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Funding Status – FY 2020 and FY 2021

FY 2020:

Wave 41 for FY 2020 was released on Thursday, February 4th, for a total of \$14.0 million, including none for North Carolina. Cumulative commitments are \$2.18 billion including \$72.6 million for North Carolina. Nationwide, USAC has now funded 97% of the FY 2020 applications representing 78% of the requested funding.

FY 2021:

USAC opened the FY 2021 Form 471 application window on Friday, January 15th. The window will close on Thursday, March 25th, at 11:59 p.m. EDT. For additional information on the FY 2021 application window, see the [USAC Special Edition Schools and Libraries News Brief dated December 22, 2020](#).

FCC Requests Comments on E-rate Funding for Remote Learning

As reported in last week’s newsletter, the Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband Coalition (“SHLB”) et al. had filed an FCC [petition](#) asking the FCC to:

- Clarify, for the duration of the pandemic, off-campus use of E-rate funded services used to enable remote learning constitutes an “educational purpose” under E-rate rules.
- Immediately declare that the cost-allocation of currently eligible E-rate services used off-campus is no longer required.
- Open an additional window to allow applicants to apply for additional E-rate funds for both FY 2020 (retroactively to the extent necessary) and FY 2021 to support off-campus services for remote learning for students and staff. For purposes of this window, the FCC should waive any rules necessary (e.g., competitive bidding and eligible services) to allow applicants to take advantage of the additional funding.

Given President Biden’s recent [Executive Order on Supporting the Reopening and Continuing Operation of Schools and Early Childhood Education Providers](#), which encouraged the FCC “to increase connectivity options for students lacking reliable home broadband,” and Acting FCC

Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel’s longstanding support for using E-rate to do so, we hoped that the FCC would be inclined to move forward expeditiously on SHLB’s petition.

And they were! Last Monday, the FCC issued a Public Notice (DA 21-98) on the SHLB petition and several other likeminded requests (see Appendix A) seeking comments on an unusually accelerated schedule. Initial comments are due February 16; reply comments are due February 23.

Specifically, the FCC asks for comments on the following areas:

- *Eligible Equipment and Services and their Costs.* Should wireless network equipment and services (e.g., hotspots or wireless towers) be eligible for E-rate funding? How about modems, routers, or connected devices? What level of service is needed to support remote learning? What are equipment and service costs?
- *Cost-Effective Purchases.* Should competitive bidding requirements be waived? In the absence of such requirements, how can the FCC assure cost-effectiveness and prevent waste, fraud, and abuse?
- *Funding and Prioritization.* How much funding is potentially available? In the event that demand exceeds available funding, how should off-campus requests be prioritized?
- *Timing.* Should relief be provided only prospectively for FY 2021, or should it be applied retroactively for FY 2020? How can the FCC be sure that limited E-rate funds are not used to pay for equipment and services that were reimbursed through other federal funding (e.g., CARES Act or EBB program monies)?
- *Legal Issues.* Can the FCC clarify that off-campus use of equipment and services to support remote learning during the pandemic constitute “educational purpose” within the statutory limits of the underlying Communications Act?

Senator Edward Markey (D-MA) and 36 other Senators have effectively already responded to the FCC’s request for comments in a [letter](#) to Acting Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel stating that “the FCC has always had clear emergency authority to utilize existing E-Rate funding to connect students learning online during the coronavirus pandemic.” The letter goes on to indicate:

Specifically, we request that you leverage the E-Rate program to begin providing connectivity and devices for remote learning. Although the funds currently available through the E-Rate will not be enough to connect every student across the country, your prompt action would provide an essential down payment. From there, Congress must provide the resources needed to finish the job by passing our Emergency Educational Connections Act, legislation that would appropriate billions more to be delivered through the E-Rate program to help close the homework gap during the pandemic.

Schools and school districts interested in federal funding for remote learning during the pandemic should seriously consider submitting supporting comments to the FCC. Initial comments on the E-rate remote learning inquiry and reply comments on the Emergency Broadband Benefit (“EBB”) program are both due next Tuesday, February 16. EBB reply comments from schools already funding monthly internet services for needy students would be particularly useful in explaining how disruptive it would be to have to transition those services to the individual families in order to qualify the services for EBB discounts.

To submit comments, go to the [Submit a Filing](#) section of the FCC website. Note the following:

- The basic filing information you’ll need to reference the proper docket number and/or name are:
 - 20-445 — Emergency Broadband Benefit Program
 - 21-31 — Addressing the Homework Gap through the E-Rate Program
- A formal detailed comment can be submitted as a “Standard Filing” with an uploaded document(s). Brief comments can simply be typed (or copied and pasted) into an “[Express Comment](#)” form.

As indicated directly below, E-Rate Central will host a webinar this coming Wednesday to discuss the FCC’s two remote learning initiatives — the separate EBB program and potential E-rate changes. The primary objective of this webinar will be to encourage schools to proactively support both initiatives.

