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E-Rate Program Overview

2022 Applicant and Service Provider Training

October 18, 2022

Universal Service
Administrative Co.

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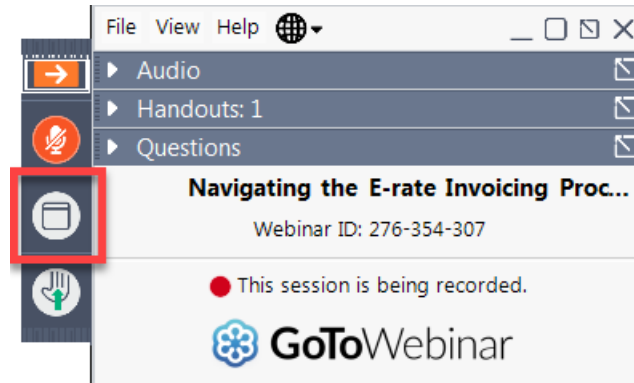- Open the panel by clicking the orange arrow.

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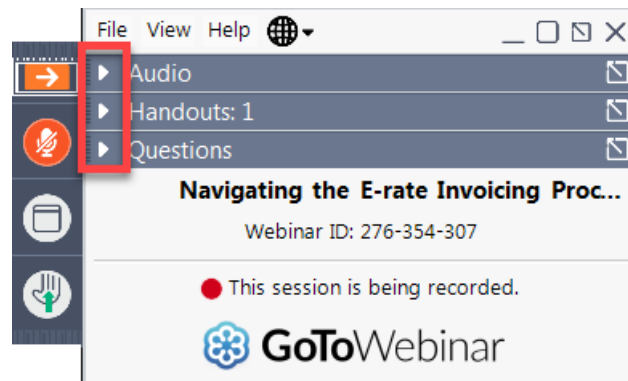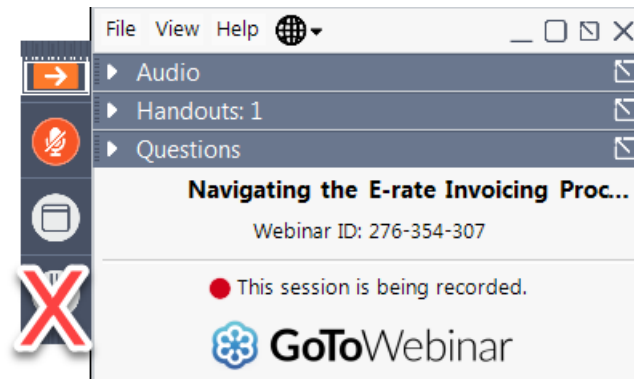
Housekeeping – Webinar Panel

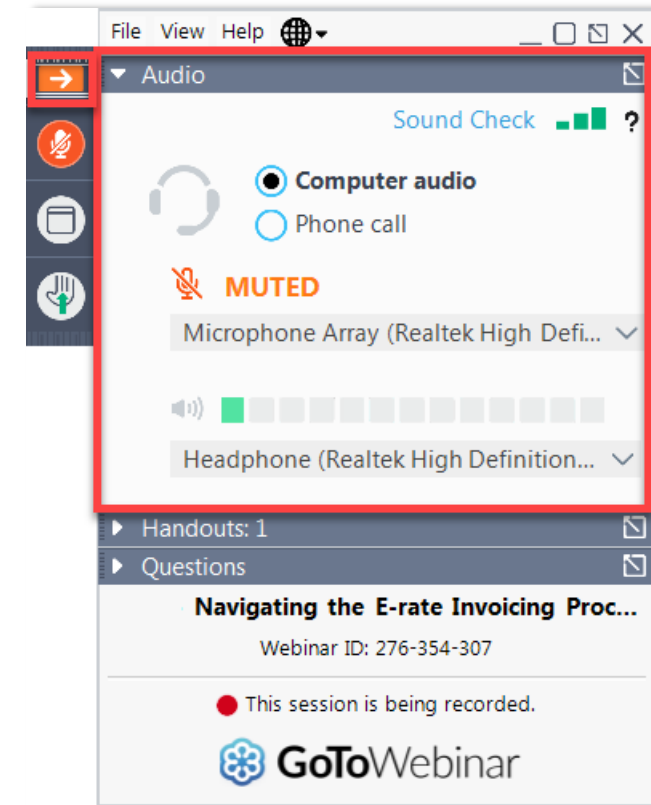- You can use the panel to view the presentation in full screen or window mode.

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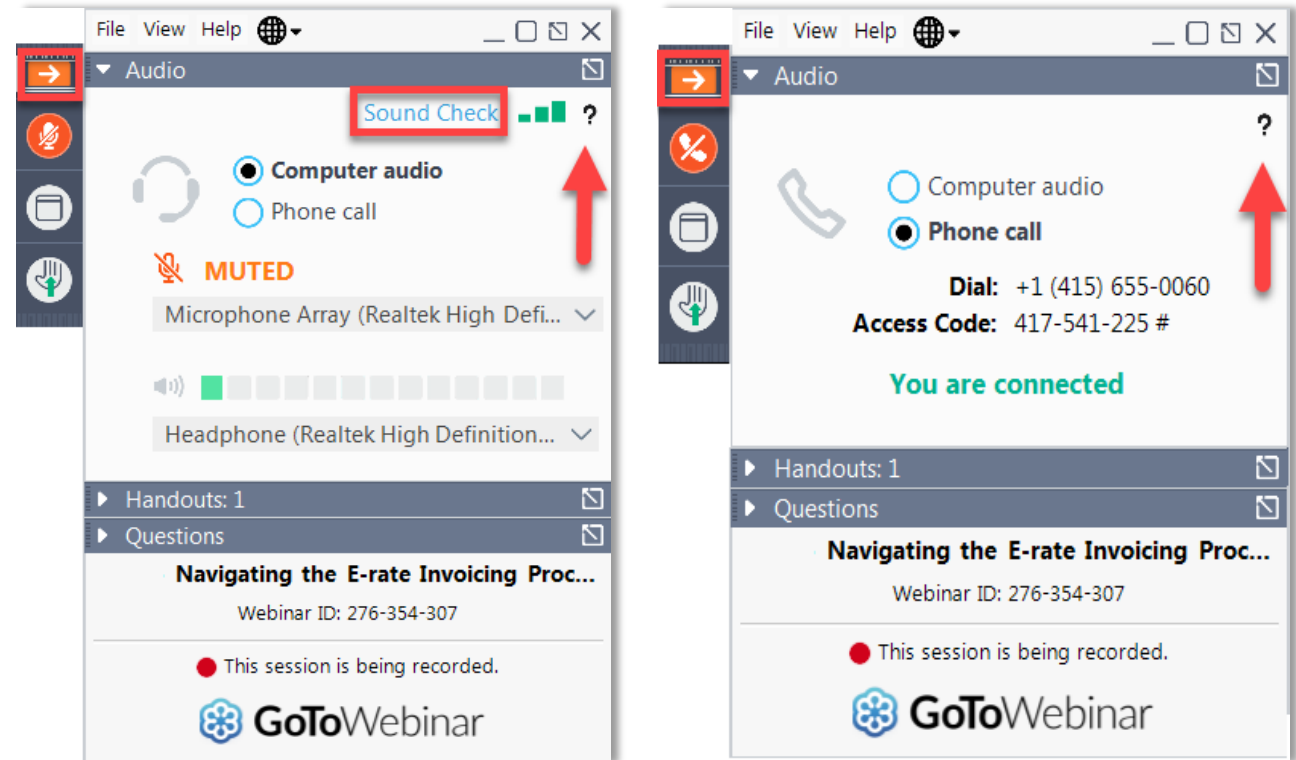
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- The **slide deck** is available when you click the arrow to expand the "**Handouts"** tab.

- A recording of this webinar will be available after the event via the registration link.
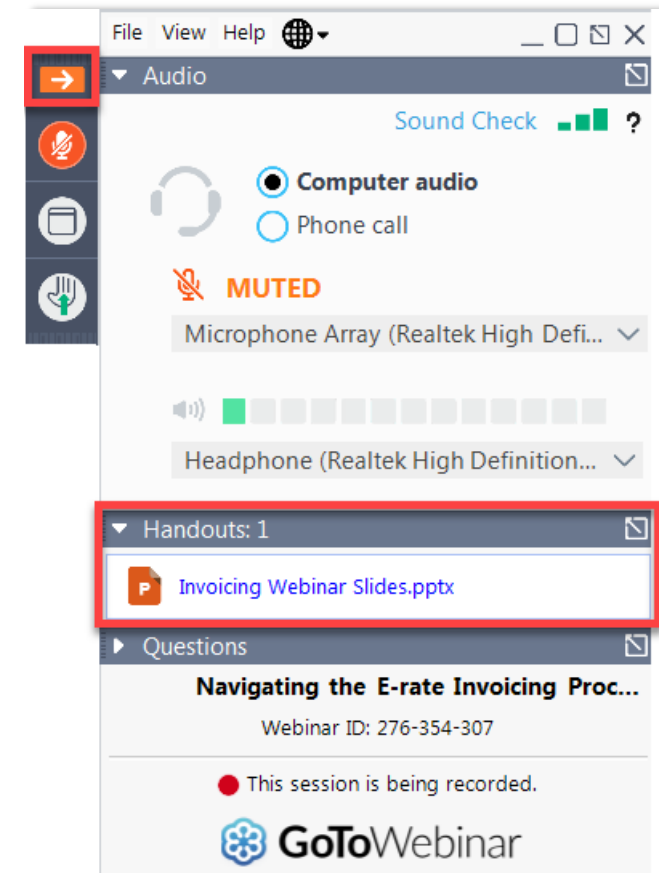
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- **There will be a live Q&A session focused on today's topics.**

