

# **E-Rate Pre-Commitment Process**

## 2023 Applicant and Service Provider Training

### October 5, 2023



Universal Service  
Administrative Co.

# Disclaimer

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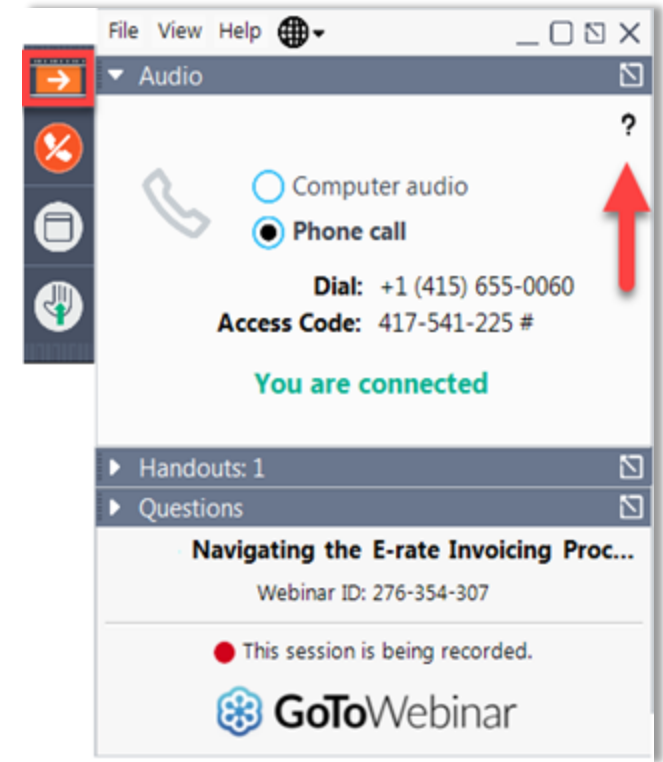
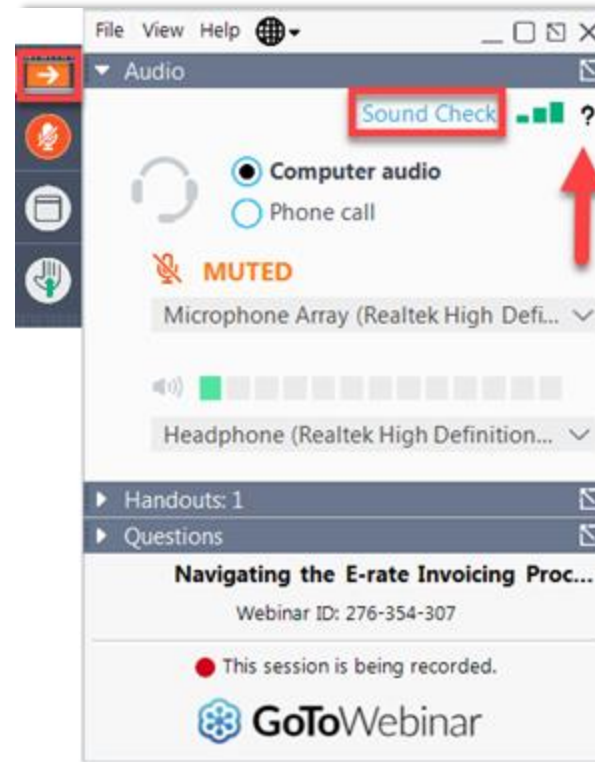
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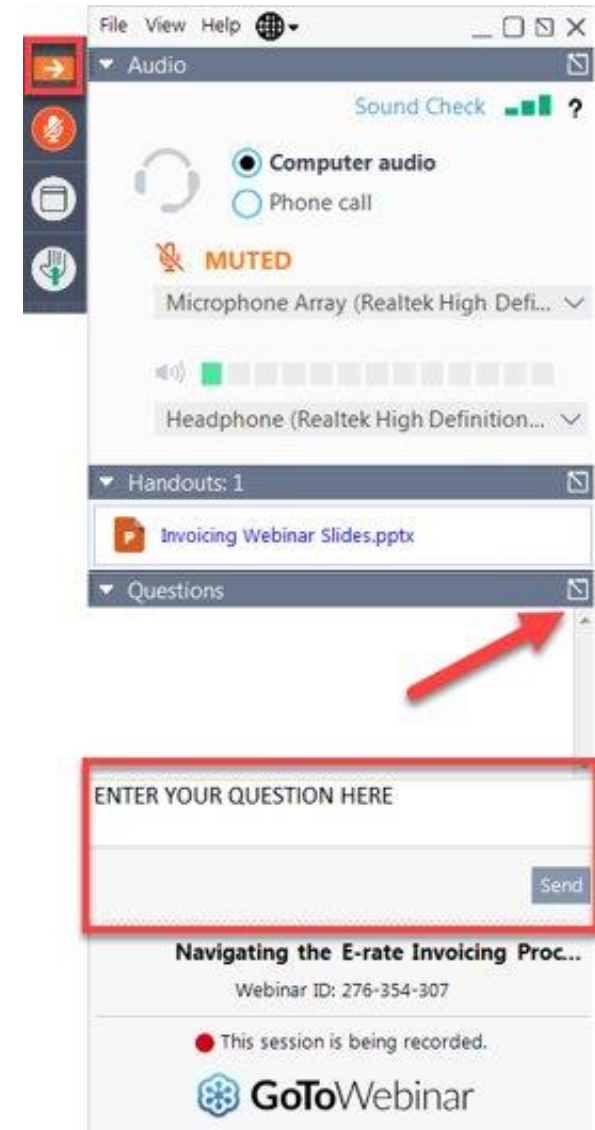
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  - Write in full sentences.
  - Ask one question at a time.
  - Ask questions related to webinar content.



