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Funding Status – FY 2020 and FY 2021

FY 2020:

Wave 43 for FY 2020 was released on Thursday, February 18th, for a total of \$10.9 million, none for North Carolina. Cumulative commitments are \$2.24 billion including \$72.6 million for North Carolina. Nationwide, USAC has now funded 97% of the FY 2020 applications representing 82% 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. February 25th is the last possible day to file a Form 470 for FY 2021 and still meet the required 28-day posting requirement.

EBB and E-Rate Remote Learning Comments

Last Tuesday, February 16th, was the FCC deadline for submitting:

- Reply comments on Docket 20-445, Establishment of the Emergency Broadband Benefit (“EBB”) Program.
- Initial comments on Docket 21-31, Addressing the Homework Gap through the E-Rate Program.

Emergency Broadband Benefit Comments:

Over a hundred EBB reply comments were received, most dealing with administrative matters involving service providers and recipient family eligibility for participation in the program. As discussed in our [earlier newsletters](#), our primary concern is to assure that EBB discounts for needy families can be applied to internet services being billed to schools or libraries. Here are web links to reply comments (plus selective quotes) stressing this very point:

- [E-Rate Central](#): “[T]he Commission can best meet the educational objectives of the EBB legislation by promoting a collaborative approach to remote learning in tandem with the schools and libraries.”
- [City of San Jose](#): “The Commission should allow aggregated, bulk eligibility partnerships with local governments, school districts, public housing authorities, and similar entities to participate in the EBBP and allow service credits to go to the bulk purchaser paying for eligible households’ broadband service.”
- [Council of the Great City Schools](#): “Apply Provider Discounts to Internet Service Paid for by School Districts.”
- [EducationSuperHighway](#): “Allow school districts to act as agents for unconnected K-12 households and enroll them in the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program.”
- [Funds For Learning](#): “Schools should be permitted to act as agents for eligible K-12 households and enroll those households in the EBB.”
- [Kristin Van Strien](#) (express comment): “The school districts are the natural partner in their child's education and many districts already provide this service for their students in low-income households. Districts already have income information on students...and can attest to the need...I urge the FCC to establish rules which allow EBB discounts to apply to the charges currently paid by districts, now and in the future, on behalf of our eligible student households.”
- [New Mexico PED, New Mexico PSFA, Deming Public Schools](#): “EBB rules should encourage — and permit — schools to play a major role in identifying and supporting home internet services for needy students.”
- [Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband Coalition \("SHLB"\)](#): “Anchor institutions [should be able to] sign up eligible consumers themselves, acting as agents for the households.”
- [Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction](#): “We ask the Commission to craft the EBB program regulations to provide incentives to encourage the type of cooperative programs that Wisconsin and other states and districts have developed with providers.”

Based on a staff presentation at the FCC’s February open meeting last Wednesday (see [summary](#) and [slides](#)), EBB program rules are scheduled to be released within two weeks. In the interim, service providers preparing for the program should attend one of the two remaining USAC webinars on EBB and Lifeline (a similar program) to be held [February 23rd](#) and [March 2nd](#) and/or review the [slides](#) from last week’s webinar. Both [USAC](#) and the [FCC](#) have established special websites to cover EBB developments. The FCC’s EBB site includes a signup form for people and organizations willing to become an “outreach partner” — something that schools and libraries may find useful to consider.

E-Rate Remote Learning Comments:

The FCC also received more than 165 initial comments on the use of E-rate funds to support remote learning. Virtually all the comments supported the underlying [SHLB petition](#) to treat remote learning as a valid “educational purpose” for E-rate funding, to open a second application window

this Spring, and to eliminate the current cost-allocation requirement for off-campus internet services (see our [newsletter of February 1st](#)). Here are web links to some of the more important and/or interesting comments.

- [E-Rate Central](#)
- [American Federation of Teachers](#)
- [American Library Association](#)
- [Common Sense](#)
- [Council of the Great City Schools](#)
- [Education and Libraries Networks Coalition \("EdLiNC"\)](#)
- [E-Rate Management Professionals Association \("E-mpa"\)[®]](#)
- [Kajeet Inc.](#)
- [North Carolina Department of Technology Broadband Infrastructure Office](#)
- [State E-Rate Coordinators' Alliance \("SECA"\)](#)

As an indication of the breadth of interest in this docket, we'll share the following express comment in its entirety:

My name is [Jonathan Fratz](#). I am a 9th grader and the freshman class co-president of San Pedro Senior High School located in San Pedro, California. I am also autistic and have an IEP, an Individualized Education Program. As a student with an exceptional need, it has been very difficult to access and participate in distance learning during the pandemic. Lacking access to a stable internet connection makes it even more difficult for me and students like myself. I support school districts using E-Rate program funds to support remote learning during the pandemic. Ensuring that all students, including students with exceptional needs, have access to high-quality internet service is important. I believe that students with exceptional needs can be successful, to the best of their ability, and reach their potential when they have access to the supports and services that they need to participate in school and be among their school community. This includes having access to high-quality internet service.

