



Universal Service
Administrative Co.

USAC

Emergency Connectivity Fund Program Newsletter

August 3, 2021

ECF Application Window Countdown: 10 Days to Window Close

Apply Now for Emergency Connectivity Fund Program Support!

The Emergency Connectivity Fund Program application filing window will be open for 10 more days! Eligible schools and libraries **must apply by next Friday, August 13, 2021**. During the current application filing window, eligible schools and libraries, in addition to consortia of schools and libraries, can submit requests for funding to purchase eligible equipment and services between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022 to meet the remote learning needs of students, school staff, and library patrons who would otherwise lack access to connected devices and broadband connections sufficient to engage in remote learning.

Interested schools and libraries can find more information and apply for support at emergencyconnectivityfund.org.

Upcoming FCC webinar and resources

The FCC will host a [webinar](#) **TODAY at 2 p.m. ET** on fcc.gov/live to highlight frequently asked questions and answer questions submitted by potential applicants. No registration is required for this event. The webinar will be recorded and be available on the [FCC's website](#) for viewing after the event.

The FCC added newly updated resources, including an [application process overview](#) and a [program flyer](#). You may also review additional Frequently Asked Questions about the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program [here](#).

ECF Portal Training Site

If you have access to the EPC training environment, USAC will be providing you with the same access to the new Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) Portal training site. This site will allow you to practice filling out the ECF FCC Form 471. We will be sending you an email with credentials that have been assigned to you and a password for the ECF Portal training site.

If you do not have an existing account or did not get an email but have an existing account, please reach out to the Customer Support Center (CSC) with questions at (800) 234-9781 Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET.

Certification Update

Consistent with the clarification provided by the FCC in a July 22 Public Notice, USAC is in the process of updating the certification language in cases where an applicant has not yet ordered equipment or services. The revised language will read: “[t]he applicant or the relevant student, school staff member, or library patron has received, or the applicant has ordered or will order, the equipment and services for which funding is sought.” Applicants need not delay submitting their applications pending updated language if they have not yet ordered equipment or services. They should just make note in the FRN narrative that no order has been placed, but will be, consistent with the provisions in the July 22 Public Notice.

Need Help?

USAC will continue to host [weekly office hours](#) where applicants and service providers can ask questions and get information about the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program application process. Register for this week’s office hours session being held this Wednesday, August 4, 2021 and office hours session for tribal applicants being held this Tuesday, August 3, 2021.

- Tuesday, August 3 @ 4 p.m. ET: Emergency Connectivity Fund Overview Office Hours for Tribal Applicants - [Register](#)
- Wednesday, August 4 @ 3 p.m. ET: Emergency Connectivity Fund Overview Office Hours – [Register](#)

Applicants and service providers can also contact the Emergency Connectivity Fund Customer Support Center (CSC) with questions at (800) 234-9781 Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET.

Training

USAC offers E-learning modules, including a Program Overview video, an ECF FCC Form 471 Walkthrough video, and an overview video for Tribal Schools, Libraries and Consortia to help applicants successfully participate in the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program.

Visit the [Training](#) section of the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program website to view trainings, access E-learning modules, register for office hour sessions, and view recordings of past trainings and office hours sessions.

Applicants can also find more information regarding the ECF FCC Form 471 [here](#) on the Program website.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need a SAM.gov account if I am an annual E-Rate applicant?

SAM.gov registration is necessary for all applicants and service providers that are submitting requests for reimbursement (FCC Forms 472/474) and receiving funds from the U.S. government. Because this is not currently required to participate in the E-Rate program, applicants who are planning to submit requests for reimbursement (FCC Form 472) and have not registered before should begin the process now. Service providers that agree to invoice on behalf of applicants also need to be registered with SAM.gov. ECF applicants whose service providers will file invoices for ECF reimbursement on their behalf (SPI invoicing) are not required to register in SAM.gov.

How should applicants request funding for equipment associated with a service request (e.g., a \$5 monthly fee for a modem or Wi-Fi hotspot connected to a broadband service)?