# E-Rate Customer Service Center (CSC)



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Monday – Friday 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET



**Create a customer service case in the  
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1. Log in to EPC.
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# MEET THE TEAM



**Benjamin Yehuda**

Program Analyst | E-Rate



**Lisette LaForge**

Program Manager | E-Rate

# Agenda

- Application Process
- Competitive Bidding (FCC Form 470)
- Requesting Funding (FCC Form 471)
- Application Review
- Funding Commitments
- Document Retention



# Applicant Forms and Important FY2024 Dates

**Competitive Bidding**

July 1, 2023  
to  
February 2024\*



**Apply for Discounts**

January 2024\*  
to  
March 2024\*



**Start Services**

July 1, 2024  
to  
June 30, 2025



**Invoice USAC**

Recurring Services  
July 2024 – October 2025\*

Non-recurring Services  
July 2024 – January 2025\*

**470**

**471**

**486**

**472**  
(BEAR)

OR

**474**  
(SPI)

\* Date ranges reflect a typical timeline and are subject to change.

# Application Process

# Know Your Role

Applicants	Service Providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine services needed, file FCC Form 470 and a Request For Proposal (RFP) if one is needed.</li> <li>• Run competitive bidding process.</li> <li>• Select winning bidder, with price of eligible products and services as primary factor.</li> <li>• File FCC Form 471 and Respond to Program Integrity Assurance (PIA).</li> <li>• File other applicant forms (FCC Forms 486, 472, 500, etc.).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to FCC Form 470 and RFPs.</li> <li>• Know the E-Rate eligibility percentage of products and services</li> <li>• After selection, may assist with responding to PIA on technical services questions (but not competitive bidding).</li> <li>• File other service provider forms (FCC Form 473 (SPAC), 474 (SPI), etc.).</li> </ul>

Both Applicants and Service Providers must document compliance **with** FCC rules on an ongoing basis and 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

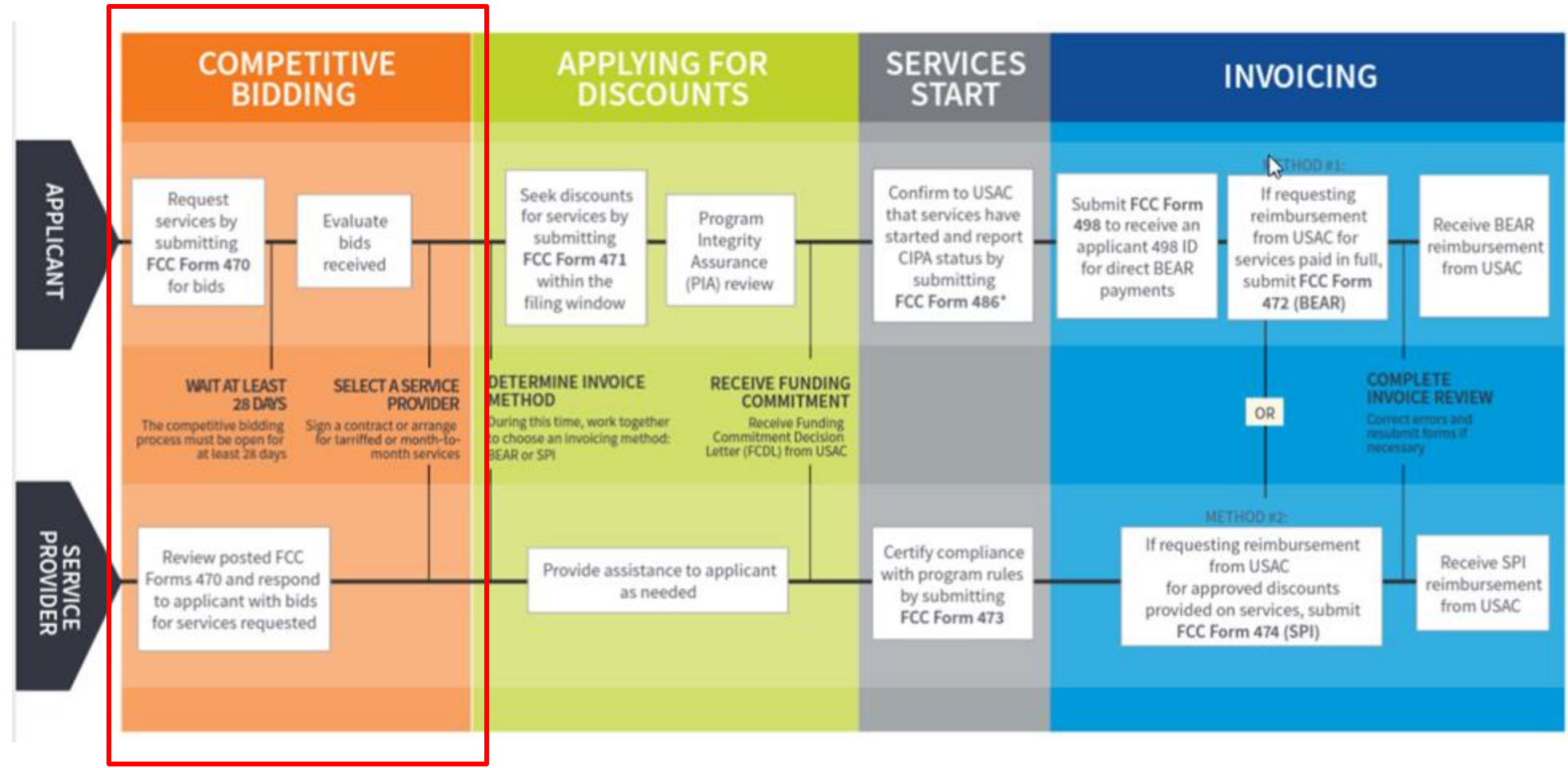
Confirm the start  
of services and  
status of CIPA  
compliance  
**(FCC Form 486)**