- Tips for submitting questions:
  - Use the "Questions" box in your webinar control panel anytime during the presentation.
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  - Write in full sentences.
  - Ask one question at a time.
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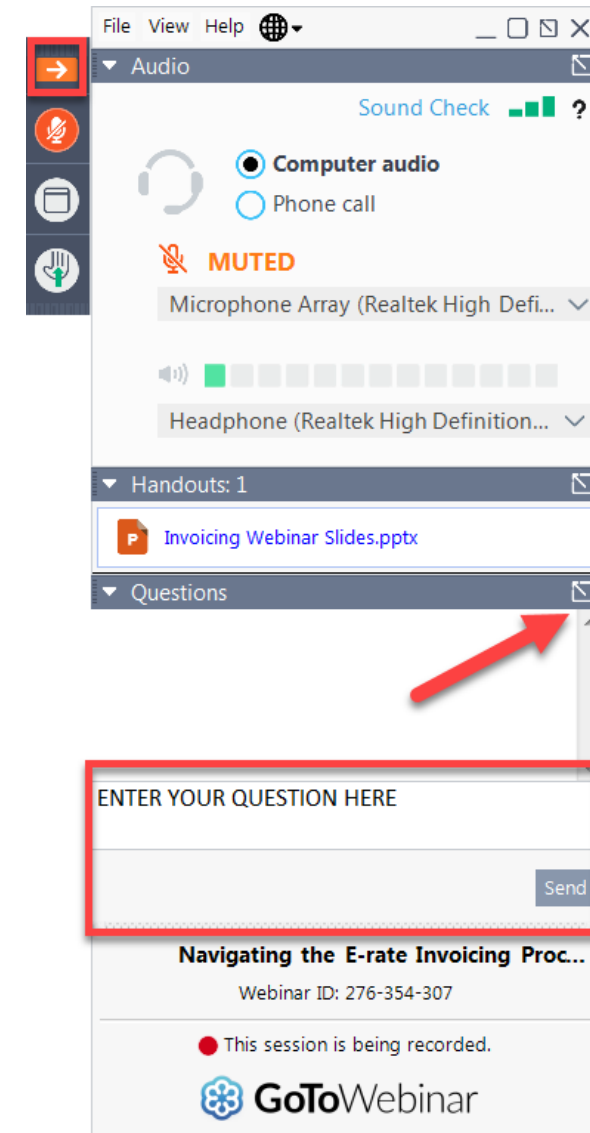
E-Rate Customer Service Center (CSC)

Call us at (888) 203-8100

Monday – Friday 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET

Create a customer service case in the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC):

1. Log in to EPC.
2. Select the **Contact Us** link from the upper right menu on the landing page.

Meet the Team

Catherine Willis

Senior Director, E-Rate

## Nkeshi Free

Communications Specialist, E-Rate

Agenda

- Overview
  - E-Rate Overview
  - Fall Training Overview
- E-Rate Eligible Entities
- E-Rate Eligible Products & Services
- Application Process
- Resources
- Question and Answer

Overview

USAC: Purpose and Role

- Congress enacted the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to establish the E-Rate program and the other USF programs.

- The FCC sets rules and policies for the program and gives direction to the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC).

- USAC is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the E-Rate program.
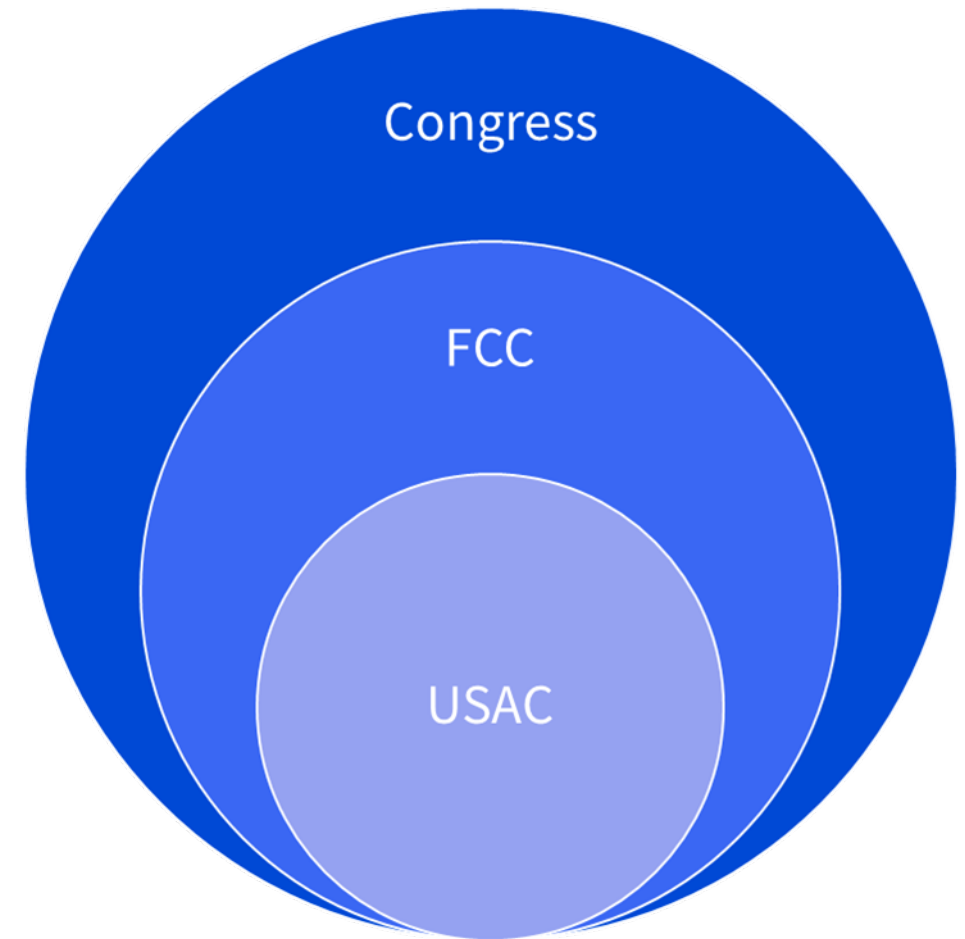
What E-Rate Does

- The E-Rate program helps U.S. schools and libraries obtain affordable **high-speed internet access** and telecommunications services

- We are one of four programs administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) under the guidance of the Federal Communications Commission.

How E-Rate Works
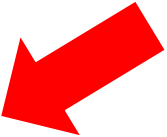
- The E-Rate Program provides discounts from 20% to 90% on **eligible equipment and services** to **eligible entities**.

    - For example: A library with a **90 percent** discount rate

        - purchasing **$1,000** in eligible broadband services

        - would pay its **10 percent** non-discounted share of costs (i.e., **$100**) to the service provider and

        - the **E-Rate program** would pay the remaining **90 percent** (i.e., **$900**) to the service provider.

Discount Matrix
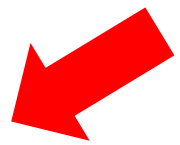
Income Measured by percentage of students eligible for NSLP	Urban Status Discount Rate	Rural Status Discount Rate
Less than 1%	20%	25%
1% to 19%	40%	50%
20% to 34%	50%	60%
35% to 49%	60%	70%
50% to 74 %	80%	80%
75% to 100%	90% for C1, 85% for C2	90% for C1, 85% for C2

- National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
- Category One (C1) Services
- Category Two (C2) Services

Applicant Overview (Fall Trainings highlighted)

- Conduct Preliminary activities
  - Attend Fall Training E-Rate Program Overview (today's session)
  - Know if your entity is eligible
  - Create/update your entity profile in EPC
    - Register for the Fall Training EPC Administrative Window Webinar
  - Understand Categories of Service
    - Register for the Fall Training Category 2 Budget Webinar
  - Will you file individually or as part of a Consortium?
    - Register for the Fall Training Pre-Commitment Webinar
  - Be aware of Document Retention requirements
- File FCC Form 470 - Complete an open and fair competitive bidding process

Applicant Overview (cont)

- File FCC Form 471 - Apply for discounts on eligible products and services
  - Register for the Fall Training Post-Commitment webinar
  - After a Program Integrity Assurance review a funding commitment decision letter (FCDL) is issued

- Start Services
  - File FCC Form 486 - Inform USAC that your services have started and demonstrate compliance with CIPA
  - Register for the Fall Training Post-Commitment webinar

- Invoice USAC

Note- after Fall Trainings, you may access all materials on the Webinars page

Service Provider Overview

- Participate in Competitive Bidding
    - Search for FCC Forms 470 (Use the <u>Service Requested</u> tool in <u>USAC Open Data</u>)
    - <u>Respond to Bids</u>
- If you win the bid,
    - Provide applicant with <u>information on Product and Service Eligibility</u>.
        - Service provider is responsible for knowing percentage of eligibility. (see <u>Mixed Eligibility</u>)
    - <u>File Service Provider Annual Certification (SPAC)</u> in a timely manner to allow invoicing to occur
    - Invoice USAC

E-Rate Eligible Entities

Eligible Entities

Entities eligible for E-Rate funding, with some qualifications, include:

- **Libraries** (including Tribal Libraries)

- **Schools** – Elementary and secondary schools as defined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

- Educational Service Agencies (ESAs)

- Non-Instructional Facilities (NIFs)

- Consortia of Eligible Entities – (groups of eligible schools and/or libraries)

Eligible Schools

- Must meet the statutory definition of elementary and secondary schools found in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001
    - An elementary school is a **non-profit** institutional **day or residential** school, including a public elementary charter school, that **provides elementary education**, as determined under **state law**.
    - A secondary school is a **non-profit** institutional **day or residential** school, including a public secondary charter school, that provides secondary education, as determined under state law, except that such term **does not** include any education **beyond grade 12**.
- The following school types are **not eligible**:
    - Schools operating as for-profit businesses
    - Schools that have endowments exceeding $50 million
- Some non-traditional facilities and students may be eligible. For more information regarding specific eligibility of Head Start, pre-kindergarten, juvenile justice, and adult education student populations and facilities, visit the Non-traditional Education page.
- An Educational Service Agency (ESA), which may operate owned or leased instructional facilities, may be eligible for E-Rate program support if it provides elementary or secondary education as defined in state law.

