

GUIDE

# 3 planning tools to navigate the E-Rate process



**Spectrum**  
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in E-Rate discounts requested by applicants in FY 2021.<sup>3</sup>

Thanks largely to the federal E-Rate program, 99 percent of America’s schools now have high-speed broadband connections capable of providing enough bandwidth to enable their students and teachers to use technology in the classroom.<sup>1</sup>

But K-12 technology leaders can’t afford to rest on this accomplishment. As applications like streaming video, online collaboration and esports become more common, school bandwidth needs are rising exponentially. Based on current usage trends, the nonprofit organization EducationSuperHighway says school districts should plan for internet bandwidth growth of between 50 percent and 100 percent year over year.<sup>2</sup>

K-12 schools and districts will need to continue leveraging the E-Rate program to keep ahead of these requirements. Planning for network infrastructure needs is essential to support digital learning and improve student outcomes — and it shouldn’t be left to the last minute. It’s important for schools and districts to start planning well in advance of each E-Rate funding year to get ahead of the 28-day bidding process and allow for unexpected contingencies.

Many E-Rate applicants try to anticipate their needs at least two to three years ahead of time so they aren’t caught unaware — and to avoid the last-minute stress of getting paperwork completed and forms posted online. While advanced planning is a key to success, a regular review of technology initiatives will ensure that infrastructure is up to date as new learning technologies or priorities emerge.

Given the complexity of the E-Rate process, we’ve compiled a number of planning tools to help you fully understand and leverage available E-Rate funds — and create more opportunities for your students.

## E-Rate planning calendar\*

Steps	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Assess district technology needs	█											
Services bidding process	█											
Submit funding requests							█					
Receive funding commitment letter										█		
Services installed										█		
Discounts applied once funding year begins on July 1												

\*These dates are estimates. In order to derive the Form 470 deadline, applicants must count backwards 28 calendar days from the Form 471 deadline. Example: FCC announces Form 471 filing deadlines each Fall.



Below is a general timeline of the E-Rate process — specific dates vary from year to year:

**Fall:** Form 470 is filed by the applicant, typically in October/ November; opens 28-day competitive bidding process.

**Winter:** Contracts signed with service providers following competitive bidding period; form 471 is submitted to Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) before the specified deadline (typically late March); USAC announces the exact dates and times of the filing window on its website every year.

**Spring:** USAC Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) staff review all applications; funding decision letters sent; appeals must be made within 60 days.

**Fall:** Form 486 confirming start of service filed with USAC, followed by reimbursement forms 472/474.

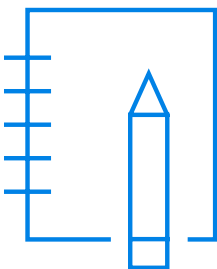
### E-Rate eligible services

E-Rate eligible services are divided into two categories. It’s imperative to know the difference and be able to plan and apply accordingly.

Eligible	Ineligible
<p><b>Category 1</b> Digital transmission and internet access services: Asynchronous Transfer Mode (ATM); Broadband over Power Lines; Cable Modem; Digital Subscriber Line (DSL); DS-1 (T-1), DS-3 (T-3) and Fractional T-1 or T-3; Ethernet; Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN); Leased Lit Fiber; Leased Dark Fiber (including dark fiber indefeasible rights of use (IRUs) for a set term); Self-Provisioned Broadband Networks; Frame Relay; Multi-Protocol Label Switching (MPLS); OC-1, OC-3, OC-12, OC-n; Satellite Service; Switched Multimegabit Data Service; Microwave Wireless.</p>	<p>Applications, content, e-mail, web hosting and end-user devices such as computers, laptops and tablets.</p>
<p><b>Category 2</b> The internet connections, equipment and services needed for broadband connectivity within schools and libraries, including: antennas, cabling, caching, firewall services, switches, routers, racks, uninterruptible power supplies, wireless access points and controller systems, software that supports internal broadband distribution, managed internal broadband services (MIBS) (i.e., managed WiFi) and basic maintenance.</p>	<p>Additional services or components such as data protection and backup, storage, internet filtering, telephone and video components, and voice/video IP components.</p>



There are a variety of forms involved in the E-Rate process. Here is an overview:



**Form 470:** Used to describe goods and services requested for Category 1 and 2 funding through the E-Rate program; required to open the 28-day competitive bidding period.

**Form 471:** Once providers are selected, used to list all contracts and services for which the applicant is requesting discounts through E-Rate.