Request  
reimbursements  
**(FCC Form 472)**  
OR receive  
discounts  
**(FCC Form 474)**

- [E-Rate Program Registration checklist](#)
- 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 a Billed Entity Number (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 equipment and services.
- Service providers review applicant FCC Forms 470 for requested equipment and services, and any procurement requirements, then **submit bids**.
- If you are a first-time E-Rate applicant, you can receive services under an existing contract





# Exemptions to Competitive Bidding

- Commercially Available Business class Internet Option (CABIO) services are exempt if they meet all the following requirements:
  - **Commercially available:** Publicly available to non-residential customers in the same form and at the same rates that it is offered to schools or libraries.
  - **Low cost:** 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:** The service must be at least 100 Mbps downstream and 10 Mbps upstream.
- Beginning in FY24, **libraries** requesting \$3,600 or less annually per library in Category 2 (C2) E-Rate equipment and services are exempt from competitive bidding requirements.

An applicant taking a competitive bidding exemption should:

- Skip filing FCC Form 470
- Create a contract record, if applicable (see video “Creating a Contract Record for CABIO Services”)
- File an FCC Form 471 funding application to request E-Rate support

# Important to understand before filing

Category of Service and Service Type selections must be consistent between your FCC Form 470 and FCC Form 471

- What equipment and services are **100% eligible** under E-Rate
- What equipment and services are only **partially eligible** under E-Rate
  - Use Cost Allocation to calculate the percentage of funding for the portion of services that are eligible
- What is “mixed bucket” eligibility?
- If you don’t understand, contact
  - The manufacturer
  - Your service provider
  - Our [Customer Service Center](#)

# Competitive Bidding Requirements

- Applicants must seek competitive bids for eligible equipment and services by submitting FCC Form 470 to USAC. USAC will post the FCC Forms 470 on its public website that service providers will use to view the requests and submit responsive bids to the applicants.
- Request for bids must be posted for at least 28 days on USAC's website before an applicant can select and enter an agreement with a service provider.
- Applicants must carefully consider all bids received and then select the most cost-effective service offering, using price as the primary factor in the bid selection. Other factors may be used in the bid evaluation process, but price of the eligible equipment and services must be weighted most heavily.

# Competitive Bidding – State/Tribal-Wide Contract Purchasing

- A state master contract is a contract that is competitively bid and put in place by a state government entity for use by an eligible entity. When competitively bidding the state master contract, a state/Tribal wide agency can submit a statewide FCC Form 470 that applicants can reference if they are purchasing from the state master contract.
- Alternately, if the state master contract was not competitively bid using an FCC Form 470, the applicant may file an FCC Form 470 and consider the state master contract as one of the bids received in their bid evaluation process.

# Requesting Services: Requests for Proposal

- **Requests for Proposals (RFPs)** may be created to describe specific needs and circumstances in more detail.
- RFP documents are any documents that provide additional information to potential bidders on the scope or details of your project.
  - For most types of service requests, RFPs are not required. However, you must issue an RFP for some requests or if you are required to do so by state, Tribal, or local rules.
  - Services on your FCC Form 470 and RFP must match.
  - All RFPs and RFP documents must be attached to your FCC Form 470 in EPC.

# Calculate your FCC Form 470 deadline

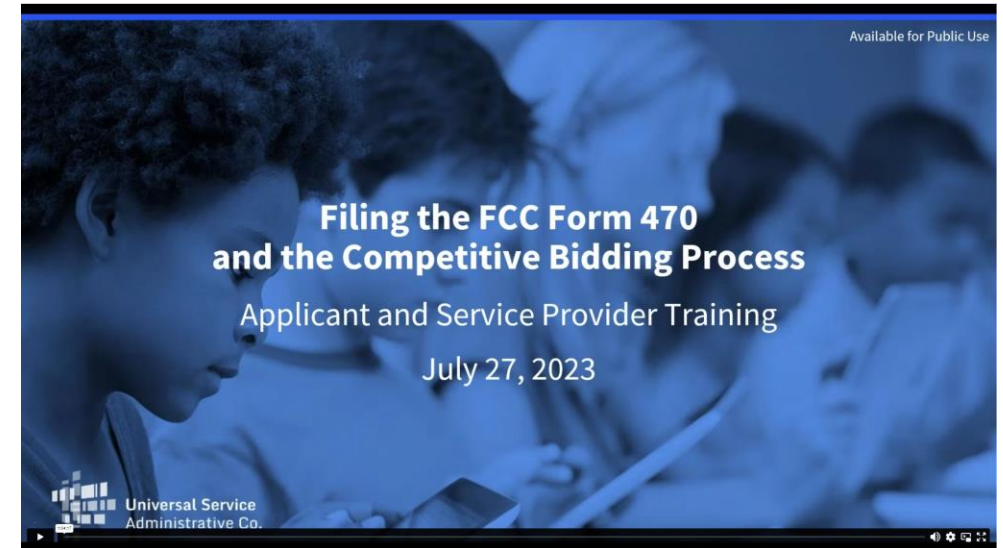
- The FCC Form 470 generally becomes available one year in advance of the funding year. For services starting on July 1, 2024, the FCC Form 470 can be filed as early July 1, 2023.
- The FCC Form 470 requires a 28-day waiting period, with service provider selection occurring on or after the 29<sup>th</sup> day after filing.
- With an **FCC Form 471** 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:** For funding last year, the [December 2022 Special Edition Newsbrief](#) announced an FCC Form 471 filing window from January 18, 2023 through March 28, 2023 for services starting on July 1, 2023 (Funding Year 2023). Filing an FCC Form 470 on February 1st would allow you to wait **at least** 28 days, select a service provider **on or after the 29<sup>th</sup> day** and file an FCC Form 471 to request USAC funding in window.

