). The webinar will also cover invoice deadlines, filing an invoice, reviews, and more. [Applicants](#) and [service providers](#) should review their respective [eLearning Module courses](#) prior to attending.

Open Data Webinar Part 2: Creating Reports and Visualizations

June 25, 2026 from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. E.T. [Register](#).

- This follow-up webinar to the Open Data Overview (Webinar 1) dives more deeply into using E-Rate data tools. Participants can expect tangible examples on how to create custom reports and visuals for an enhanced program experience. To be successful in this webinar, you should have attended Webinar 1.

Webinar Recordings

Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) Review Process Webinar (March 26, 2026). This [webinar](#) provided E-Rate participants with an overview of the Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) FCC Form 471 review process, preparing for a PIA review, handling PIA inquiries, and funding commitment decision letters (FCDL). View [webinar slides](#).

Service Provider Webinar (March 31, 2026). This [webinar](#) is for Service Providers who are new to the E-Rate program. After attending this webinar, you will be able to: accurately describe what E-Rate is and the different steps of the E-Rate process, obtain a Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN), bid on projects, assist the applicant/beneficiary, certify compliance, and invoice USAC. View [webinar slides](#).

Conferences

- **American Libraries Association (ALA) Conference** from **June 25-29, 2026** (Chicago, Illinois). [Event link](#).
- **International Society for Technology in Education's ISTE Live and ASCD** (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) **Conference** from **June 28-July 1, 2026** (Orlando, Florida). [Event link](#).

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