

## **FCC Announces Special E-rate Filing Window for School District Bandwidth Upgrades**

**September 25, 2020**

On September 16, acknowledging the disruptions caused by COVID-19 and the new reliance on remote learning by school districts, the FCC directed the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) to open a second E-rate filing window for Funding Year 2020 (FY2020). The window opened Monday, September 21 and will close on Friday, October 16 at 11:59 p.m. EDT.

This new window makes available additional E-rate funding to school districts during the current funding year to **“purchase additional bandwidth needed to meet the unanticipated and increased demand for on-campus connectivity resulting from the pandemic.”**<sup>1</sup>

### **Background**

As background, under the FCC’s E-rate program, eligible schools, libraries, and consortia (comprised of eligible schools and libraries) may request discounts for eligible services, which include connections needed to support broadband connectivity to schools and libraries.

For FY2020 (July 1, 2020–June 30, 2021), USAC originally opened the filing window to run from January 15, 2020–April 29, 2020. Given the timing of the funding cycle, however, applicants were unable to take into account the increased bandwidth needs resulting from being forced to transition fully or partially to remote learning.

### **Eligible Services and Applications**

During this second filing window, school districts may *only* request E-rate support for “Category One services” to increase their Internet bandwidth as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic without having to undergo a new competitive bidding process if the following requirements are met:

- they already sought bids for the services by posting an FCC Form 470;
- they received a Funding Commitment Decision Letter (FCDL) from USAC approving a funding request for Category One internet access and/or

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DA-20-1091A1.pdf>

data transmission services that relied on that FCC Form 470 or they have such a request pending with USAC; and

- they are requesting additional E-rate discounts on an FCC Form 471 during this second window to purchase additional bandwidth through their existing service provider or a new service provider.

School districts must still follow any state and local procurement laws that may be in effect.

E-rate “Category Two” services, which are internal to a school district, are not eligible for additional support during this limited second filing window.

Applicants may file funding requests featuring new service providers in the event that their existing service providers are unable to provide sufficient bandwidth to meet the demand.

USAC can fund requests in which the price per megabit is the same or less than that in the original contract. However, if the price per megabit is higher than that in the original contract, USAC will limit the funding commitment to the price per megabit in the original contract.

Applicants applying for this new funding window must submit the following information via the new FCC Form 471:

1. The identification numbers for the FY2020 FCC Form 471 and funding request that previously relied on the FCC Form 470
2. A statement confirming that the requested E-Rate discounts are for additional bandwidth needed as a result of COVID-19
3. The price per megabit in the original and new funding requests, plus highlight any difference in pricing

More information can be found here: <https://www.usac.org/e-rate/resources/e-rate-productivity-center/funding-year-2020-filing-window/>

-----

For more information about broadband policy developments, please contact Connected Nation at [policy@connectednation.org](mailto:policy@connectednation.org), and [Subscribe via RSS](#) to Connected Nation’s Policy Briefs.