# 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](#)
- eLM on the 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**



## FCC Form 470 and Competitive Bidding





# Step 2: Selecting Service Providers

## Evaluating Bids

# Fair and Open Competition: Gift Rules

- Receipt or solicitation of gifts by applicants from service providers (and vice versa) and potential service providers is prohibited and a competitive bidding violation.
- Service providers may not offer or provide any gifts or thing of value to applicant personnel involved in the E-Rate program.
- Gift prohibitions are always applicable, not just during the competitive bidding process.
- Exceptions for gifts must be limited to items worth \$20 or less, including meals or prizes, and cannot exceed \$50 from one service provider to each individual per funding year.
- Watch our [Gift Rules video](#) for more details on the gift rules.

# Evaluating Bids

- To evaluate incoming bids, create a bid evaluation matrix or similar document.
- Develop evaluation criteria or factors to assess the bids.
  - You can have one or multiple factors.
- Assign each evaluation factor a point value or percentage.
  - **The price of the eligible products and services must be the most heavily weighted factor.**
  - Other factors, including other non-price factors, can be considered as well; but they cannot be weighted equally or higher than price of the eligible equipment and services.
- The vendor with the most overall points is the winner.
- **Resources**
  - Review the [How to Construct an Evaluation Matrix](#) webpage
  - Download a [Sample Bid Evaluation Matrix](#) (PDF)
  - More details available in the Appendix Section of this slide deck

# Sample: Bid Evaluation Matrix

- Evaluate your bids using a matrix, filled in with your chosen factors and point values.

Factor	Points Available	Vendor 1	Vendor 2	Vendor 3
Price of eligible products and services	50	15	50	35
Prior experience with vendor	20	20	0	20
Service provider bonded	20	7	13	20
Local or in-state vendor	10	10	8	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>82</b>

**Result:** Vendor #3 wins. Note that this may not be the lowest cost vendor.

# Evaluating Bids: Zero or One Bid Received

- If you receive only one bid, and it is cost-effective, you may accept it.
  - Document your decision with a memo or email to your file.
- If you did not receive any bids, you can solicit bids after the 28-day waiting period.
  - Reach out to vendors in the area.
  - Ask your current service provider to submit a bid or confirm they are willing to continue your current services at the same cost.

# Duplicative Services

- Duplicative services are services that provide the same functionality for the same population in the same location during the same period of time.
- Backup or redundant services – services sought to reduce reliance on any single service provider's network during an outage – are considered duplicative.
- Services that provide necessary bandwidth requirements, such as multiple T-1 lines when appropriate for the population served and the services to be received, may not be considered duplicative. However, the applicant must still evaluate and choose the most cost-effective option from the bids received.
- E-Rate cannot fund duplicative services.

# Contracts

- Applicants must have a signed contract or other legally binding agreement in place and loaded in EPC prior to submitting their FCC Forms 471 to USAC.
- Applicant must not sign a contract before the Allowable Contract Date (ACD), which is 28 days after the FCC Form 470 is filed.
- Signed contracts constitute the best evidence that a legally binding agreement exists.
- A verbal offer and/or acceptance will not be considered evidence of the existence of a legally binding agreement.
- Learn more on the [State Master Contracts](#) webpage.
- **Resource**
  - **Instructional Video:** [How to Create a Contract Record](#) (5:58 mins)
  - [How to Create a Contract for Low Cost High Speed Internet](#) (4:55 mins)



# Review Resource for Selecting Service Providers

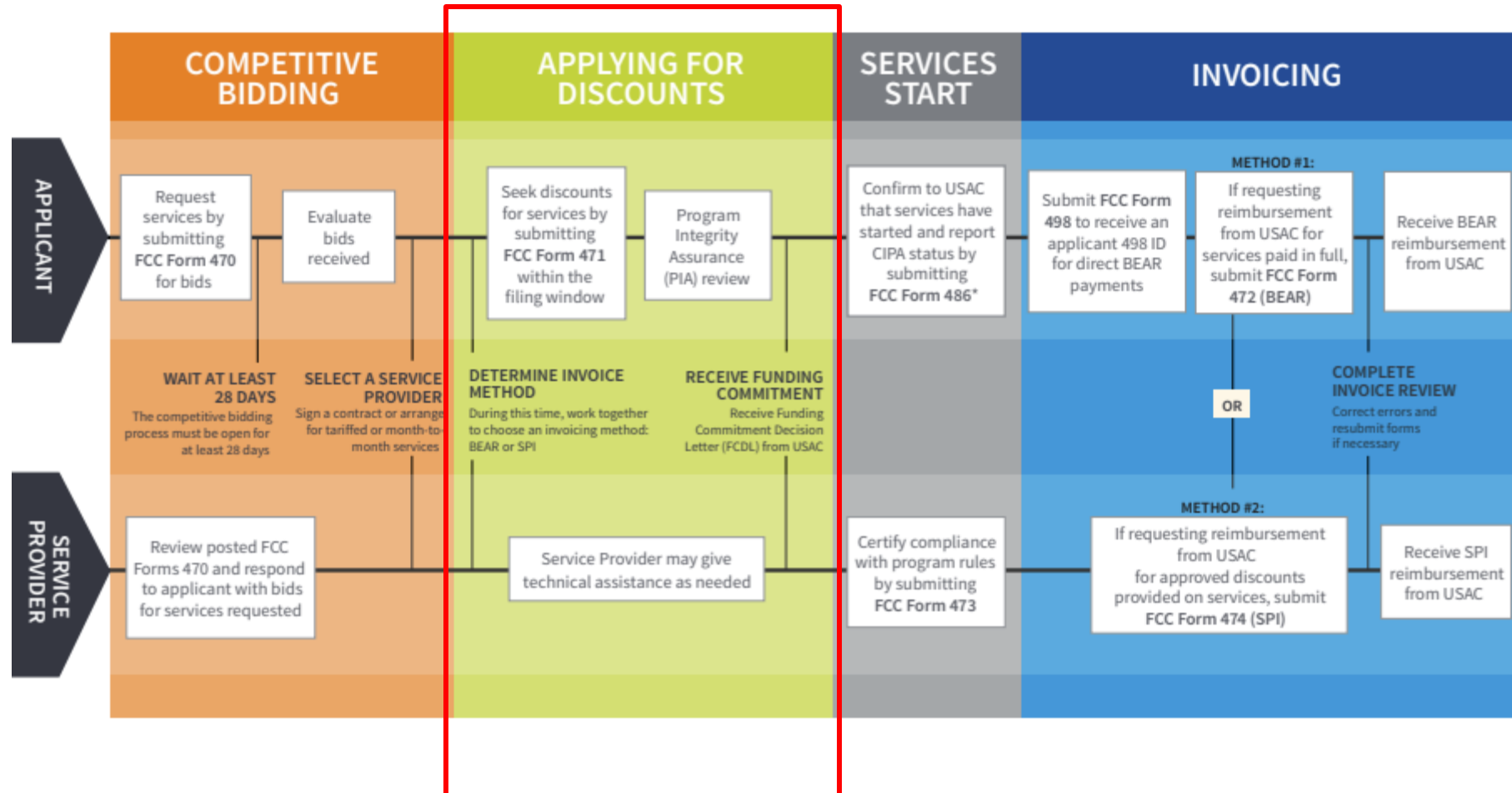
- [Selecting Service Providers](#) webpage
- Review the [How to Construct an Evaluation Matrix](#) webpage
- **Reminder**
  - Your [FCC Form 470](#) and your request for proposal (RFP), if you issued one, both have been publicly available for the same [28-day period](#) before you can close your competitive bidding process.
  - Once you have chosen your service provider(s) and signed a contract (if applicable), you can file an FCC Form 471 to apply for discounts as soon as the [FCC Form 471](#) application filing window opens.
  - Document Retention
    - You must keep all [documentation](#) for at least 10 years from the last date to receive service.
      - For multi-year contracts this means 10 years from the contract expiration date.