Eligible Libraries

- Budget must be completely separate from any school (including any elementary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities).

- Cannot operate as a for-profit business.

- Must be eligible for assistance from State Library administrative agency under the Library Services Technology Act (LSTA), as amended by the Museum and Library Services Act of 2018.

  - Tribal Library Eligibility Update: On January 27, 2022, the Commission unanimously adopted an Order (FCC 22-8) amending the definition of "library" in the E-Rate program rules to include "Tribal library." By making this change, the Order clarifies that Tribal libraries **are eligible for E-Rate support**, correcting a longstanding issue for these libraries.

- Review the Registration Checklist for New Tribal Libraries (PDF)

Eligible Tribal Libraries

- A library may be designated as a Tribal library by a Tribal Council (e.g., pursuant to a Tribal Resolution).

- Tribal libraries designated by a Tribal Council should have three characteristics commonly associated with Institute of Museum & Library Services (IMLS) grants to Native American libraries:

  - Regularly scheduled hours

  - Staff, and

  - Materials available for library users

Note - Tribal **college** libraries are not eligible for E-Rate funding

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Eligible Non-Instructional Facilities (NIF)

- A Non-Instructional Facility (NIF) is a school building without classrooms or a library building without public areas. Non-instructional facilities on school and library property are eligible to receive discounts on data transmission services and internet access services (Category One services).

    - Examples of NIFs on library property include, but are not limited to:

        - Bookmobile garages;

        - Interlibrary loan facilities; and

        - Library technology centers.

    - Examples of NIFs on school property include, but are not limited to:

        - Administrative buildings;

        - School bus barns and garages; and

        - Facilities associated with athletic activities.

- More information is available on the Non-Instructional Facility page.

Eligible Consortia

- A consortium (plural consortia or consortiums) is a group of E-Rate eligible entities that seeks competitive bids or E-Rate funding for eligible equipment and services on behalf of its members. Schools and/or libraries can form consortia for the purposes of the E-Rate program to aggregate demand in order to lower prices and promote more efficient use of shared facilities.
  - Consortia are not themselves eligible for discounted services, but they can conduct competitive bidding processes and/or apply for eligible equipment and services on behalf of their members.
  - Schools and libraries can join together to form consortia.
- There are two common reasons why applicants will choose to form a consortium:
  - One is to aggregate demand for lower prices; and
  - The other is to provide expertise to assist small entities with the application process. These small entities can join together and work with the consortium leader to conduct the competitive bidding and application processes on their behalf.

Eligible Consortia – Tribal Government Information

- A Tribal government can create a consortium for its Tribally controlled schools and libraries, and a Tribal government employee can act as the consortium leader.

- The [consortium leader](#) is responsible for ensuring that necessary certifications are made, responding to USAC inquiries on behalf of members, and maintaining records.

  - Consortium leaders must be authorized by each member to act on behalf of consortium members

- Review the [Registration Checklist for New Tribal Libraries](#) (PDF)

E-Rate Eligible Products and Services

Eligible Services List (ESL)

- Each year, the FCC issues a list of services and equipment that are eligible for the upcoming funding year.

- FY2022 Eligible Services List (PDF)

E-Rate Service Categories

- **Category One (C1)** (Service **to the building**'s demarcation point)
  - Data Transmission and/or Internet Access
  - No budget (limit) on funding requested.

- **Category Two (C2)** (Portions of service **inside the building** that are covered)
  - Internal Connections,
  - Managed Internal Broadband Services, and
  - Basic Maintenance of Internal Connections
  - Applicant has a budget or limit on how much funding can be requested.
  - Budget covers a five-year period. See Category Two Budget page

Category One (C1) Services

- Services that bring broadband services to eligible schools and/or libraries.

  - Eligible services are classified as:

    - Data Transmission and/or

    - Internet Access services

Examples: Category One (C1) Services

- Examples of **Category One (C1)** services include:

  - Leased lit fiber

  - Internet access provided over fiber or copper

  - Commercially available internet access

    - Cable provider internet

    - Satellite internet

Category One (C1): Internet Access

- **Internet Access** services are connections to an eligible location from an **internet service provider**. These connections would allow the location **access to the publicly available internet**.

  - Example – Library 1 and Library 2 need individual internet services.

Category One (C1): Data Transmission

- **Data Transmission** services are secure connections **between eligible locations**. These connections would not include public internet access.
  - Example – Library 1 needs a secure connection to Library 2 to **transmit library records**.

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Data Transmission + Internet Access

- Both types of service will be needed if a **secure connection** between two eligible locations is needed **along with internet services** at both locations.

  - Example – Library 1 and 2 each need individual Internet Access services. If the two libraries also transmit confidential library records between each other, they will also need a secured data transmission service as well.

Category Two (C2) Services

Eligible Services: Category Two (C2)

- **Category Two (C2)** includes services or equipment necessary to transport information **within the building** to classrooms or publicly accessible areas of a library.

- **There are three service types:**

  - **Internal Connections (IC) –** Equipment needed to utilize a broadband connection within a school or library.

  - **Basic Maintenance of Eligible Broadband Internal Connections (BMIC)** – Covers the repair and up-keep of the eligible equipment needed to use a broadband connection within a school or library.

  - **Managed Internal Broadband Services (MIBS)** – Services **provided by a vendor** related to the operation, management, and monitoring of eligible internal connections (owned or leased equipment) necessary for the broadband connectivity within schools and libraries.

- End User equipment, such as laptops , computers, headsets, speakers, are **not** eligible for E-Rate funding.

Eligible Services: Category Two (C2)

- Examples of Category Two (C2) services include:
  - **Internal Connections**
    - Cabling, routers, switches, modems, and wireless access points
    - If a device needs software or a license to make it work, this is also eligible (**Right-to-Use and Client Access Licenses**)
  - **Basic maintenance of Internal Connections (BMIC)**
    - The repair and upkeep of eligible internal connections (services to deploy bugs, fixes, patches)
    - Multi-year maintenance service subscriptions (updates to existing software)
    - Only maintenance services provided for the current funding year are eligible. (i.e., a three year subscription should be requested annually for one third of the price over three years)
  - **Managed internal broadband services (MIBS)**
   - Managed Wi-Fi Agreement

C2 Example: Common Eligible Internal Connections

- Some **common eligible Internal Connections** that may be utilized are displayed here.

- In this **scenario**, a library is receiving internet service which has been delivered by the service provider to the library's technical room to a terminating point. They are looking for internal connections to cost effectively connect laptops and desktops to utilize the internet service.

- **Note:** End user equipment, such as laptops, computers, headsets, speakers, are not eligible for E-Rate support.
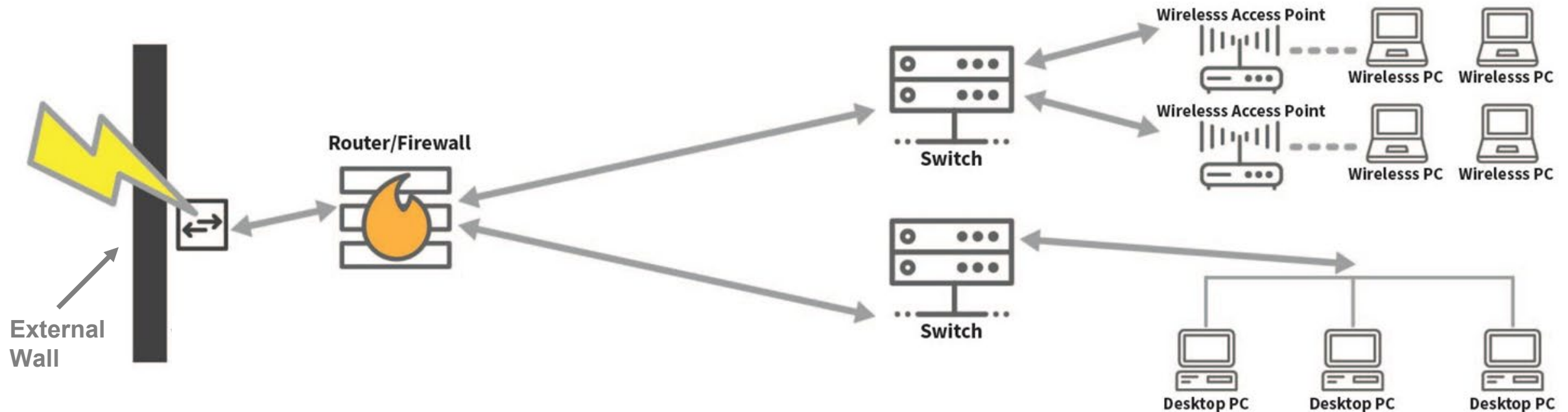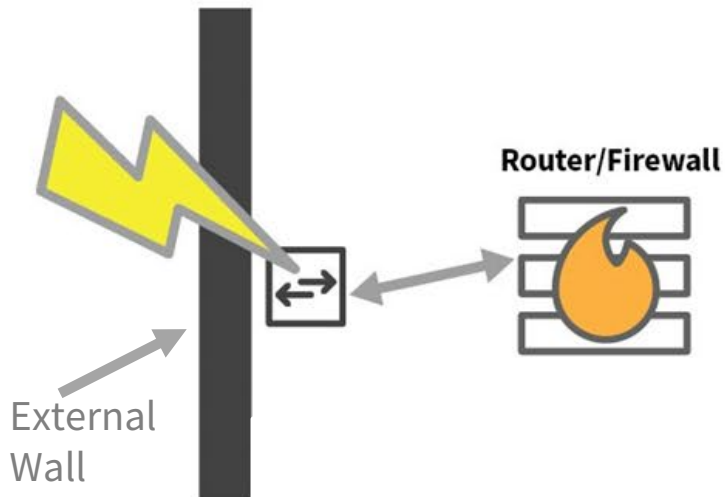
Eligible Internal Connections

- Applicants may use different types of eligible internal connections **C2 equipment/services** to accomplish internet connection to their end user devices. **Cabling** is utilized to provide connection to the various devices and transport information.

