

Understanding the E-Rate process

Optimize connectivity and implement managed solutions with Category One and Category Two opportunities





Explore how leasing can advance learning objectives

K-12 schools face persistent budget challenges related to today's escalating technology demands. For more than 25 years, the E-Rate program has helped eligible institutions secure funding for needed upgrades and purchases that support educational goals and initiatives. Learn more about the program and how your school or library can make the most of it to advance learning, and how checking the Managed Internal Broadband Services (MIBS) box during the application process will provide you an option to lease equipment rather than purchase, opening up new opportunities for your school.

Spectrum Business® is one of the largest E-Rate providers in the U.S.

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What is the E-Rate program?

Administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC), the E-Rate program provides discounts of up to 90% to help eligible schools and libraries obtain affordable internet access and telecommunications services.¹ The discount is based on the percentage of students who qualify for the federal school lunch program.

“Communication with Spectrum Business has been fantastic. During the installation process especially, I always felt included every step of the way in every milestone that mattered.”

Craig Black
IT Project Manager, The Schools of McKeel Academy

E-Rate categories: The services they fund

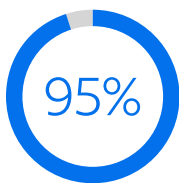
Category One services

Address needs related to facilitating broadband connectivity to schools and libraries, including data transmission and/or internet access.

Category Two services

Access technology and managed services for K-12 districts, schools and libraries that support the internal connections needed for broadband connectivity, including MIBS and basic maintenance of the internal connections. Eligible options span routers, cabling, switches and modems, as well as management, repair and upkeep of those items.

Learn more at [USAC](#).



95% of surveyed schools and libraries see E-Rate funding as essential to their internet connectivity goals.²

Four steps to applying for E-Rate funding

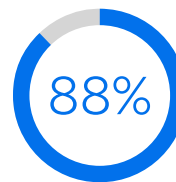
Spectrum Business has been helping K-12 districts, schools and libraries make the most of E-Rate funding opportunities to support their networking needs. Here are the steps to submitting your application and tips for optimizing the process:

Step 1: Define your network technology goals

Gather the relevant departments and stakeholders to review your education technology needs and set goals. Considerations might include improving bandwidth, planning for forecasted future growth, integrating or enhancing a wide area network (WAN) and improving WiFi coverage. Protecting against escalating physical and cybersecurity threats represents another common objective.

Step 2: Check the USAC solution eligibility list

You can check the eligibility of your school or library by contacting your state department of education or state library. Confirm the eligibility of your desired services by consulting the [USAC website](#). Finally, establish the funding you will need based on the services you want and the goals you have set.



88% of survey respondents recognize the benefits of the E-Rate program, highlighting faster internet connections and increased student and library patron connectivity as direct outcomes.³

Step 3: Complete your E-Rate application

Set up an account in the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC). Complete and certify Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Form 470. **Service providers can only submit proposals for the specific services requested. To maximize your options, without making any commitments, you can include requests for both purchased and leased (MIBS) equipment.** It is also imperative to know and adhere to the program's application deadlines.

Step 4: Choose the right partner

Evaluate the submitted bids and choose your provider. You must wait at least 28 days after filing the Form 470 before you can close your competitive bidding process. You must choose the bid that is the most cost-effective.

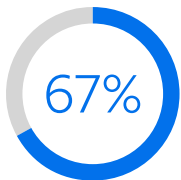
4,300+

districts nationwide have internet service contracts about to expire — representing a significant opportunity to upgrade for less.⁴

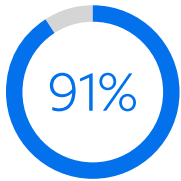
Experience the benefits of leasing

School districts no longer have to own and manage their own network technology. Choose a solution that is installed and fully managed by a service provider. Here are some of the benefits of leasing managed network solutions versus buying those solutions:

- No large upfront capital investment.
- No time-consuming maintenance demands.
- Reduced burden on IT staff so the team can focus on higher-priority projects.
- Flexibility to scale network capacity as needs change.
- Up-to-date network and cybersecurity protection with automatic updates and refreshes.
- Effective and predictable budgeting thanks to fixed costs.



of U.S. school districts met the FCC's bandwidth goal of 1 Mbps per student in 2022. Only two years prior, that number was 47%.⁵



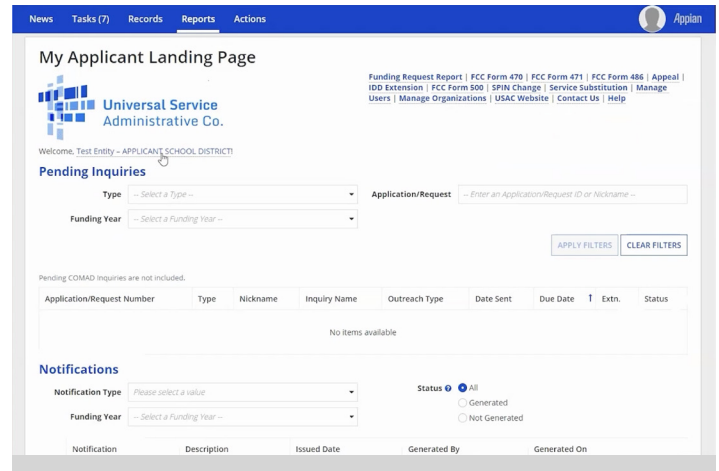
of teachers report that students have a 1:1 ratio to digital devices — up from 54% just a few years ago.⁶

MIBS: Get the most out of your Category Two budget

Many schools apply separately for Category One and Category Two funding. MIBS allows you to lease instead of purchase the eligible equipment you may require. This approach can save you time by shifting the responsibility for maintenance, licensing and repair to the service provider. It can also provide peace of mind and help you advance other business objectives by freeing your internal IT staff to address other demands.