# FCC Form 470 Tips for Success:

- Get Ready to File
  - Review you State and Local Procurement Rules
  - Review our Eligible Services
- File and certify an FCC Form 470
  - E-Rate acknowledges receipt of your form with a Receipt Notification Letter
- Ensure an Open and Fair Process
  - Use a Bidding Evaluation Matrix
  - Abide by our Gift Rules
- Wait at least 28 days
- Select a Service Provider
  - Price must be the primary factor
  - Enter into a legally binding agreement
- For more information see our Competitive Bidding Infographic

# Requesting Funding – FCC Form 471

# Applying for Discounts is the second Step In The E-Rate Application Process



# FCC Form 471 Overview

- After selecting a service provider, applicants file an FCC Form 471 (Description of Services ordered and Certification Form) to request funding for eligible equipment and services for the upcoming funding year.
- Applicants must
  - Include information on the recipients of service and service provider(s)
  - Work with their service provider to provide detailed descriptions of equipment and services, including costs, requested equipment and dates of service
  - Have evidence (signed contract or written notification to your service provider) of a legally binding agreement in place before submitting the FCC Form 471.
  - Certify compliance with program rules

# Before you file – Update your EPC Profile

- New applicant: Create an account in the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC)
- Returning applicant: Update your EPC account information during the **Administrative Window** (between October and mid January)
  - Verify the accuracy of the information in EPC. **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
- Tribal applicant: Check the Tribal box in your EPC entity profile and indicate your Tribal affiliation.
  - Tribal College and University (TCU) libraries are eligible as of Funding Year 2024 if they serve as a public library for their community.
- During the **Application Filing window**, any changes to your EPC profile that would impact your discount will be prohibited. EPC is “locked” to changes at this point.

# Your FCC Form 470 and FCC Form 471 must match

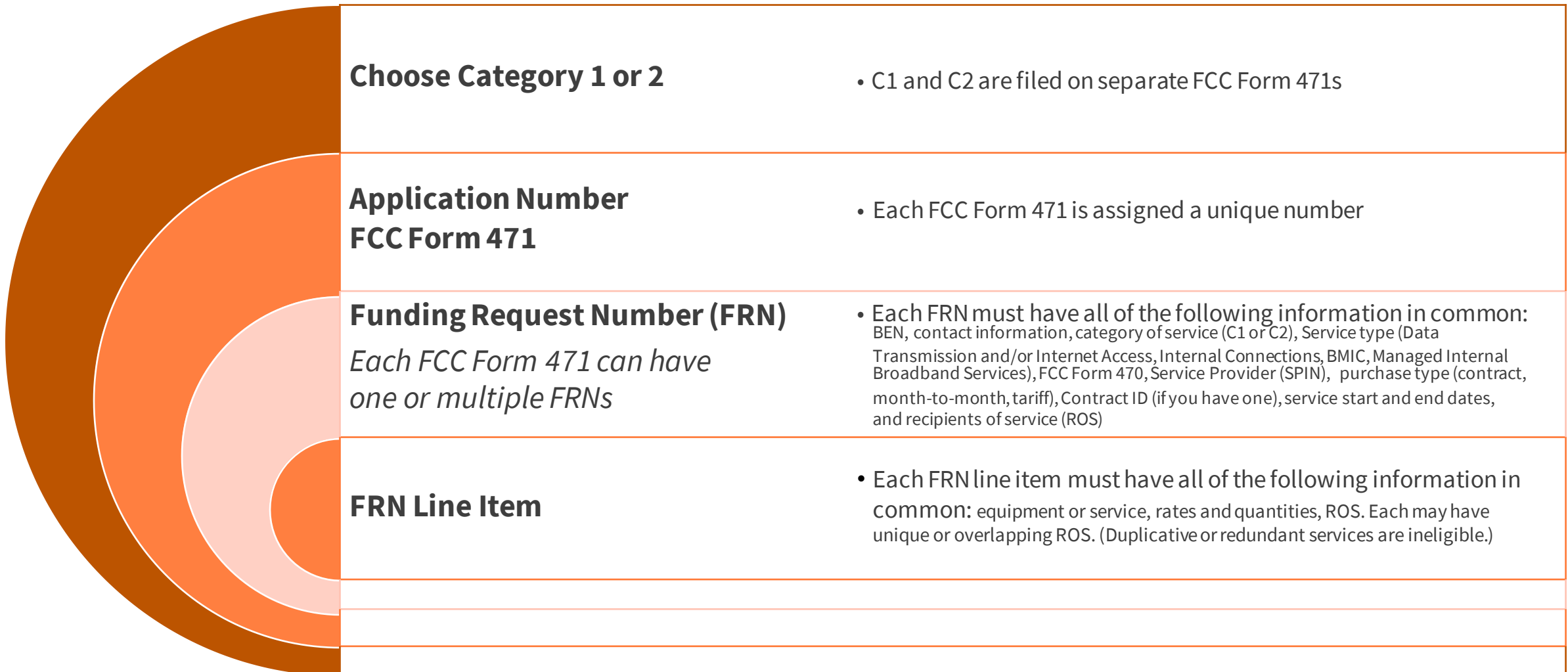
- Your FCC Form 470 and FCC Form 471 should match, in terms of service type.
- If you bid for two Category Two (C2) service types on your FCC Form 470, and invoice USAC for three C2 service types, this implies that additional information, other than what was competitively bid for, may have influenced the selection of service provider.
  - This discrepancy **cannot be corrected** after competitive bidding ends.
  - You are allowed to select all three service types on your FCC Form 470, if you don't know what service types your service provider will provide.
  - **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 29<sup>th</sup> day.