- Eligible internal connections:
  - Cabling
 - Router
  - Firewall
  - Switch
  - Wireless Access Point

External Wall

40
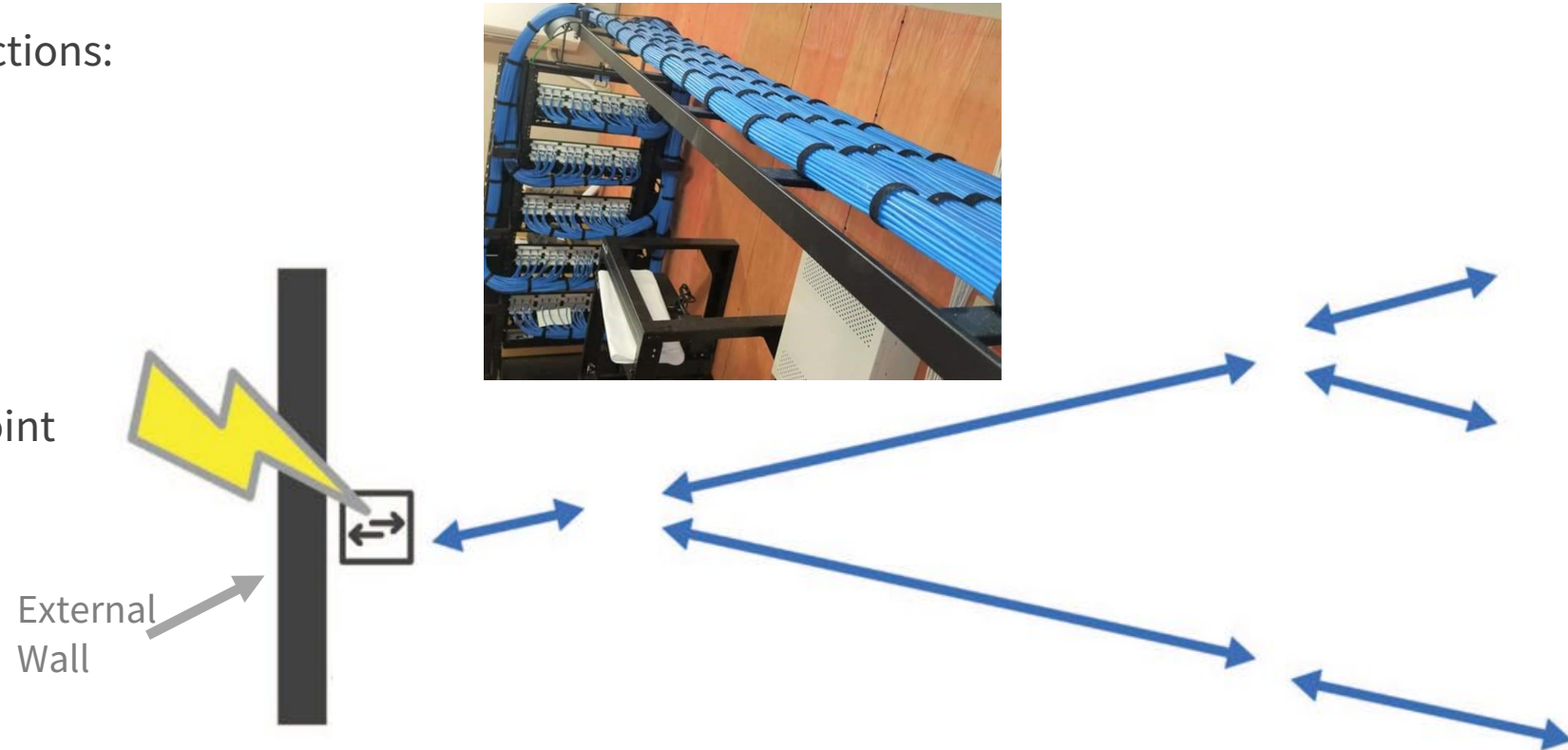
Router and Firewall

- The **Router** can act as the initial device in your internal network. It is the main communication point between the internet access service and the devices in your internal network.

- A **Firewall** acts as a barrier between the internal network and the public internet.


Router/Firewall

External Wall

Switch and Wireless Access Points (WAP)

- A **Switch** acts as a connecting device for multiple other devices.

- The **Wireless Access Points (WAP)** receive and transmit wireless Internet to applicable devices.


External
Wall

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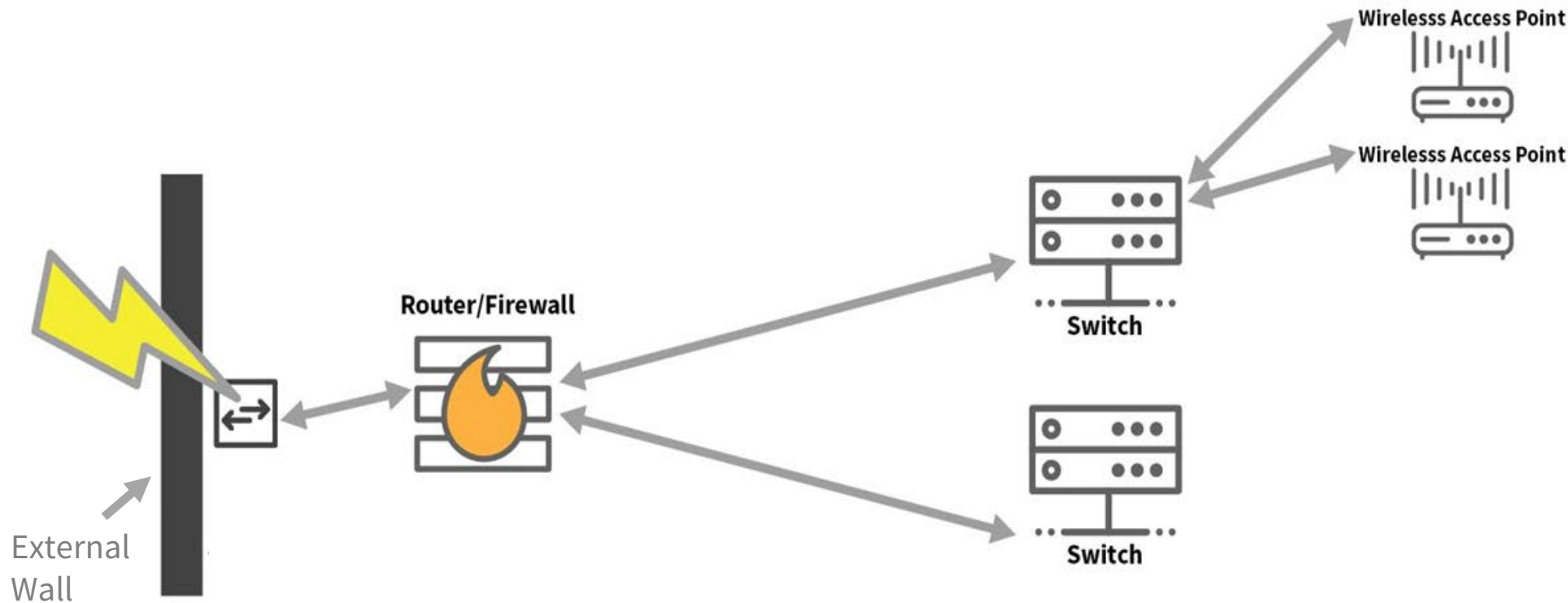
Basic Maintenance of Internal Connections (BMIC)

- **Basic Maintenance** is eligible for equipment that is **E-Rate eligible**.

