Competitive Bidding (FCC Form 470) E-Rate Question & Answer (Q&A) Session

E-Rate Q&A Session

January 23, 2024
Disclaimer

To accommodate all attendees, real-time closed captions will be present during this presentation. We apologize in advance for any transcription errors or distractions. Thank you for your support.
Housekeeping

- Audio is available through your computer’s speakers.
- The audience will remain on mute.
- Enter questions at any time using the "Questions" box.
- If your audio or slides freeze, restart the webinar.
- A copy of the slide deck is in the "Handouts" section of webinar panel.

Download PDF of Slides here!
Housekeeping – Technical Issues

• Use the "Sound Check" link and click the question mark icon for audio help.

• Exit the webinar and click the "Check System Requirements" link in the event confirmation email to determine whether your computer meets the requirements to see and hear the webinar.

• If issues persist, call 833-851-8340 to troubleshoot with GoToWebinar.
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 Our Team

Ben Yehuda
Assistant Program Analyst | E-Rate

Bernie Manns
Senior Director of Program Management | E-Rate

Shawn Jensen
Senior Program Analyst | E-Rate
Agenda

- Question & Answer Session Overview and Purpose
- Wi-Fi on Buses
- FCC Form 470 & Competitive Bidding Resources
- Question & Answer (Q&A) for E-Rate Applicants and Service Providers
Question & Answer Session Overview and Purpose
Question & Answer Session and Training Series

• Provide targeted program information.

• Assist program participants with timely and topic relevant questions.

• Equip program participants with knowledge about E-Rate resources.

• Recommended for: Applicants and service providers

• E-Rate experience level: All
Question & Answer Structure and Format

• USAC team members will provide a high-level overview of the topic materials.
• Participants should read the assigned materials and watch assigned videos in advance of the webinar event and come prepared with questions to ask during the Q & A session.
• Questions related to the topics and experience level will be given priority.
Wi-Fi on Buses
School Busses: Now E-Rate Eligible

• Equipment and services necessary to provide mobile broadband connectivity on school buses are E-Rate eligible when used for educational purposes.
  • Installation fees and equipment needed to make the wireless service for school buses functional are also eligible under Category One.

• School bus Wi-Fi services are eligible for school-owned, leased or contracted school buses, if used primarily to transport students to and from school and school-related activities for educational purposes. Charter, municipal, city buses and other school-owned vehicles (i.e., cars and vans) are not eligible.

• Separate maintenance and operations services related to mobile broadband connectivity for school buses are also not eligible.
School Buses: Competitive Bidding

• School bus Wi-Fi is subject to all existing E-Rate rules and requirements, including competitive bidding, cost allocation, and discounting rules.

• Applicants are not required to compare costs between a given service plan for providing school bus Wi-Fi and other technological approaches to deliver connectivity to end user devices.

• Applicants who entered into multi-year agreements for Bus Wi-Fi in the Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) program are not exempt from competitive bidding requirements.

• The competitive bidding exemption for Commercially Available Business Class Internet Option (CABIO) services does not apply to bus services. It only applies to services delivered to a school or library building.

• Service provider selection must be consistent with E-Rate program rules including selecting the most cost-effective service offering(s), using price of the eligible equipment and services as the primary factor in the evaluation matrix.
School Buses: Restrictions/Limitations on Usage

- Equipment and services must primarily be utilized for educational purposes as defined by E-Rate rules.
- There are no new user or CIPA restrictions for Bus Wi-Fi. All restrictions must be consistent with those placed on building-based broadband networks.
- Wi-Fi should only be active during school bus normal operating hours (i.e., when students are being transported to and from school or school-related activities) or when there is a clear educational purpose for enabling school bus Wi-Fi connections outside of these hours.
- Bus Wi-Fi service must be disabled outside of these hours and cannot be utilized for community use purposes.
**School Buses: How to Seek Bids on the FCC Form 470**

- USAC released an article on *how to seek bids for Wi-Fi on school buses in FY2024*

- The FY 2024 FCC Form 470 **has not changed** since USAC posted it in July 2023. Applicants seeking bids for Wi-Fi on buses should use the following drop-downs:
  - Select “Category 1 — Data Transmission and/or Internet Access” in the **Service Requests** section under **Category(s) of Service**.
  - You will be required by EPC to upload a Request for Proposal (RFP) document. Select YES under RFPs for Service Requests.
  - Add a narrative (e.g., “Applicant seeks bids for wireless school bus service and (if applicable) associated equipment to make the service functional to provide Wi-Fi. Reference the associated “RFP” document for additional information.”)
  - Add a new service request, selecting the following EPC guiding statements in sequential order:
    - I seek bids for internet access and/or data transmission service.
    - I seek bids for Internet access and data transmission service (provided over any combination of transmission medium, e.g., fiber-only networks, fiber/non-fiber hybrid networks, or non-fiber networks such as cable, DSL, copper, satellite, or microwave).
    - I seek bids for data plans or wireless adapters (Air Cards) for mobile devices for commercial wireless service for a school or library that does not have an existing broadband internal connections.
    - Provide remaining details like quantity and entities.
Question & Answer Session: Prerequisites