# E-Rate FCC Form 471 Application Terms

- **Application Number** – A unique number that USAC assigns to each FCC Form 471. Each BEN can have one or more applications. C1 and C2 services must be on different applications. BENs applying for both categories of service will need at least two applications
- **Funding Request Number (FRN)** - A unique number that USAC assigns to each funding request in an FCC Form 471. Each FCC Form 471 application can have one or multiple FRNs.
  - Each FRN must have all of the following information in common: BEN, contact information, category of service (C1 or C2), 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), dates of service, recipients of service
- **FRN Line Item** - A unique number assigned to each Line Item within the FRN, beginning with the funding request number. For example, the first line item within FRN 2399059243 would be number 2399059243.001. Each FRN can have one or multiple line items.
  - Each FRN line item must have all of the following information in common: equipment or service, rates and quantities, recipients of service



# Relationship Between Unique Numbers



# E-Rate FCC Form 471 Application Terms

## 1. What is the specific equipment or service and which category does it fall under?

- C1: Data Transmission or Internet Access
- C2: Internal Connections, Basic Maintenance of Internal Connections (BMIC), or Managed Internal Broadband Services (MIBS)
- If you are requesting both C1 and C2 services, you will need to put these requests on **different FCC Form 471 applications.**

## 2. Is this a contracted or month to month service or multiple contracts?

- Services under different contracts, or services provided on a month-to-month basis, must be under **different FRNs.**
- If services are being provided by **multiple Service Providers**, then **separate FRNs** must be created.

## 3. What is the exact type of equipment or connection being requested?

- C1 Example: Fiber Ethernet vs Copper Cable Modem
  - Since both fall under Data Transmission/Internet Access, they may be able to share an FRN using separate line items.
- C2 Example: Switch vs a License providing basic maintenance services
  - Since these are separate service types (i.e., internal connections and basic maintenance of internal connections) they require separate FRNs.

## 4. Are the recipients of service or the dates of service different?

- If either are different, **different FRNs** must be created.

# Common FCC Form 471 Application Errors

## 1. Not correctly classifying the category of service or equipment/service type on the Form 470

- Determine the equipment/services you need and contact the CSC to verify correct classification of equipment/services.
- Competitively bid for all necessary equipment and service types by filing an accurate Form 470 that accurately describes the equipment and service(s).

## 2. Filing an inaccurate FRN with the wrong equipment/service type

- Work with your service provider to ensure that equipment/services are accurately represented on the Form 471.
- Contact the CSC or your PIA reviewer with any questions.

## 3. Failing to remove ineligible services/equipment.

- Work with your service provider to determine whether your requested service/equipment is 100% eligible.
- Remove any ineligible amounts when creating your FRN(s).

# Eligible Software: Key Reminders

- Software can fall into two **Categories of Service**.
- Commitments for different types of software can be for different term lengths.
  - Right to Use Licenses Purchased with Internal Connections – **All years** of the license contract can be billed in a single funding year

For a 3-year contract for 100% eligible licenses at a pre-discounted amount of \$12,000, the full amount of \$12,000 could be entered into a single FRN for that funding year.
  - Software Updates are considered BMIC – Only the **current year** of service can be included in a single funding year and multi-year software contract amounts must be prorated.
    - For a 3-year contract for 100% eligible BMIC services at a total pre-discounted amount of \$12,000, the FRN could only request a single year of expenses, or \$4,000, in **a single funding year**. BMIC services can only be invoiced after they are actually provided/performed.

## 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 USAC's website.

**Apply for  
Discounts**

**471**

**FY2024 Dates**  
January 2024  
To  
March 2024

## “Out of Window” Applications Caused by Late 470

- This year, if you had certified your FCC Form 470 after **February 28, 2023**, you would still have needed to wait 28 days before certifying FCC Form 471.
- You would not have been able to certify your FCC Form 471 before the filing window closed on March 22.
- In this situation, file the FCC Form 471 as soon as you have waited 28 days and selected the most cost-effective service offerings. You will then need to file a waiver request with the FCC. Basic instructions for filing the FCC Window Waiver Requests are on the [FCC Form 471 Filing](#) page.