- In this **example**, a cable and a Wireless Access Point are not functioning properly. The green circles below indicate malfunctioning equipment but **are eligible** for the **basic maintenance and repair** of these items **is also eligible**.
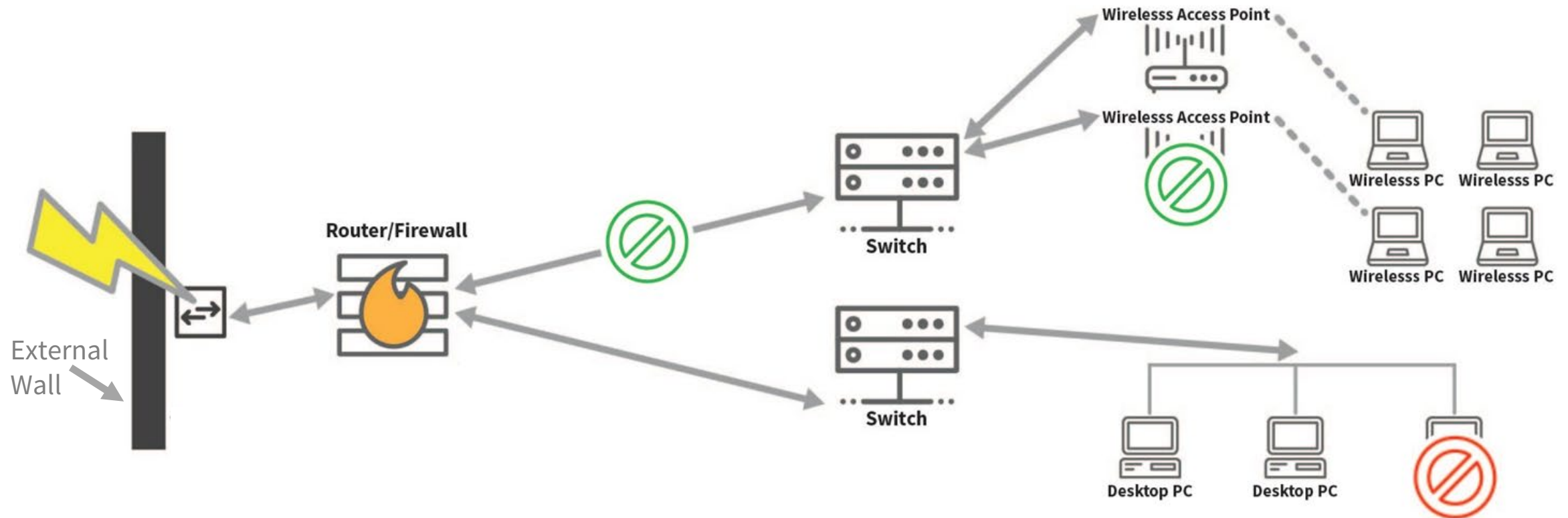
Managed Internal Broadband Services (MIBS)

- If you need help in the daily operation of your internal network, this service provided by a vendor is eligible as **Managed Internal Broadband Services (MIBS)**. They can support equipment that an applicant already owns or they can install equipment that they lease to the applicant. They can perform actions on the eligible equipment to ensure that the internal network operates at an optimal level.
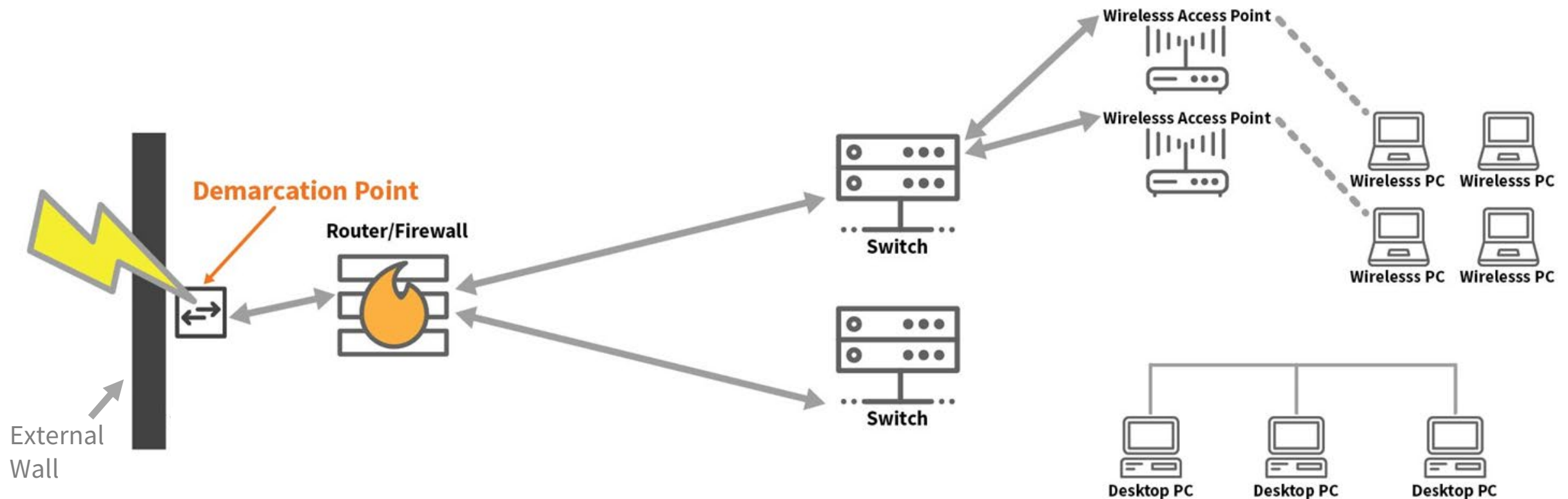
Basic Fiber Concepts

Fiber: Network Equipment

- Network Equipment includes the electronics and equipment **necessary** to make **Data Transmission and/or Internet Access** services functional.

- Eligible under **Category One (C1)**.

  - A single piece of Network Equipment, also called **basic terminating equipment.**

    - The single piece must be located at the **demarcation** point – the point at which the service provider would start to check if services were interrupted.

Introduction to Fiber: Types of Eligible Fiber

- Data Transmission and Internet Access services can be transmitted over various types of physical methods.
  - Four examples of physical methods:
    - Fiber
    - Copper
    - Microwave
    - Satellite
- The next couple of slides will provide additional information on the various types of Category One (C1) Fiber services.

Introduction to Fiber: Types of Eligible Fiber

- **Leased lit fiber**
  Data Transmission or internet access services where the **applicant pays a monthly fee** to the service provider who **provides the service via fiber**. This is a **totally inclusive service** consisting of all the components needed to provide and maintain the service.

- **Leased dark fiber**
  Service providers may have fiber that they are not currently utilizing that could be used to provide services. Applicants can lease portions of this unused fiber network that is owned by a service provider.
  - This lease would **only be to use the fiber**.
  - The applicant needs to **account for**
    - **any network equipment needed to use the fiber**, and
    - **associated maintenance and operations of the fiber**.
  - The applicant will also need obtain **separately any needed data transport and/or internet access** service over that fiber.

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Introduction to Fiber: Types of Eligible Fiber

- **Self-provisioned networks**
  - Applicant can also seek requests to build and own their own **high-speed broadband network**.
    - The applicant will need to show that building its own network is more cost-effective than leasing or using an existing network for the same period of time. This is also known as being the most-cost effective option.
    - If building the network is determined to be the most cost-effective option, the applicant hires a vendor to construct the network, or a portion of the network that the applicant will use. The applicant can completely or partially own and maintain the network or a portion of the network.
    - A self-provisioned network can be shared with an ineligible third-party entity so long as the ineligible third-party entity pays its fair share of the costs of the undiscounted costs of the network. The applicant will have to show that the fair share paid by the ineligible third-party was reasonable.
  - The **applicant must**
    - Pay for the network equipment,
    - Pay to maintain and operate the network, and
    - Pay for any data transport and/or internet access services that are used on the network separately.

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Eligible Fiber Services: State/Tribal Match Funding

- [State or Tribal Match](#) Eligibility Requirements:

  - The broadband service must meet the FCC's long-term connectivity targets.

  - The funding must be from an eligible source.

  - The terms and conditions associated with the state funding must not conflict with E-Rate program rules.

  - The total amount of support, including matching funds, may not exceed 100 percent of the cost of the project.

  - State (or Tribal) match funds are available for special construction only—applicants should create separate funding requests on their FCC Forms 471 for special construction.

- Applicants seeking additional E-Rate discounts to match state funding for special construction must submit information with their FCC Form 471 filing that USAC will use to determine:

  - Whether the state funding is from an eligible source;

  - That any terms and conditions associated with the state funding are not in conflict with E-Rate rules;

  - The appropriate calculation of the additional E-Rate discount, if any; and

  - Whether the project meets the FCC's connectivity targets.