• FCC Form 470 and Competitive Bidding Videos
• E-Rate Pre-Commitment Process Webinar Recording and Slides
• FCC Form 470 Filing EPC System Guide FY2022-FY2024 (PDF)
• FCC Form 470 Services Guiding Statements Reference Table (PDF)
• Lowest Corresponding Price (Page)
• FCC Form 470 Search User Guide
• Competitive Bidding & FCC Form 470 FAQs
• 12/15/2023 E-Rate News Brief
  • Article: How to Apply for Wi-Fi on School Buses in FY2024
• Service Providers Webinar (September 2023)
• Eligible Services Q&A (January 2024)
FCC Form 470 and Competitive Bidding Video Series
FCC Form 470 and Competitive Bidding Video Series

- How to File an FCC Form 470
- How to Search for FCC Forms 470
- E-Rate Competitive Bidding Process
E-Rate Pre-Commitment Process Webinar
E-Rate Pre-Commitment Process Webinar: 10/05/2023

- Application Process
- Competitive Bidding (FCC Form 470)
- Evaluating Bids
- Requesting Funding (FCC Form 471)
- Application review
- Funding commitments
- Document retention
FCC Form 470 Filing EPC System Guide
FCC Form 470 Filing EPC System Guide

- Form Assistance
- One Portal
- Begin the form: Basics
- Categories of Services
- Certifications
- Signatures
FCC Form 470 Search User Guide
FCC Form 470 Search User Guide

• How to search for certified FCC Form 470s in EPC
• Search and Export Certified FCC Forms 470
• Exporting Search Results
FCC Form 470 Services Guiding Statements Table
FCC Form 470 Services Guiding Statements Table

- Category One vs Category Two
- Leased Dark and Lit Fiber
- Internet Access
- Data Transmission
Service Provider Webinar
Register Your Entity

- **Register on SAM.gov** to obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).
- **Register with USAC** to provide services to our applicants by completing an FCC Form 498.
  - This results in the creation of your **SPIN ID/498 ID**.
  - USAC sets your access to the E-File System.
  - You receive an email letting you know you can create a password in the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC).
  - Keep this information current.
Bid on Services

- The **applicant** starts the **competitive bidding process** by posting one or more FCC Forms 470 and Request(s) for Proposals (RFP) documents, if applicable, to the USAC website.
  - These documents may include specific requirements for service providers to follow during the competitive bidding process.
- **Service providers** review the information and bid on the requested services.
  - The bid should include information on E-Rate eligibility percentage and category of service.
  - The bid should be responsive to the equipment and services being requested.
Open and Fair

The competitive bidding process must be open and fair.

- “Open” means there are no secrets in the process. Information shared with one bidder must be shared with all. All bidders know what is required of them.
- “Fair” means that all bidders are treated the same throughout the competitive bidding process, and that no bidder has advance knowledge of the project information.
Open and Fair – Service Providers

To help ensure an open and fair process, service providers should:

• **Review all the requirements**, including the FCC Form 470 and any RFP(s).

• Provide a responsive bid to what was requested by the applicant.

• Ask questions if the information provided by the applicant is unclear.

• Separate the **eligible, mixed bucket**, and **ineligible services** in your bid response.

• **Do not offer gifts, free services, devices, or non-E-Rate discounts** to make your response more attractive.

• **Do not offer to help** an applicant if you are also planning to respond to their bid request.
Bid should include Lowest Corresponding Price

Service providers must charge the Lowest Corresponding Price. (See 47 C.F.R. § 54.500.) This is the lowest price that a service provider charges to non-residential customers who are similarly situated to a particular school, library, or library consortium for similar services. This ensures that:

- Service providers do not charge applicants more than they would charge their other customers for the same services.
- Any lack of experience in negotiating in a service market does not prevent applicants from receiving competitive prices.

Note – document retention rules apply even in the event of a merger or acquisition.
How Applicants Select a Service Provider

• Applicants must wait **at least 28 days** after posting their FCC Form 470 and then can they:
  
  • Evaluate the bids received
  
  • See sample evaluation matrix

• Select a service provider **on or after the 29th day**.
  
  • The day the applicant certifies the FCC Form 470 counts as day 1. For example, if they file and certify an FCC Form 470 on September 1, they may select a service provider on or after September 29.

• **The price of eligible equipment and services** must be the **primary** selection criterion (weighted more heavily than any other single criterion).
Resources

• Competitive Bidding Page
• Competitive Bidding Infographic
• Competitive Bidding FAQs
• Competitive Bidding Webinar: July 27, 2023
• 12/15/2023 E-Rate News Brief
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?
Call us on (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 into the EPC.
2. Select the Contact Us link from the upper right menu on the landing page.
Upcoming Webinars

Our next webinar is on: January 25 at 2 p.m. ET

Service Provider Selection & the FCC Form 471 Question and Answer (Q&A) Session

Recommended for: Applicants and service providers

E-Rate Experience Level: All

Go to the E-Rate Webinars page for additional information.
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 two business days.
• We appreciate your feedback!
Thank You!