Education SUPERHIGHWAY

E-Rate: Increasing Educational Opportunity Through Digital Access

Overview

The Schools and Libraries Program, also known as E-rate, is a Universal Service Fund program designed to help public schools and libraries gain access to affordable telecommunication services and high-speed internet access. Administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) under the direction of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), public school districts and libraries may apply annually for eligible services, which they can procure through national or regional service providers at a discounted rate.

The annual process includes district applicant's filing both FCC Form 470, which is a description of the services requested and opens the competitive bidding process and Form 471, which requests discounts on eligible services and equipment. The FCC Form 470 must be filed at least 28 days before the close of the filing window for the funding year in which services are requested.

Eligible services include:

Category 1 services focus on funding connectivity to the school district — the Wide Area Network (WAN). USAC defines these services as those, "that provide the basic conduit access to the Internet."

Category 2 services are those that focus on infrastructure hardware and services inside the school or those "needed to enable high-speed broadband connectivity and broadband internal connections components." These services are related to the Local Area Network (LAN) and Wi-Fi.

Each year $3.9 billion is available to fund both Category 1 and 2 services and each year more than $1 billion is left on the table. In partnership with EducationSuperHighway, the leading non-profit dedicated to upgrading the internet access in America's classrooms, AESA aims to help schools fully leverage the federal and state funding available through E-rate to transform connectivity and broadband access in our nation's schools. Below are a collection of tools and resources curated to assist school district leaders and administrators so we can continue to upgrade school networks and support learning.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

E-rate Webinars - Watch on demand webinars to help you navigate the E-rate cycle.

Compare & Connect K-12 - A school broadband tool that helps school district leaders see what they are paying for internet services compared to similar districts.

Network Essentials for Superintendents - A guide that takes school district leaders through the ABCs of school broadband functionality.

Guides and Templates - Use these best practices to apply for E-rate funding and drive competitive bids from service providers.

Case Studies - Read success stories from school districts across the country that now have access to high-speed Internet.

E-rate Central News for the Week - Get the latest news, updates, and reminders.