E-Rate Application Process

Application Cycle Overview
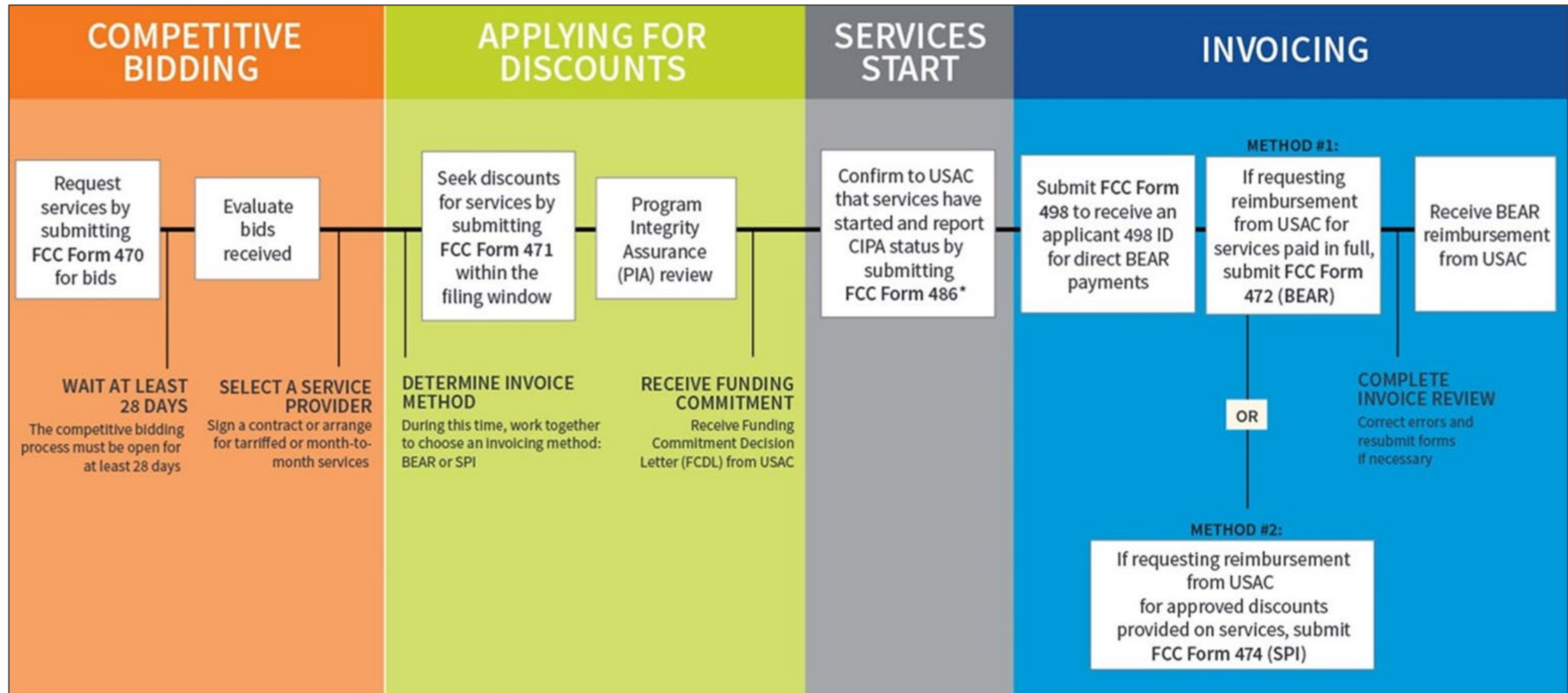
Applicant Forms and Important FY2023 Dates

Competitive Bidding

July 2022
to
≈February 2023
(actual dates TBA)

→

Apply for Discounts

January 2023
to
≈March 2023
(actual dates TBA)

→

Start Services

July 1, 2023
to
June 30, 2024

→

Invoice USAC

Recurring Services
July 2023 – October 2024*

Non-recurring Services
July 2023 – January 2025*

470

471

486

472 (BEAR)

OR

474 (SPI)

* Date ranges reflect a typical timeline, but are subject to change.

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E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC)

- **E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC)** is the account and application management portal for the E-Rate program.

- Applicants use this tool to:

  - Manage and complete E-Rate program processes,

  - Receive notifications,

  - Open customer service cases, and

  - Contact customer service.

- Instructional Step-by-Step Videos are available on the Videos page.

- **Note:** Setting up new user and entity profiles in the EPC can take several days to complete depending on a number of factors, including the number of entities joining a consortium and the availability of designated users to activate their accounts. See the Before You Begin page or the Registration Checklist for New Tribal Libraries (PDF).

Identifying Numbers

- **Billed Entity Number (BEN)** - Assigned to each **applicant entity** in the system.
  - Each entity that receives and pays bills is assigned a **Billed Entity Number (BEN)**.
    - For example: an independent school, a school district, an independent library, a library system, a consortium, or an educational service agency.
  - Schools in a school district, libraries in a library system, and NIFs also have entity numbers.

- **Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN)** - Assigned to participating providers.
  - Service providers may have more than one SPIN due to:
    - Different business units or service areas.
    - Mergers and acquisitions.

- **Consultant Registration Number (CRN)** - Assigned to each consultant in the system.
  - A consultant may be a single individual or a consulting firm with multiple employees.

Funding Request Number (FRN)

- Applying for discounts

  - You list the equipment and/or services and identify the costs for those equipment and/or services on the FCC Form 471.

  - Each of these funding requests is assigned a number – a Funding Request Number (FRN).

  - You can have one or multiple FRNs on your FCC Form 471.

- FRNs are specific to:

  - Recipient(s) of Service (ROS)

  - Category of service

  - Service type (Data Transmission and/or Internet Access, Internal Connections, BMIC, Managed Internal Broadband Services)

  - FCC Form 470

  - Service provider (SPIN)

  - Contract, if you have one

- An FRN can have one or many types of equipment and/or services, as long as the equipment and/or services have all the above in common.

Funding Year

- A Funding Year (FY) starts on July 1 and ends the following June 30.

    - **FY2022 started on July 1, 2022 and ends on June 30, 2023.**

    - **FY2023 starts on July 1, 2023 and ends on June 30, 2024.**

- **Delivery and installation of services**

    - **Recurring services** (e.g., monthly internet access) must be delivered during the funding year.

    - **Non-recurring services** (e.g., equipment installations) can generally be installed through September 30 following the close of the funding year.

        - The September 30 deadline can sometimes be extended, either automatically or by request.

        - Delivery and installation can sometimes start before the funding year (i.e., before July 1).

Competitive Bidding
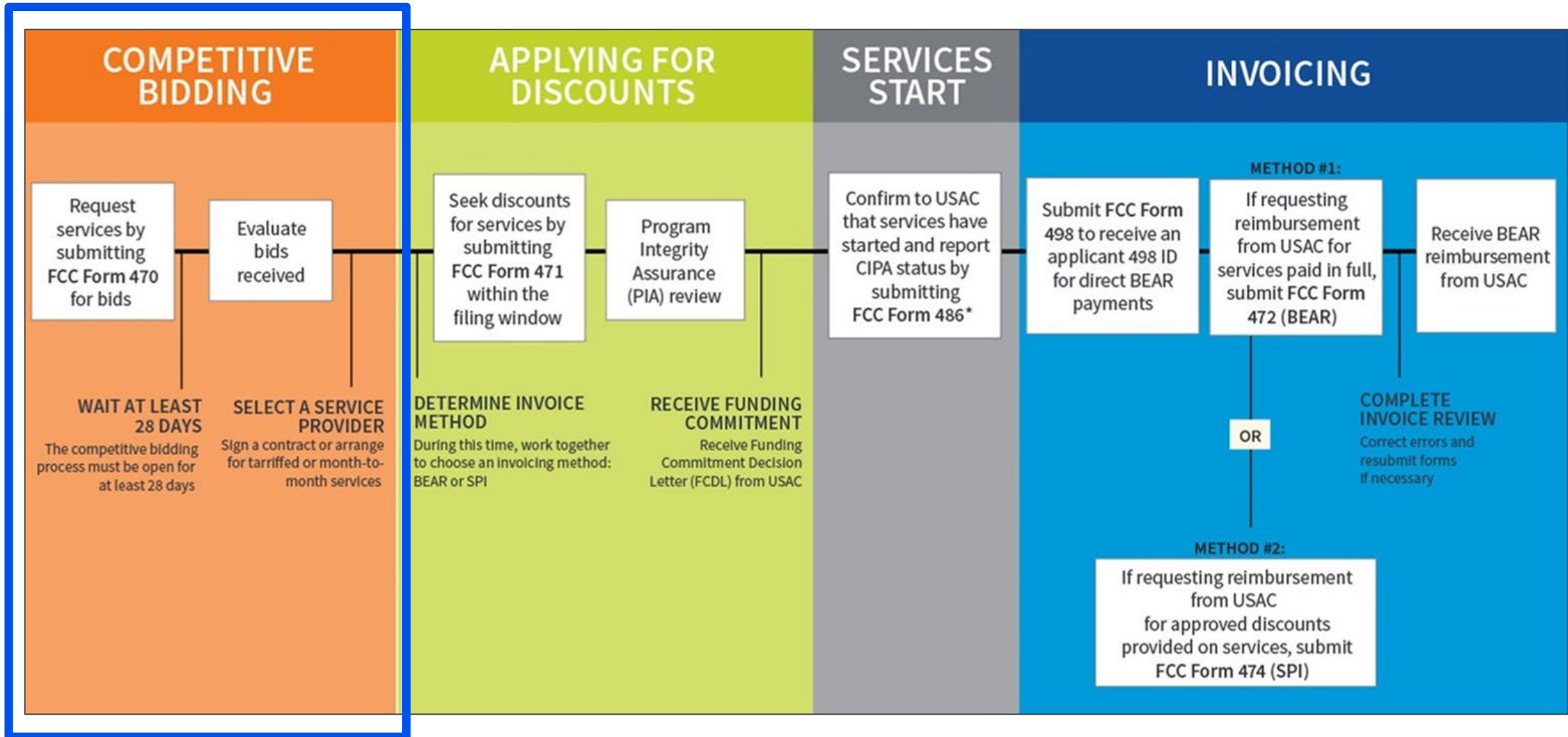
File an FCC Form 470

- Competitive bidding is the formal process for applicants to choose the vendors/service providers who will provide the requested products and services.

- The applicant must file and certify an **FCC Form 470** to start the competitive bidding process.
  - Describe your desired services and requirements with sufficient specificity for service providers to be able to submit responsive bids.
  - No generic descriptions (e.g., all Digital Transmission Services).
  - You may also include additional bidding documentation, such as a Request for Proposal (RFP) with your FCC Form 470.
    - We use "RFP" generically to refer to any bidding document that describes the applicant's project and requested services or products in more detail.
  - Services requested on the FCC Form 470 and RFP MUST match.