Applicants should work with their service providers to separate the costs of the equipment from the services and submit them on separate funding requests.

Do applicants need to have contracts in advance of submitting an application for ECF support?

No, contracts are not required under the ECF Program rules, but applicants are required to comply with state, local, or Tribal procurement laws or regulations. Applicants also do not need to have already placed an order for eligible equipment or services prior to filing an application.

Please see [DA 21-881](#) for more information about the application certification language in 47 CFR 54.1710(a)(1)(x).

When I request funding for equipment, what do I use as the service end date in the application?

For equipment or other non-recurring services that have not been received when the applicant submits the application, applicants may use June 30, 2022 as the service end date.

Please see [DA 21-881](#) for more information about the deadline for invoicing for these non-recurring purchases.

It's summer vacation, and I don't know exactly how many students lack broadband access at home. What should I do?

At the application stage, schools just need best estimates of their unmet need to request funding.

When it is time to invoice, schools may only request ECF reimbursement for services that fulfilled an actual unmet need of a student or staff member, consistent with the application certification. Schools may also be asked to provide documentation to support actual costs of services to those students and staff after funds have been committed.

Could a school district use the district's National School Lunch Program (NSLP) percentage, NTIA's "[Indicators of Broadband Need Map](#) " or other publicly available data to provide best estimates on its ECF FCC Form 471 application, and then collect a certification from students or staff before seeking reimbursement for the device or service?

Again, only best estimates of the unmet need are required for schools at the time they submit their

application. It is up to the school to determine how to estimate need. Schools may also be asked to provide documentation to support actual costs of assigned equipment and/or services after funds have been committed. A student or staff certification collected after the application but before receiving service/equipment may be an appropriate way to ensure the school is only seeking reimbursement for those students and staff with unmet need.

What will school applicants need related to unmet need at the different stages of the ECF Program process (e.g., application, invoicing, or audits)?

At the application stage, schools just need best estimates of their unmet need. They may use whatever method they deem appropriate for estimating unmet need and are not required to provide any documentation to support these estimates when they submit their ECF FCC Form 471 application. Here is a link to see the unmet need questions for schools on the application: www.emergencyconnectivityfund.org/ecf-fcc-form-471/entity-information.

When schools file for reimbursement, they should only request reimbursement for eligible equipment and services provided to students or staff who would otherwise lack broadband services and/or devices sufficient to engage in remote learning. For example, if a school requested ECF funding to support the broadband services at the homes of 100 students based on an estimate of those that lack services, but it determines during the school year that only 90 students have unmet need, the school should only seek reimbursement for the services provided to those 90 students. Schools may also be asked to provide documentation to support actual costs of assigned equipment and/or services after funds have been committed.

All applicants should also maintain documentation supporting their compliance with ECF Program rules.

What will library applicants need related to unmet need at the different stages of the ECF Program process (e.g., application, invoicing, or audits)?

At the application stage, libraries may request funding for eligible equipment and services. Like schools, libraries must certify that they are only seeking support to address unmet need, but are not required to provide best estimates of unmet needs on their ECF FCC Form 471 applications.

To ensure libraries are providing eligible equipment and services to patrons with unmet needs, ECF rules require libraries to, on a going forward basis, provide patrons with a copy of an eligible use policy, which explains that the equipment or service is intended for library patrons who do not otherwise have access to equipment or services sufficient to meet the patrons' educational needs, and patrons must sign and return a statement saying they would otherwise lack such access. Documentation supporting these certification statements may be requested to show compliance with ECF rules.

All applicants should also maintain documentation supporting their compliance with ECF Program rules.

The FCC continues to update its FAQs as new questions come in. Additional FAQs are available at: www.fcc.gov/emergency-connectivity-fund-faqs .

Need Help? Contact Us!

Please contact the Emergency Connectivity Fund Customer Support Center (CSC) at (800) 234-9781 or create a case in the ECF Portal.