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## Funding Status – FY 2020

Wave 20 for FY 2020 was released on Friday, September 11<sup>th</sup> for a total of \$75.3 million including \$4.42 million for 19 North Carolina applicants. (Wave 19 was canceled.) Cumulative commitments are \$1.62 billion including \$52.9 million for North Carolina. Nationwide, USAC has now funded 88% of the FY 2020 applications representing 58% of the requested funding.

## K-12 Bridge to Broadband Initiative

Short of fixing E-rate itself, the FCC has done its utmost to encourage others to fund equipment and services to support remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Earlier efforts include:

- The “[Keep Americans Connected Pledge](#)” urging broadband and telephone providers to: (a) not terminate residential service; (b) waive late fees; and (c) open Wi-Fi hotspots for those in need (see our newsletters of [March 23<sup>rd</sup>](#) and [May 4<sup>th</sup>](#)).
- Waiver of the E-rate gift rules, recently extended through December 31<sup>st</sup>, to permit vendors to offer free or reduced-price broadband services and equipment (see discussion in last Friday’s USAC News Brief referenced below).
- Collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education to promote the use of up to \$16 billion in CARES Act state funding for remote learning (see [FCC/DOE joint announcement](#)).

Last week the FCC issued a [news release](#) citing the launch of the “[K-12 Bridge to Broadband](#)” initiative undertaken by the cable industry and EducationSuperHighway to identify and fill the connectivity gaps of K-12 students in low-income family homes nationwide. Cable industry participation is being coordinated by NCTA – The Internet & Television Association. The new cable program reflects the following core principles:

- Creating “sponsored” service offerings for school districts and other entities.
- Working together with school districts to identify students needing service.
- Standardizing a baseline set of student eligibility standards.
- Minimizing the amount of information needed to sign up families and facilitate enrollment.
- Protecting the privacy of the families covered by the program.

## E-Rate Updates and Reminders

### *Upcoming E-Rate Dates:*

October 12      Nomination deadline for six USAC Board members including one school representative (see our [newsletter of August 17<sup>th</sup>](#)).

## USAC News Brief Dated September 11 – Shared Networks, Waivers, and Login Tips

[USAC's Schools and Libraries News Brief of September 11, 2020](#), discusses the following three topics:

1. Updates USAC's website fiber guidance to reflect clarifications made by the FCC in the recent *Park Hill Order* ([DA 20-455](#)) concerning the shared use of self-provisioned networks. The revised guidance notes:
  - E-rate Program rules do not require applicants to exclusively own and use the entire self-provisioned network;
  - E-rate applicants can share self-provisioned networks with ineligible third-party entities so long as the ineligible entities pay their fair share (i.e., the pro-rata portion) of the undiscounted costs associated with constructing and/or operating the network. In general, "fair share" is the ineligible entity's pro-rata portion of the undiscounted cost of the shared services and equipment; and
  - Applicants must also comply with all other fair share requirements, including the obligation to submit documentation demonstrating the reasonableness of the methodology used to determine the ineligible entity's fair share. This documentation should be submitted with the FCC Form 471, and must contain a clear explanation of how the ineligible entity's pro-rata share was calculated and must demonstrate the reasonableness of the cost allocation methodology used to ensure that E-rate funding is not used to provide services to ineligible third-party entities.
2. Use of the extended gift rule waiver to support the provision of broadband equipment and services for remote learning. Most importantly, USAC notes that:
  - During the extended waiver period, service providers can continue to offer, and E-rate program participants can continue to solicit or accept, broadband connections, Wi-Fi hotspots and other devices, networking gear, system upgrades, or other things of value that could help students, teachers, and patrons while schools and libraries prepare for extended remote learning and remain fully or partially closed as a direct result of COVID-19.
  - In addition, service providers may offer, and schools and libraries may solicit or accept, gifts of additional bandwidth through December 31, 2020 to meet the increased on-campus connectivity needs of schools and libraries in response to the pandemic without running afoul of the E-rate Program rules.
3. Tips for logging into the new One Portal for access to EPC and the BEAR filing system.

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*Newsletter information and disclaimer: This newsletter may contain unofficial information on prospective E-rate developments and/or may reflect E-Rate Central's own interpretations of E-rate practices and regulations. Such information is provided for planning and guidance purposes only. It is not meant, in any way, to supplant official announcements and instructions provided by USAC, the FCC, or NCDPI.*

*Additional North Carolina specific E-rate information is available through our Web site — <http://www.e-ratecentral.com/us/stateInformation.asp?state=NC>. Note that this site provides easy access to formatted North Carolina applicant E-rate histories via the Billed Entity Number (“BEN”) search mechanism in the upper left-hand corner. Detailed information can be obtained by “drilling down” using the links for specific funding years and individual FRNs.*

*If you have received this newsletter from a colleague and you would like to receive your own copy of the North Carolina E-Rate Forum, send an email to [join-ncerate@lists.dpi.state.nc.us](mailto:join-ncerate@lists.dpi.state.nc.us). Please include your name, organization, telephone, and e-mail address.*

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