- Service providers review an applicant's FCC Form 470 for requested products and services, any procurement requirements and then submit bids.

- After waiting a minimum of 28 days, an applicant may select a service provider to provide the requested services.

Applying for Discounts
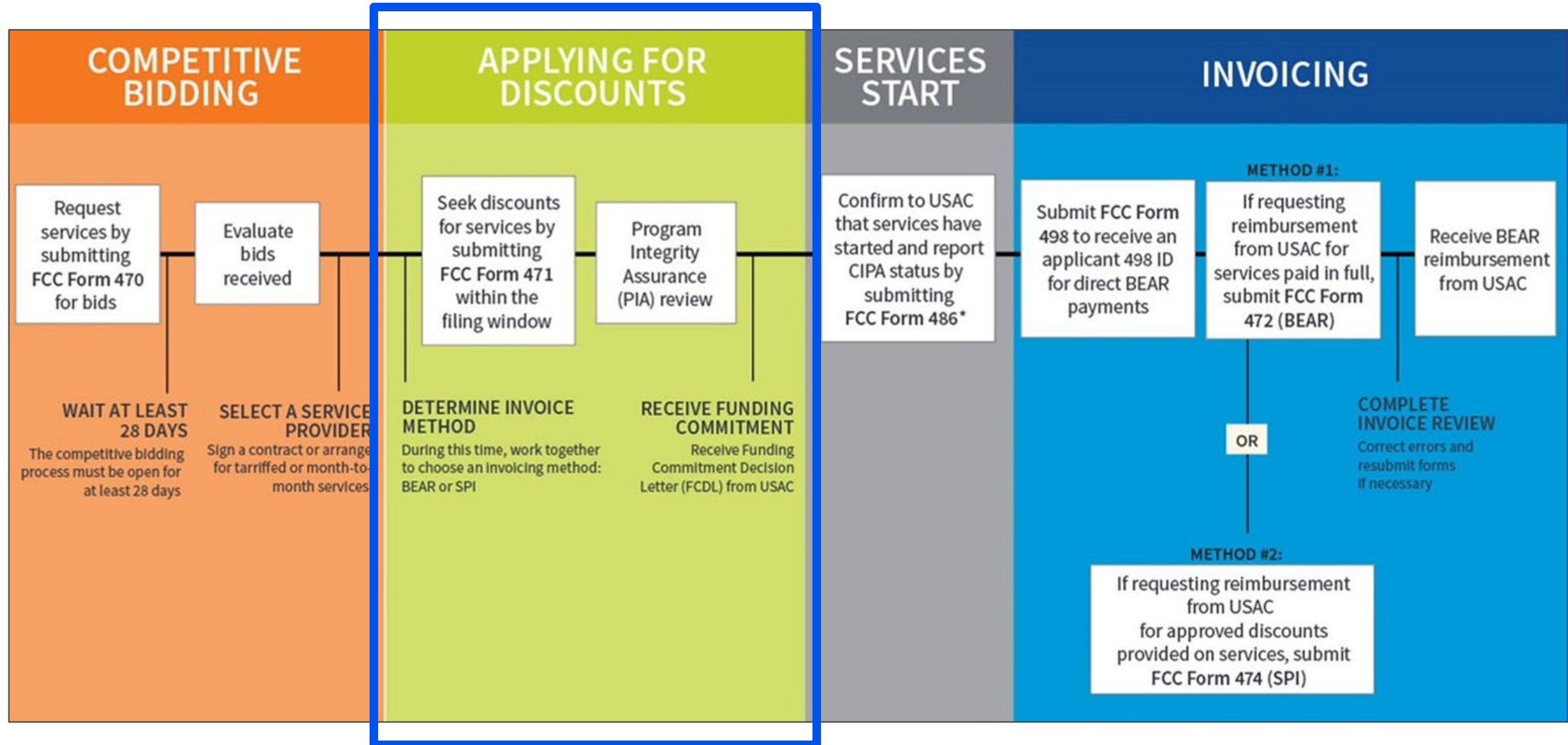
Application Filing Window

- After selecting a service provider, applicants file the FCC Form 471 to apply for funding.

- FCC Forms 471 are filed during the FCC Form 471 application filing window.

  - The filing window generally opens in mid-January and closes in mid-March in advance of the start of the funding year.

- Applications (FCC Forms 471) filed outside of the filing window are not considered for funding and will need a waiver from the FCC.

- **FCC Window Waiver**

  - USAC cannot approve appeals or waiver requests that ask for a waiver of the E-Rate program rules— you must file a request for waiver with the FCC.

  - Basic instructions for filing the FCC Window Waiver Requests is on the FCC Form 471 Filing page.

Services Start
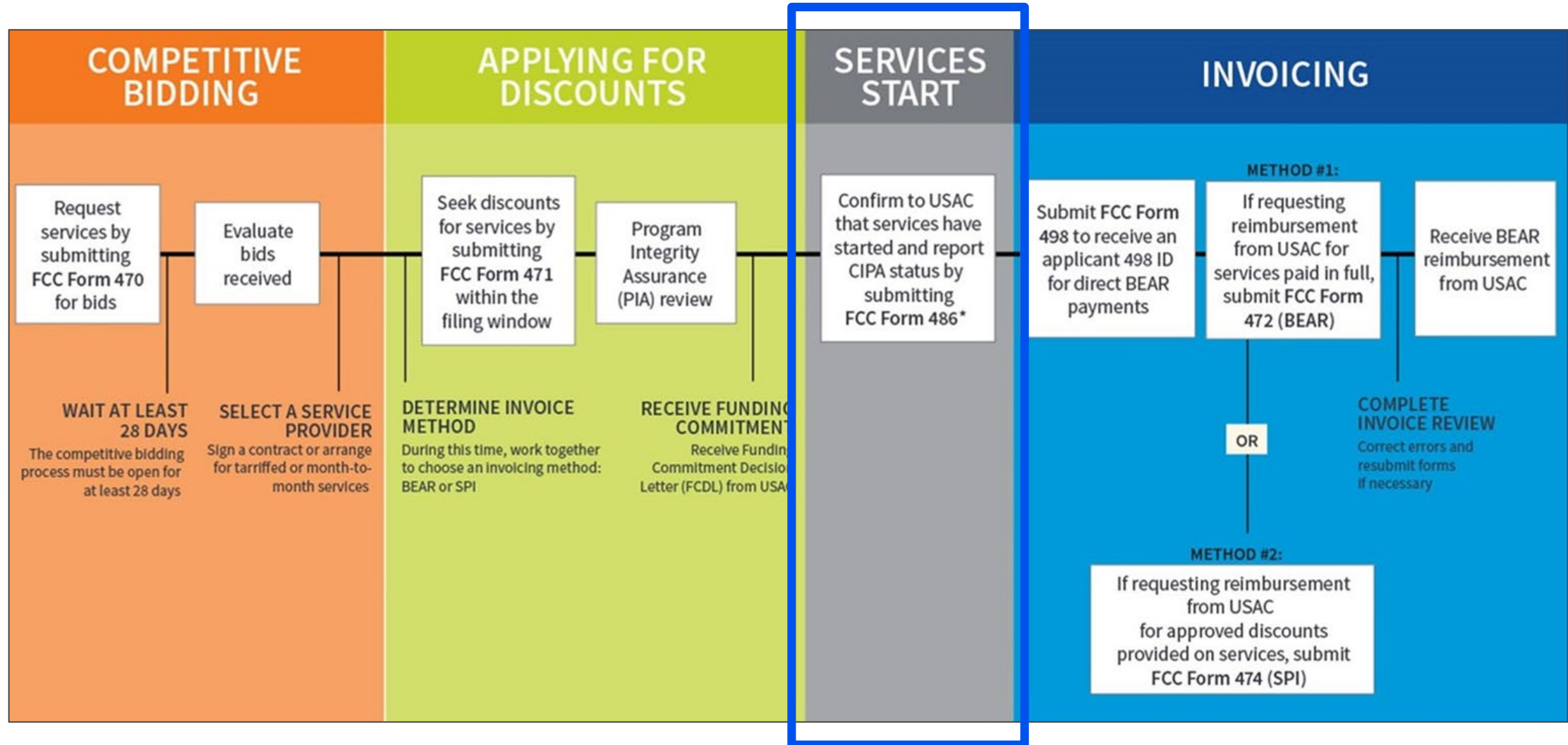
Service Start Date

- When is my Service Start Date (SSD)?

    - If the SSD occurs:

        - Before the start of the funding year, the start date is the first day of the funding year: July 1, 2023.

            - i.e., For installations starting May 25, 2023 before the funding year, the SSD is July 1, 2023 of the funding year.

        - Any day during the funding year (between July 1, 2023 and June 20, 2024), then the first day is the actual start date.

            - i.e., For services starting August 7, 2023 of the funding year, the SSD is August 7, 2023 of the funding year.

- Your FCC Form 486 must be filed within 120 days of the service start date, which you reported on the FCC Form 486, or within 120 days of the date you received your Funding Commitment Decision Letter, whichever is later.

Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA)

- Applicants must certify compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) to be eligible for E-Rate program discounts on Category One internet access and all Category Two services – internal connections, managed internal broadband services, and basic maintenance of internal connections.

- **CIPA requirements** include the following three items:

  - Internet Safety Policy;

  - Technology Protection Measure; and

  - Public Notice and Hearing or Meeting.