E-Rate Updates and Reminders

Upcoming E-Rate Dates:

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|-------------|---|---------|------------|---------|------------|
| February 10 | E-Rate Central webinar on EBB and E-Rate for Remote Learning. The focus of the webinar will be to encourage the filing of comments on both FCC initiatives due next Tuesday, February 16 th . The webinar will be held at 2:00 p.m. EST (click here for Zoom link). | | | | |
| February 12 | Form 486 deadline for FY 2020 covering funding committed in Wave 25. More generally, the Form 486 deadline is 120 days from the FCDL date or the service start date (typically July 1 st), whichever is later. Upcoming Form 486 deadlines are: <table border="0" style="margin-left: 40px; margin-top: 10px;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">Wave 26</td> <td>02/19/2021</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wave 27</td> <td>02/26/2021</td> </tr> </table> | Wave 26 | 02/19/2021 | Wave 27 | 02/26/2021 |
| Wave 26 | 02/19/2021 | | | | |
| Wave 27 | 02/26/2021 | | | | |
| February 16 | Reply comment deadline on the FCC’s Emergency Broadband Benefit (“EBB”) program, Docket 20-445 . A preliminary FCC roundtable on EBB will be held February 12 th and EBB will be discussed in the FCC’s next open meeting on February 17 th . | | | | |
| February 16 | Initial FCC comment deadline on using E-rate funding to support remote learning, Docket 21-31 (see article above). | | | | |
| February 25 | Last day to file a Form 470 for FY 2021 and meet the required 28-day posting requirement. | | | | |
| March 25 | The FY 2021 Form 471 application window will close at 11:59 p.m. EDT. | | | | |

Library E-Rate Funding FY 2016-2020:

The University of Washington Information School has just published a detailed study entitled “[E-rate Funding and Libraries: Preliminary Analysis of Trends Post-Modernization](#).” The study is unique in breaking out library funding commitments by entity, information that is difficult to disaggregate from USAC’s library system and library consortium data. The study shows, for example, the following library funding and participation data for FY 2016-2020:

Funding Year	Category 1 Commitment	Category 2 Commitment	Total
2016	\$117,812,408.01	\$18,401,680.48	\$136,214,088.49
2017	\$104,181,982.06	\$14,461,625.76	\$118,643,607.82
2018	\$112,838,065.47	\$10,057,081.32	\$122,895,146.78
2019	\$111,067,231.72	\$18,601,606.83	\$129,668,838.55
2020	\$105,003,537.72	\$19,427,911.79	\$124,431,449.51

Table 1. E-rate commitments to libraries as of January 5, 2021.

Funding Year	Number of Libraries
2016	11,853
2017	11,684
2018	11,396
2019	11,221
2020	10,965

Table 3. Number of unique library entities applying per year as of January 5, 2021.

Most impressively, the University’s study group has created a publicly available library E-rate [dashboard](#) (please allow time for it to load) that will be updated with new USAC data twice a week showing library E-rate funding by state and by entity. An example of the searchable entity data is shown below.

Participation by Entity Per Year

Choose a State

AK

Download State Entity Data (optional)

Download (.csv)

Show 10 entries

Search:

Commitment totals by year per participating entity. Commitment sums to recipient entities are estimates when the recipient applied as part of a system or consortium.

Recipient Entity Number	Name	City	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
145559	Anchor Point Public Library	Anchor Point	\$1,335.60	\$1,399.21	\$1,705.20	\$1,705.20	\$1,335.60
145561	Aniak Public Library	Aniak	\$82,166.40	\$34,495.20	\$26,124.12	\$42,627.60	\$67,147.80
145599	Big Lake Library	Big Lake	\$3,740.40	\$3,095.14	NA	NA	NA
145694	Centennial Library	Metlakatla	\$31,339.46	\$25,085.72	\$23,139.43	\$24,516.00	\$30,419.17
145584	Chinik Public Library	Kodiak	NA	NA	NA	\$29,862.40	\$25,304.80
17005934	Chugiak Eagle River Branch Library	Eagle River	\$5,913.18	\$4,115.53	\$11,485.49	\$4,115.53	\$4,292.08
16028675	Coffman Cove Community Library	Coffman Cove	\$28,692.37	\$41,060.88	\$40,953.50	NA	NA
145568	Cold Bay Public Library	Cold Bay	\$51,080.10	\$50,760.00	\$33,480.00	\$53,762.40	\$72,900.00
145569	Cooper Landing Community Lib	Cooper Landing	\$1,050.00	\$1,302.00	\$1,302.00	\$1,302.00	\$1,302.00
145577	Copper Valley Community Lib	Glennallen	\$1,620.00	\$1,511.16	\$1,511.16	\$1,679.16	\$1,728.00

Showing 1 to 10 of 74 entries

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Per Capita Commitment for AK

USAC News Brief Dated February 5 – Form 470 Reminders

[USAC’s Schools and Libraries News Brief of February 5, 2021](#), provides the following Form 470 filing reminders:

- You must [log in to One Portal](#) before you can access the Form 470 in EPC.
- Applicants submit and certify a Form 470 to open their competitive bidding process.
- The Form 470 must be certified by a full-rights user.

- If you issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) and/or RFP documents, they must be uploaded into the Form 470 in EPC.

Note: USAC considers RFPs to be any additional documentation provided to bidders. Additional information provided after the Form 470 is filed can be uploaded as an addendum only if an RFP (of any length) is uploaded before the Form 470 is certified. We recommend filing an RFP of some type with every Form 470.

- Your Form 470 must be certified on or before February 25 in order to timely certify a Form 471.

Note: If you wait until February 25 to file your Form 470, you will have to review all bids, select your providers, sign contracts, and file your Form 471 all on March 25, the last day of the application window. Form 470s should be filed as early as possible.

- You will receive a Receipt Notification Letter in your EPC News feed shortly after you certify your Form 470, and service providers will be able to view your form and all uploaded attachments.

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. Please include your name, organization, telephone, and e-mail address.

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