One issue not raised in the SHLB petition, and therefore not discussed in most comments, was the importance of cybersecurity — the subject of a petition subsequently filed by CoSN (see our [newsletter of February 15th](#)) that we believe will shortly lead to another FCC Public Notice and request for comments. One point made in our comments, however, is that “cybersecurity is integral to the viability of both on-campus and off-campus internet services and that its eligibility can and should be treated within Docket 21-31.” This point was made in even greater detail in the comments of the [Cybersecurity Coalition](#) that stated, in part, that “the efficacy of remote learning is ultimately dependent on our educational institutions’ ability to remain secure from cyber threats.” (See also the comments of [Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools](#).)

Reply comments on this docket are due tomorrow, Tuesday, February 23rd. The very short one-week period between the due dates for initial and reply comments, we believe, is an indication that the FCC’s leadership intends to provide some E-rate support for remote learning. How much support would depend largely upon how much additional E-rate funding can be made available over the next year.

At the low end, the FCC could provide some relief simply by eliminating the off-campus internet allocation rule and by expanding the eligible services list for Category 2 services. This would at least provide applicants with more flexibility to use their Category 2 budgets.

At the high end, the greatest prospect for additional E-rate funding now lies with Congress. The recent mark up by the House Energy and Commerce Committee of the proposed new COVID-19 Reconciliation package includes \$7.6 billion (non-USF funding) for the E-rate program. The legislative language would allow libraries and K-12 schools to purchase eligible equipment to provide off-campus Internet connectivity for students, teachers, and library patrons. Several additional steps are needed before full House approval and certainly before Senate approval.

Overall — perhaps with rose-colored glasses on — we are encouraged by recent developments at the FCC, in Congress and the Administration, and with the outpouring of support by applicant and service provider communities.

E-Rate Updates and Reminders

Upcoming E-Rate Dates:

February 23	FCC reply comment deadline on using E-rate funding to support remote learning (see article above).						
February 25	Last day to file a Form 470 for FY 2021 and meet the required 28-day posting requirement.						
February 25	Invoice deadline for most FY 2019 recurring service and special construction FRNs. Requests to extend this invoice deadline, if needed, must be submitted by this date.						
February 26	Form 486 deadline for FY 2020 covering funding committed in Wave 27. 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><tr><td>Wave 28</td><td>03/05/2021</td></tr><tr><td>Wave 29</td><td>03/12/2021</td></tr><tr><td>Wave 30</td><td>03/19/2021</td></tr></table>	Wave 28	03/05/2021	Wave 29	03/12/2021	Wave 30	03/19/2021
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March 25	The FY 2021 Form 471 application window will close at 11:59 p.m. EDT.						

USAC News Brief Dated February 19 – Form 470 Reminders

With the end to the Form 470 filing period for FY 2021 near at hand, [USAC's Schools and Libraries News Brief of February 19, 2021](#), provides the following reminders:

- **Most importantly:** February 25th is the last day that you can submit and certify your FY 2021 Form 470 and still wait the required 28 days before timely filing your FY 2021 Form 471 before the application filing window closes on March 25th at 11:59 p.m. EDT.
- Describe the services you need accurately and completely on the Form 470.

- Be sure to post for all services you are requesting under the correct service type.
- All Requests for Proposal (RFPs) and RFP documents must be attached to the Form 470.
- Respond promptly to questions from potential bidders.
- Service providers: Review Forms 470 and RFP documents in order to submit responsive bids.

Friday's News Brief also:

- Reminds applicants and service providers that February 25th is also the invoice deadline for most FY 2019 recurring service and special construction FRNs. Requests to extend this invoice deadline, if needed, must be submitted on or before February 25th.
- Summarizes last December's FCC Order ([FCC 20-178](#)) amending the invoice deadline rule to permit applicants and service providers up to 120 days to submit invoices after USAC issues a Revised Funding Commitment Decision Letter (RFCDL) approving a post-commitment request or granting an appeal of a previously denied or reduced funding request (see our [newsletter of December 14th](#)).

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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