- In general, **school and library authorities must certify that**:

  - They have complied with the requirements of CIPA;

  - They are undertaking actions, including any necessary procurement procedures, to comply with the requirements of CIPA; or

  - CIPA does not apply because they are receiving discounts for telecommunications services only.

- Learn more on the CIPA page.

Document Retention

- You must keep all [documentation](#) for at least 10 years from the last date to receive service.
  - Here are some examples of documentation that would be needed for pre-planning and step one:
    - Evidence of eligibility for E-Rate participation
    - Proof of square footage
    - Bids
    - Competitive Bidding/Evaluation Matrix
  - For multi-year contracts, this means 10 years from the contract expiration date.
- Retain receipt and delivery records relating to pre-bidding, bidding, contracts, application process, invoices, provision of services, and other matters relating to your applications.
  - i.e., For recurring internet access service for FY2023, both the applicant and the service provider **must retain all records** until at least June 30, 2034.

Invoicing
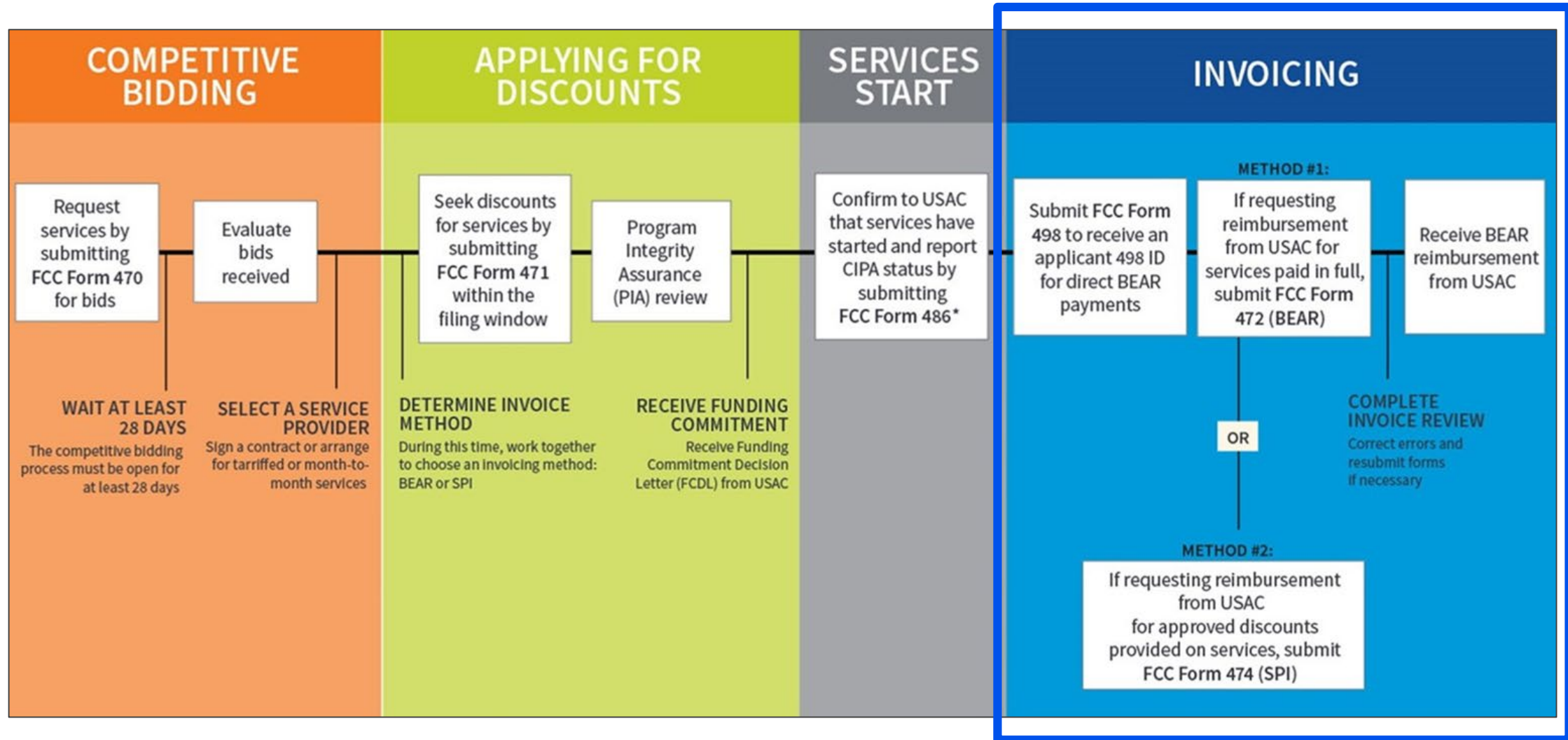
Resources

- [Applicant Process](#)

- [Service Provider Process](#)

- [Process Flow Chart](#)

- Visit the [E-Rate Website](#)

- Subscribe to the [E-Rate News Brief](#)

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- View [E-Rate Training Videos](#)

- E-Rate [Registration Checklist](#)

- [FCC Form 471 Submission Checklist](#)

- [Invoicing Webinar](#)

Housekeeping – Q&A

- Use the "Questions" box in your webinar control panel to submit your question in writing.

  - Click the box with the arrow above the questions box to expand it.

  - Ask questions related to webinar content.
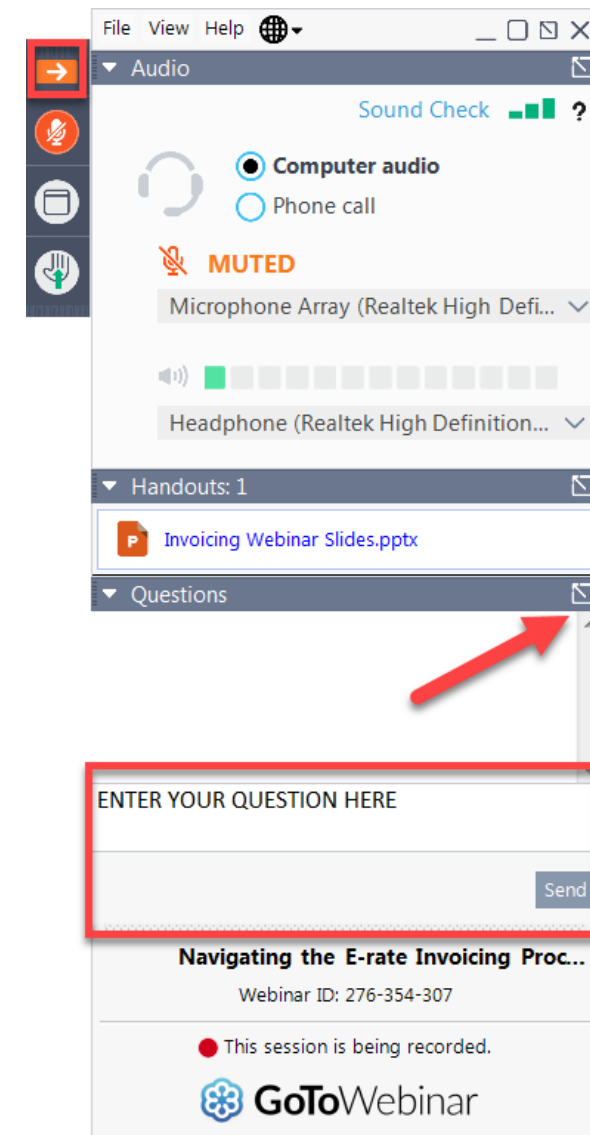
Questions?

E-Rate Customer Service Center (CSC)

Call us at (888) 203-8100

Monday – Friday 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET

**Create a customer service case in the
[E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC)](#):**

1. Log in to EPC.
2. Select the **Contact Us** link from the upper right menu on the landing page.
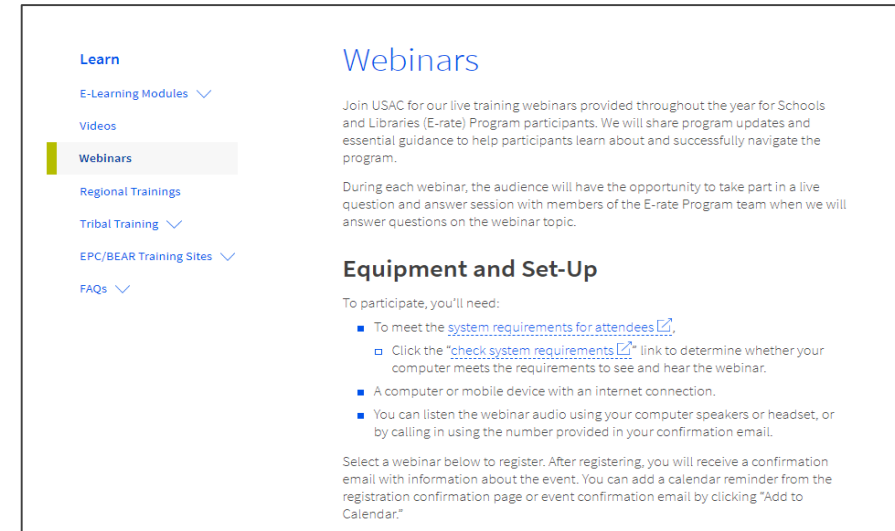
Upcoming Webinars

Our next webinar is on:
October 20 at 2 p.m. ET

E-Rate Pre-Commitment Process

Recommended for: Applicants and service providers

E-Rate Experience Level: All

Go to the E-Rate **Webinars** page for additional information.

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- If you are not able to complete the survey today, one will be emailed to you within one to two business days.

- We appreciate your feedback!

Thank You!

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