

E-Rate Guide

What is E-Rate?



- **E-Rate (short for Education Rate)** is a program administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) under the direction of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).
- The primary goal of E-Rate is to ensure that all schools and libraries, especially those in low-income or rural areas, have access to high-speed broadband and internet connectivity, which is essential for digital learning and information access.
- **What Services Are Covered?**
 - **Category 1 “External”** Internet Access & Data Transmission Broadband internet WAN (Wide Area Network) services
 - **Category 2 “Internal”** Hardware e.g., routers, switches, access points, firewalls
 - E-Rate provides discounts (ranging from 20% to 90%)
- **Funding Year (FY) 2025 (July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026) is \$2.64 billion**

The Process

Step 1: Identify Needs & Post Bid Request (FCC Form 470): Eligible schools and libraries assess their technology needs (e.g., more bandwidth, new Wi-Fi infrastructure). They then complete and certify an FCC Form 470, which describes the services and equipment they need. This form is posted on the USAC website, inviting service providers to submit competitive bids.

Step 2: Competitive Bidding Period: Service providers review the FCC Form 470 and submit bids. Applicants must wait at least 28 days after the Form 470 is posted before selecting a service provider. The competitive bidding process must adhere to FCC rules, and state/local procurement requirements.

Step 3: Select Service Provider & Apply for Discounts (FCC Form 471): After reviewing the bids, the school or library selects the most cost-effective service offering, with price being the primary factor. They then file an FCC Form 471 to formally request E-rate discounts for the chosen services. This form must be submitted within a specific annual filing window.

Step 4: Application Review (Program Integrity Assurance - PIA): USAC reviews the applications to ensure they comply with all E-rate rules and regulations, including adherence to the competitive bidding process and eligibility criteria.

Step 5: Funding Commitment Decision Letter (FCDL): If approved, USAC issues an FCDL, which outlines the approved services and the committed funding amount.

Step 6: Start Services & Invoicing: Once services begin, either the service provider or the applicant can invoice USAC for the approved discount amount. Service Provider Invoicing (SPI - FCC Form 474): The service provider bills USAC directly for the discounted portion, and the school/library pays the remaining non-discounted portion. Billed Entity Applicant Reimbursement (BEAR - FCC Form 472): The school/library pays the full cost to the service provider and then seeks reimbursement from USAC for the discounted portion.

Preference Setting

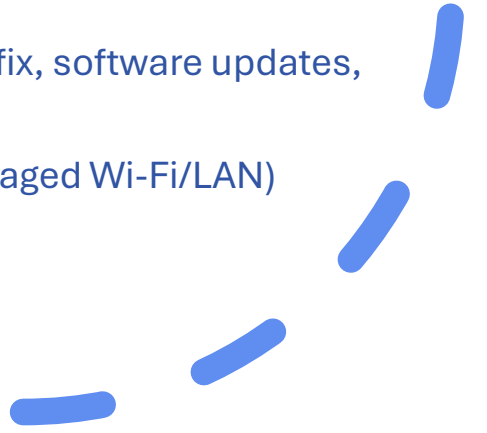
Per FCC rules customers can either:

- **List multiple acceptable solutions**, encouraging providers to propose different technologies

or

- **Specify a preferred approach** (e.g., Router model XXXX), must include words such as "Or Equal/ Equivalent per FCC rules to allow for competitive offers.

What is E- Rate Eligible for 2026?

- **Category 1 — Internet Access & Transport**
 - **Internet access** (any technology, any speed)
 - **Data transmission/WAN circuits** (fiber, copper, wireless, radio links)
 - **Managed router, DNS, DHCP, basic firewall services** (as part of Internet access)
 - **Note:** Voice services are **no longer eligible**.
 - **Category 2 — Internal Connections & Support**
 - **Wi-Fi equipment** (access points, controllers)
 - **Switches, routers, cabling, racks, connectors**
 - **Firewalls** (hardware/software)
 - **UPS units** supporting eligible network gear
 - **Caching servers** (for improving network performance)
 - **BMIC:** Basic maintenance of internal connections (break/fix, software updates, tech support)
 - **MIBS:** Managed internal broadband services (vendor-managed Wi-Fi/LAN)
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Carahsoft E-Rate line card

Network Infrastructure

- HPE, CISCO, Fortinet, Palo Alto, Check Point, Arista

Cyber Security & Filtering

- Zscaler, CrowdStrike, Trellix, Sophos, Torq, Broadcom

Virtualization and Servers

- Nutanix, AWS, Google, Microsoft

Power Supply

- Vertiv

- Carahsoft supports over 1,000 E-Rate resellers and service providers
- Find the partner that can deliver services like:
 - Network Topography
 - Cabling
 - Configuration
 - Training
 - Set up and delivery

Find The Provider That Fits You

Where to go?

For assistance with E-Rate products, contact us at:



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