

# E-Rate Program

(FY 2025–2026)

## Overview

The [E-Rate Program](#), formally known as the Schools and Libraries Program of the Universal Service Fund, was established by the [Telecommunications Act of 1996](#) and is administered by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) through the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC). The program provides discounted telecommunications, internet access, and internal network infrastructure to eligible K-12 schools and public libraries across the United States.

E-Rate aims to bridge the digital divide by ensuring all students and communities have access to affordable, high-speed internet. In recent years, the FCC has modernized E-Rate to prioritize broadband connectivity, cybersecurity, and network infrastructure making it a cornerstone of federal digital equity and education technology efforts.

## Federal Permitting Framework

In 2025, the FCC and USAC continue advancing E-Rate modernization priorities to strengthen broadband access and network security for schools and libraries nationwide.

- The FCC oversees E-Rate regulations, funding allocations, and modernization priorities. The USAC manages applications, disbursements, and compliance reviews. State Education Agencies (SEAs) assist with outreach, eligibility verification, and project coordination to ensure equitable broadband access across schools.
- The FY 2025 application window opens January–March 2025 using Forms 470 and 471. FY 2026 expands support for cybersecurity and Wi-Fi 6/7 upgrades in K-12 institutions.
- Schools must keep records and tech plans for 10 years, while vendors must ensure eligible services, transparent pricing, and adherence to FCC bidding rules.

## National Dashboard for Permitting

FCC, in coordination with the USAC, maintains a centralized E-Rate Funding and Compliance Dashboard to:

- Track funding applications and approvals for schools and libraries.
- Provide transparency on timelines, spending, and vendor participation.
- Coordinate with State Education Agencies (SEAs) to expand broadband and Wi-Fi.

Dashboard updates are planned for mid-2025 to include real-time data on connectivity and cybersecurity investments across the education sector.

## What Does This Mean for Government?

*Federal agencies will face new mandates including:*

- Expand broadband infrastructure and cybersecurity protections across the K-12 and library ecosystem.
- Track funding utilization through USAC's online dashboards and transparency tools.
- Collaborate with local education agencies to ensure digital equity and universal connectivity goals are met.

This modernization aligns E-Rate with broader national priorities such as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and the National Cybersecurity Strategy, reinforcing education connectivity as a national infrastructure priority.

## What Does This Mean for Industry?

For contractors, telecom providers, and integrators, the E-Rate Program represents a steady federal investment in education connectivity and modernization.

*Key takeaways for vendors:*

- Annual multi-billion-dollar funding for broadband, Wi-Fi, and cybersecurity upgrades in K-12 schools and libraries.
- Growing demand for eligible network equipment, cloud-based management tools, and security services.
- Preference for E-Rate-certified, transparent, and cost-effective vendors that comply with FCC rules.
- Vendors must hold a Service Provider ID (SPIN), follow open competitive bidding, and maintain 10-year record compliance under USAC audit standards

In short, E-Rate drives consistent opportunities for technology companies to deliver secure, scalable, and affordable connectivity solutions across the U.S. education sector.

## Timeline

This timeline repeats each year, outlining the standard funding and implementation cycle for schools and libraries participating in the E-Rate program.

Milestone	Key Dates	Focus & Key Provisions
Application Window Opens	<b>January – March 2025</b>	Schools and districts file FCC Form 470 to start competitive bidding and select eligible broadband or network service providers.
Funding Requests Submitted	<b>April – June 2025</b>	Institutions submit Form 471 to request funding commitments for internet access, Wi-Fi infrastructure, and network upgrades.
Funding Commitment Decisions (FCDLs)	<b>July 2025</b>	The Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) issues award notifications; districts finalize vendor contracts and project schedules.
Project Implementation Begins	<b>August – December 2025</b>	Schools begin installation and modernization projects — expanding fiber, Wi-Fi 6/7, and cybersecurity protections ahead of the new academic year.
Post-Funding Reviews & Audits	<b>Q1 2026 and Beyond</b>	ED-affiliated institutions maintain documentation, submit invoices (Form 472/474), and complete USAC audits to verify proper use of funds.

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