E-Rate Pre-Commitment Process

2022 Applicant and Service Provider Training

October 20, 2022
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  • Links within the deck are clickable

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1. Log in to EPC.
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Meet Our Team

Lisette LaForge
Program Analyst | E-rate program

Nkeshi Free
Communications Specialist | E-rate
Agenda

• Application Process
• Competitive Bidding (FCC Form 470)
• Requesting Funding (FCC Form 471)
• Application Review
• Funding Commitments
• Document Retention
Application Process
# Know Your Role

## Applicants
- Determine services needed, file FCC Form 470 and a Request For Proposal (RFP) if one is needed.
- Run competitive bidding process.
- Select winning bidder, with price of eligible products and services as primary factor.
- File FCC Form 471 and Respond to Program Integrity Assurance (PIA).
- File other applicant forms (FCC Forms 486, 472, 500, etc.).
- Document compliance with FCC rules on an ongoing basis.
- Retain documentation for at least ten years from last date of service delivery.

## Service Providers
- Respond to FCC Form 470 and RFPs.
- Know the E-Rate eligibility percentage of products and services
- After selection, may assist with responding to PIA on technical services questions (but not competitive bidding).
- File other service provider forms (FCC Form 473, 474, etc.).
- Document compliance on FCC rules on an ongoing basis.
- Retain documentation for at least ten years from last date of service delivery.
Application Process - Overview

**Pre-Commitment Steps**
- Request services *(FCC Form 470)*, run a competitive bid process, and select a vendor
- Request funding *(FCC Form 471)* and undergo application review

**Post-Commitment Steps**
- Confirm the start of services and status of CIPA compliance *(FCC Form 486)*
- Request reimbursements *(FCC Form 472)* OR receive discounts *(FCC Form 474)*

- See the [E-Rate Program Registration checklist](#) for tips to get started
- Call our Customer Service Center at (888) 203-8100 to set up an account in the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC) and make sure your school or library has an entity number (also called a Billed Entity Number or BEN).
Competitive Bidding – FCC Form 470
Competitive Bidding Is The First Step In The E-Rate Application Process
What Is Competitive Bidding?

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

• Service providers review an applicant's FCC Form 470 for requested products and services, any procurement requirements and then submit bids.
Exemptions to Competitive Bidding

- Commercially Available Business class Internet Option (CABIO) services are exempt if they meet all of the following requirements:
  - **Commercially available**: This means that it is publicly available to non-residential in the same form and at the same rates that it is offered to schools or libraries.
  - **Low cost**: This means that the total annual pre-discount cost for the service, including any one-time costs such as installation, does not exceed $3,600 per year per school or library.
  - **High-speed**: This means that the service must provide bandwidth speeds of at least 100 Mbps downstream and 10 Mbps upstream.

- An applicant utilizing CABIO services should:
  - Create your contract record (if applicable; see video “Creating a Contract Record for CABIO Services”)
  - File your FCC Form 471 funding application to request E-Rate support
Important to understand before filing

- What Category/ies of Service and Service Type(s) you are bidding for. These need to be consistent between your FCC Form 470 and FCC Form 471
- What equipment/services are **100% eligible** under E-Rate
- What equipment/services are only **partially eligible** under E-Rate
- What is “mixed bucket” eligibility?
- If you don’t understand, contact
  - Our [Customer Service Center](#)
  - The manufacturer (in the case of equipment)
  - Your service provider
More information on Competitive Bidding

For more information, see the following links:

- [FCC Form 470 and Competitive Bidding](#) webinar
- [Competitive Bidding Infographic](#)
- [Guiding Statements Reference Table](#)
- File and certify FCC Form 470 through the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC) (for more detail, see [FCC Form 470 videos](#) entitled [E-Rate Competitive Bidding Process](#) and [How to file an FCC Form 470](#)
- Service Providers – see video entitled [How to Search for FCC Forms 470](#)
Pro-Tip - Calculate your FCC Form 470 deadline

• The FCC Form 470 generally becomes available one year in advance of the funding year in question. For services starting on July 1, 2023, the 470 can be filed as early July 1, 2022.

• The FCC Form 470 requires a 28-day waiting period, with service provider selection occurring on or after the 29th day after filing.

• With an FCC Form 470 Application Filing window from January to March, it is important to remember to file the FCC Form 470 in time to be able to wait 28 days, select a service provider and file an FCC Form 471 before the close of the filing window.

**Example:** The [December 2021 Newsbrief](#) announced a filing window from January 12, 2022 through March 22, 2022 for services starting on July 1, 2022 (Funding Year 2022). Filing an FCC Form 470 on February 1 would allow you to waiting **at least** 28 days, select a service provider **on or after the 29th day** and file an FCC Form 471 to request USAC funding in window
Requesting Funding – FCC Form 471
Applying for Discounts is the second Step In The E-Rate Application Process
FCC Form 471 Overview

• Applicants file an FCC Form 471 (Description of Services ordered and Certification Form) to request funding for eligible services and equipment for the upcoming funding year.