# How Does E-Rate Help Schools and Libraries?

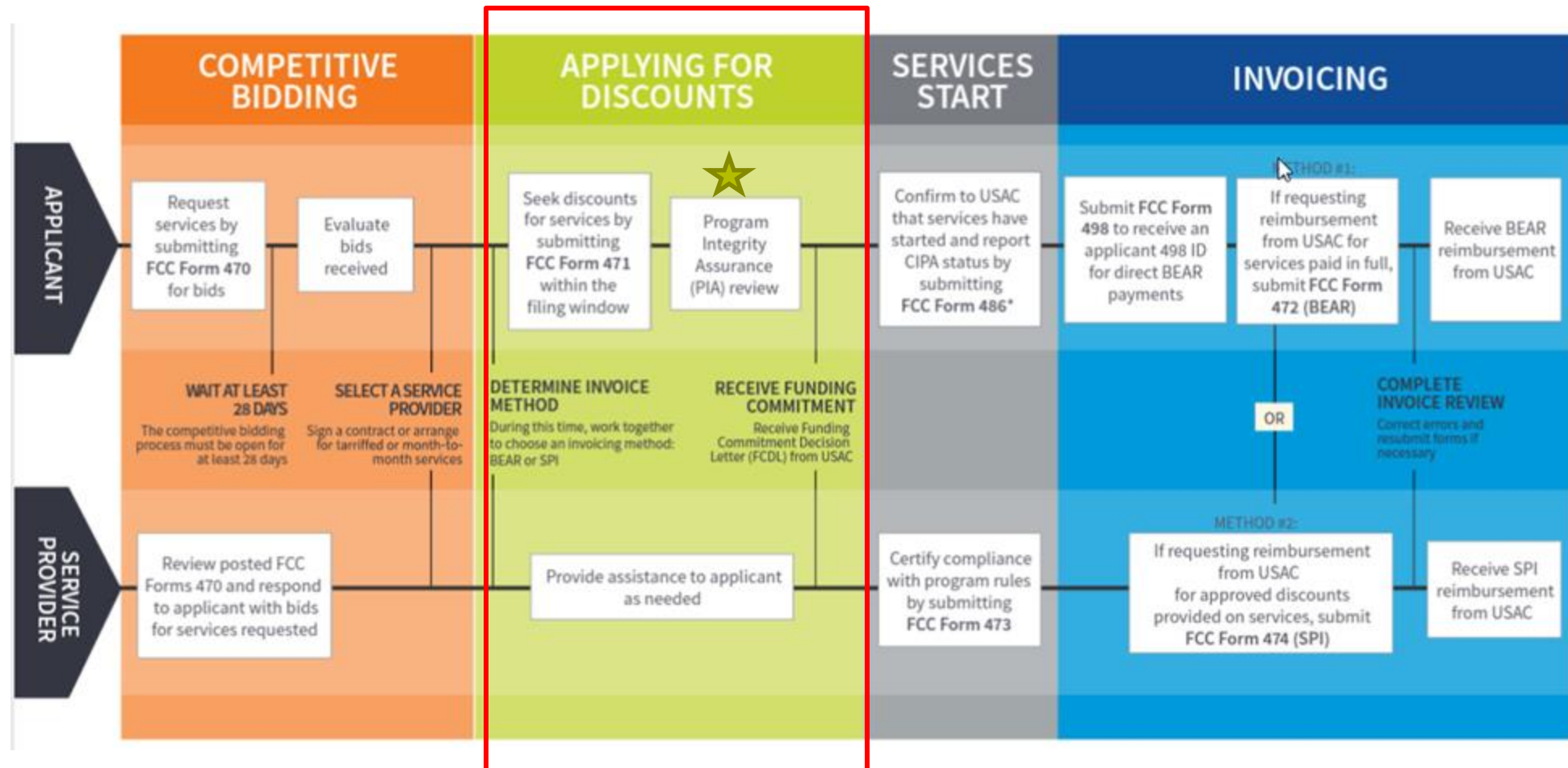
- The E-Rate Program provides discounts up to 90 percent to eligible schools (K-12), libraries, and groups of schools and libraries (e.g., consortia, districts, systems) for eligible internet access and data transmission services, internal connections (e.g., Wi-Fi equipment, cabling, and basic maintenance services) that are competitively bid and approved on the application (FCC Form 471).
- These discounts result in a reduction of the costs for these service/equipment to the schools or libraries requesting funding through the E-Rate program.
- For example: A library with a 90 percent discount rate purchasing \$1,000 in eligible broadband services would pay its 10 percent non-discount 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.
- Applicants receive the funding floor (\$55,000 or \$25,000) when the C2 budget calculation for an entity results in a figure below their funding floor (less than 150 students or 5556 square feet of library space). Examples of entities eligible for the funding floor:
  - A **school** with fewer than 150 students ( $\$167/\text{student} * 149 \text{ students} = \$24,883$  therefore **\$25,000**).
  - A non-Tribal **library** with less than 5,556 square feet ( $\$4.50/\text{square foot} * 5555 \text{ square feet} = \$24,997.50$  therefore **\$25,000**).
  - A **Tribal library** with less than 12,223 square feet ( $\$4.50/\text{square foot} * 12,222 \text{ square feet} = \$54,999$  therefore **\$55,000**).