**Form 472:** Used to seek reimbursement from USAC for services rendered.

**Form 474:** Submitted by service provider for discounts.

**Form 486:** Used to confirm to USAC that services have started; required before most payments can be made.

**Form 500:** Used for adjustments and to modify dates for receipt of service or file for extensions.

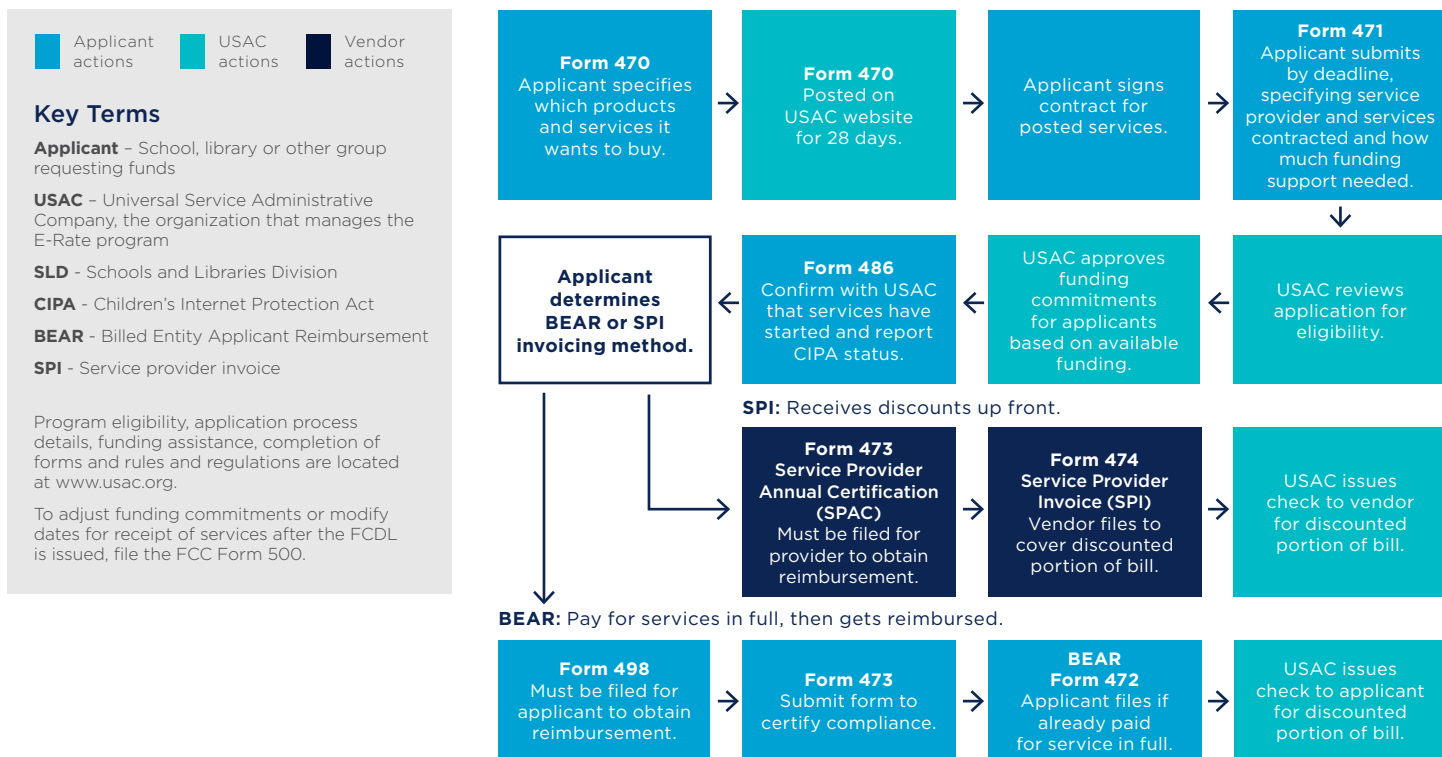
### Take advantage of special construction funding

The FCC defines special construction as upfront, non-recurring installation charges for the deployment of new or upgraded facilities, including: construction of network facilities, design and engineering and project management.

Applicants can apply for funding for special construction charges incurred up to six months prior to the July 1 start of the funding year (on or before January 1).

### E-Rate process overview

Before you begin the E-Rate process, you will need to establish an account via the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC). The chart below demonstrates the application, approval and discount or reimbursement process along with the required forms at each step.



### Ready to learn more?

For access to more expert insights and additional help navigating the E-Rate process, get the guide, "Using E-Rate funds to enhance school networks: An essential guide for K-12 leaders."

1. "[EducationSuperHighway](#)," 2021.
2. "[K-12 Bandwidth Goals](#)," EducationSuperHighway, 2021.
3. "[2021 E-Rate Trends Report](#)," Funds For Learning, 2021.

### About Spectrum Enterprise

Spectrum Enterprise, a part of Charter Communications, Inc., is a national provider of scalable, fiber technology solutions serving many of America's largest businesses and communications service providers. The broad Spectrum Enterprise portfolio includes [networking and managed services solutions](#): [Internet access](#), [Ethernet access and networks](#), [Voice](#) and [TV solutions](#). The Spectrum Enterprise team of experts works closely with clients to achieve greater business success by providing solutions designed to meet their evolving needs. For more information, visit [enterprise.spectrum.com](http://enterprise.spectrum.com).

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