• Applicants must
  • Include information on the recipients of service and service provider(s)
  • Provide detailed descriptions of services, including costs, requested equipment and dates of service and
  • Certify compliance with program rules
Before you file – Update your EPC Profile

• If you are a new applicant, you will need to create an account in the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC)

• If you are a returning applicant, you need to update your EPC account information during the Administrative Window, which typically occurs between October and December
  • It is important to verify the accuracy of the information during the administrative window because USAC automatically updates profile information to match information on the most recently filed FCC Form 471. These updates impact Student Count, NSLP and CEP numbers, and library square footage

• During the Application Filing window, any changes to your EPC profile that would impact your discount will be prohibited. EPC is “locked” at this point.
What is the FCC Form 471 Application Window?

The **FCC Form 471 Application Window** refers to the time every year when the **FCC Form 471** application is available to file in EPC.

- It occurs annually between January and March is announced in the E-Rate News Brief each December. Subscribe to the [E-Rate News Brief](#) to be notified of the Application Window and other timely program information.
- This is a firm deadline and based on FCC Rules
- It cannot be waived without express written permission from the FCC
Pro-Tip – Your FCC Form 470 and FCC Form 471 must match

• Your FCC Form 470 and FCC Form 471 should match, in terms of service type.
• If you bid for two categories of service on your FCC Form 470, and invoice USAC for three categories of service, this implies that additional information, other than what was competitively bid for, may have influenced the selection of service provider.
  • This discrepancy cannot be corrected after the fact.
  • To avoid a competitive bidding violation, if there is time before the FCC Form 471 deadline, you would need to recertify the FCC Form 470 with the additional service type, wait an additional 28 days and select a service provider on or after the 29th day.
How to file FCC Form 471

- After you have selected a service provider, and made sure that your profile contains the most accurate information, gather information you will need to file your FCC Form 471 (see FCC Form 471 Checklist)

- File FCC Form 471 through the E-Rate Productivity Center

- For more information on the FCC Form 471 application process, see FCC Form 471 Videos on the E-Rate website.
“Out of Filing Window” Applications

- If you certified your FCC Form 470 after February 22, 2022, you would still have need to wait 28 days before certifying FCC Form 471, which means you will not be able to certify your FCC Form 471 before the filing window closes on March 22.

- You can still submit and certify your FCC Form 471 after waiting the 28 days and after March 22, but USAC cannot consider your FCC Form 471 unless the FCC grants a waiver.

- 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.
Application Review
Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) Review

After applicants certify an FCC Form 471 within the filing window, PIA reviewers check the information on the form for completeness and accuracy.
Before your PIA Review - Review your FCC Form 471

• After certifying your FCC Form 471, and while you are waiting for your PIA review, there are some areas you should double-check for accuracy.
• If you find any information that should be corrected or updated, you can submit a Receipt Acknowledgment Letter (RAL) Modification Request.
• If you are using a new or existing contract on your FCC Form 471, you must have a contract record uploaded to your EPC profile.
  • To create that record, go to your organization page and click Contracts, then Manage Contracts and Add a New Contract.
PIA review resources

• For a deep dive on the PIA Review process, please view the following:
  • PIA and Selective Review Process Webinar
  • Application Review page on the E-Rate website
Funding Commitments
Funding Commitment Decision Letter

• After the PIA review process has been completed, USAC issues a Funding Commitment Decision Letter (FCDL) containing USAC’s decisions on your funding requests.

• You can find this decision in the News feed in your organization’s E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC) account.

• You should review this decision carefully, as it contains important information both for planning the start of the receipt of services and for completing the additional steps in the application process.

• If you disagree with one or more of the decisions in your FCDL, you can appeal to USAC.
Document Retention
Document Retention

• You must keep all documentation for 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 received
    • Evaluation matrix
• Retain receipt and delivery records relating to pre-bidding, bidding, contracts, application process, invoices, provision of services and other matters relating to your applications
  • For example, with recurring internet access service for FY2022, both the applicant and the service provider must retain all records until at least June 30, 2033
Additional Resources

• Visit the [E-Rate Website](#)
• Subscribe to the [E-Rate Newsbrief](#)
• Attend [E-Rate Webinars](#)
• View [E-Rate Training Videos](#)
• [E-Rate Process Flow Chart](#)
• [E-Rate Registration Checklist](#)
• [FCC Form 471 Submission Checklist](#)
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Category Two Budgets

Recommended for: Applicants and service providers

E-Rate Experience Level: All

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