# 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**.

# 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 to start 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

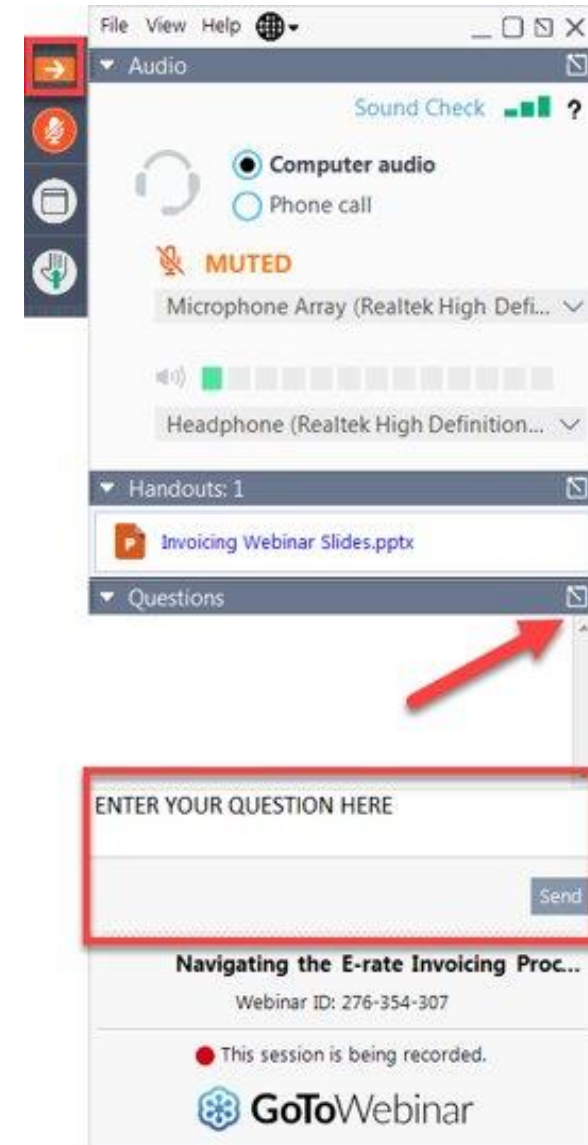
- You must keep all documentation for 10 years from the last date to receive service
  - [Document Retention](#)
- Retain receipt and delivery records relating to pre-bidding, bidding, contracts, application process, invoices, provision of services and other matters relating to your applications
  - 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](#)
- Sample Forms
  - [Sample FCC Form 470](#)
  - [Sample FCC Form 471 \(Category 1\)](#)
  - [Sample FCC Form 471 \(Category 2\)](#)

# Housekeeping – Q&A

- Use the “Questions” box in your webinar control panel to submit your question in writing.
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  - Ask questions related to webinar content.





**Questions?**

# E-Rate Customer Service Center (CSC)



**Call us at (888) 203-8100**

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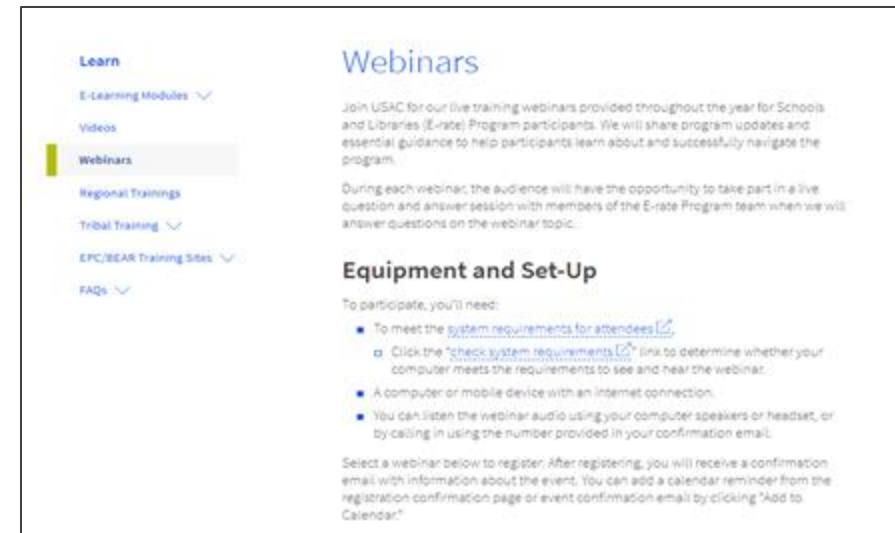
# Upcoming Webinars

**Our next webinar is on:  
October 12 at 2 p.m. ET**

## Eligible Services 101

**Recommended for:** Applicants and  
service providers

**E-Rate Experience Level:** All



The screenshot shows a webpage with a navigation menu on the left and a main content area on the right. The navigation menu includes: Learn, E-Learning Modules, Videos, Webinars (highlighted with a yellow bar), Regional Trainings, Tribal Training, EPC/SEAR Training Sites, and FAQs. The main content area is titled "Webinars" and contains the following text:

Join USAC for our live training webinars provided throughout the year for Schools and Libraries (E-rate) Program participants. We will share program updates and essential guidance to help participants learn about and successfully navigate the program.

During each webinar, the audience will have the opportunity to take part in a live question and answer session with members of the E-rate Program team when we will answer questions on the webinar topic.

### Equipment and Set-Up

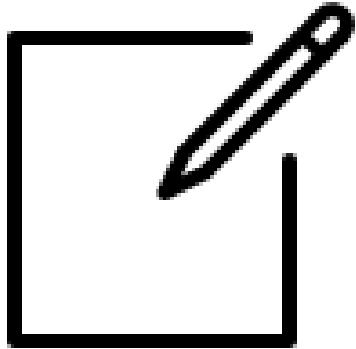
To participate, you'll need:

- To meet the [system requirements for attendees](#)
- Click the ["check system requirements"](#) link to determine whether your computer meets the requirements to see and hear the webinar.
- A computer or mobile device with an internet connection.
- You can listen the webinar audio using your computer speakers or headset, or by calling in using the number provided in your confirmation email.

Select a webinar below to register. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email with information about the event. You can add a calendar reminder from the registration confirmation page or event confirmation email by clicking "Add to Calendar."

Go to the E-Rate **Webinars**  
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# Take Our Survey



- We want to hear about your webinar experience.
- A survey will appear on your screen at the end of the webinar.
- 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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