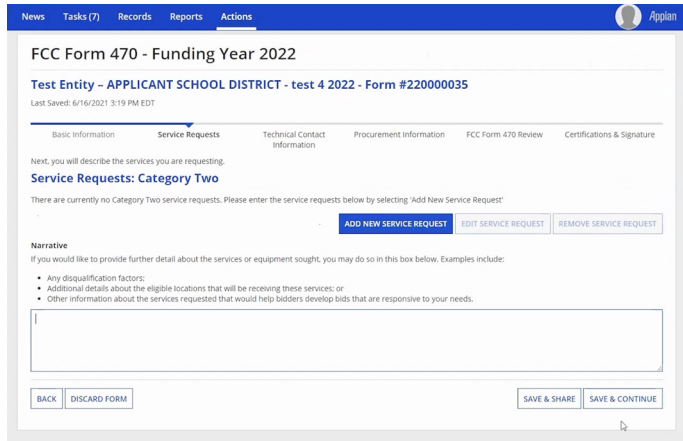
Applicant landing page

Once you have an account with the EPC, you can begin the E-Rate application process. The first screen captures high-level details of your request.



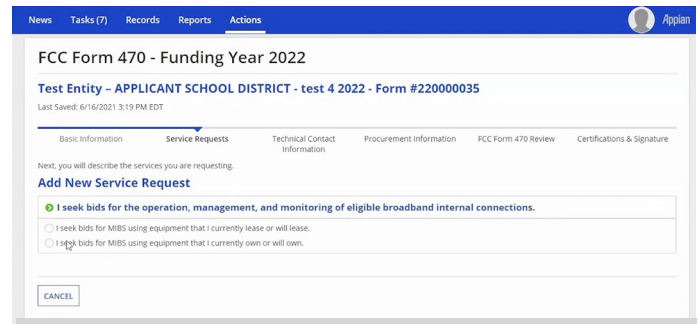
The Category Two section

The initial Category Two screen will ask for details spanning eligible locations to information that aids potential bidders in responding to your request.



MIBS: Own or lease

After selecting the third button, the MIBS option, you will receive a follow-up question related to whether you intend these services for equipment that you own or plan to own or that you lease or plan to lease. By selecting the MIBS leasing option, you can reduce your capital costs, offload maintenance and management to a provider partner and relieve your resource-constrained IT team.

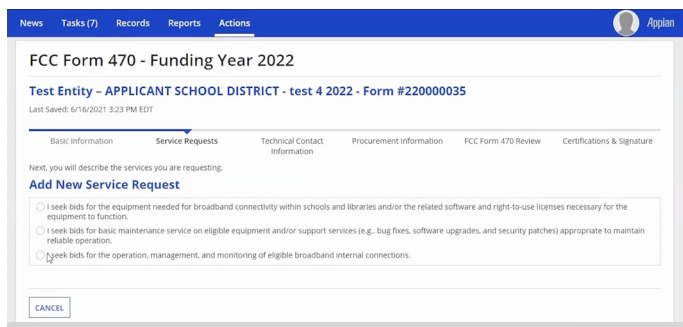


The MIBS selection

While in the Category Two section, you will be given three options:

1. Equipment for broadband connectivity.
2. Basic maintenance and support.
3. The operation, management and monitoring of eligible broadband connections.

You can submit multiple requests for as many of the three options as fit your needs or you desire bids on. Choosing the third (MIBS) option ensures you can lease as well as purchase equipment.



Not sure you are ready for leasing?

Select the MIBS option during the application process if you are interested in receiving quotes for both purchasing and leasing. **Doing so does not obligate you to lease equipment** but preserves the option to do so after you conduct a cost-benefit analysis.



Empower enhanced learning with Spectrum Business

Spectrum Business has provided K-12 schools and libraries with a complete range of solutions for more than 20 years. As one of the largest E-Rate service providers in the country, we offer services for Category One and Category Two, as well as many other solutions designed for schools and districts. Our offerings deliver benefits including end-to-end security, physical security and unified communication solutions for K-12 education. We are the right partner for your E-Rate needs, simplifying the process and freeing you to concentrate on your schools' key efforts and initiatives.

When it is time to replace or upgrade equipment, consider leasing it with managed solutions through Spectrum Business to extend your E-Rate funding and create education solutions that power new levels of student achievement.

[Learn more](#)

"I had the notification email, I had the line, I had everything tested within two weeks. I've never had a better installation than the one I had with Spectrum Business."

Tram Tran

Manager of Information Technology, Cannon School

1. ["E-Rate: Universal Service Program for Schools and Libraries,"](#) Federal Communications Commission, February 27, 2024.
2. ["E-Rate Trends Report,"](#) Funds for Learning, 2023.
3. Ibid.
4. ["Connect K-12's 2022 Report Shows 67% of U.S. School Districts Now Meet FCC Internet Connectivity Benchmark,"](#) Connected Nation, November 16, 2022.
5. Ibid.
6. ["20 Years of Student Feedback Drives Digital Learning,"](#) edWeb, November 17, 2023.

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