



Universal Service
Administrative Co.

USAC

Emergency Connectivity Fund Program Newsletter

July 27, 2021

ECF Application Window Countdown: 17 Days to Window Close

The Clock is Ticking – Apply Now for Emergency Connectivity Fund Program Support!

The new school year is just around the corner, will students in your community have the broadband access and devices they need to succeed?

The Federal Communications Commission has a new program to help with unmet needs. The Emergency Connectivity Fund Program covers 100% of the reasonable costs of laptops, tablets, Wi-Fi hotspots, modems, routers, and broadband connectivity purchases for off-campus use by students, school staff, and library patrons.

Eligible schools and libraries **must apply by August 13**. 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.

Interested schools and libraries can find more information and apply for support at emergencyconnectivityfund.org. The FCC will hold a [webinar on August 3 at 2 p.m. ET](#) to highlight frequently asked questions and answer questions submitted by potential applicants. Newly updated resources include an [application process overview](#) and a [program flyer](#). You may also review additional Frequently Asked Questions about the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program [here](#) or contact the Customer Support Center hosted by the Universal Service Administrative Company, the program administrator, at (800) 234-9781, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET.

Congress authorized the Emergency Connectivity Fund as part of the American Rescue

Plan Act of 2021. Through the [Emergency Connectivity Fund](#), the FCC will award \$7.17 billion to help schools and libraries purchase connected devices and broadband internet connections to facilitate off-campus remote learning. The [initial application window](#) will close on **August 13** at 11:59 p.m. ET.

Emergency Connectivity Fund Service Delivery Date

On July 22, 2021, the FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau issued a Public Notice ([DA 21-881](#)), which set June 30, 2022 as the service delivery date for equipment and other non-recurring services funding requests filed during the initial application filing window if the equipment or services have not been received at the time the funding request is made. As such, applicants may use June 30, 2022, as the "service end date" in the funding request where indicated in the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program application portal, and the invoicing deadline for these non-recurring services and equipment will be 60 days from the date of the funding commitment decision letter; a revised funding commitment decision letter approving a post-commitment change or a successful appeal of previously denied or reduced funding; or August 29, 2022 (i.e., 60 days after June 30, 2022), whichever is later.

The Public Notice also modified the certification language for section 54.1710(a)(1)(x) of the Commission's rules to clarify that applicants may request funding for eligible equipment and services that have not yet been ordered for the upcoming school year (i.e., July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022).

Unmet Needs

The FCC has not prescribed a specific way for applicants to go about estimating what they will need to address unmet needs. In the case of schools, applicants should provide their best estimates about the number of students who did not have access to adequate connected devices, broadband connections, or both when the pandemic began; the number of students who do not currently have adequate access; and how the applicant expects those numbers to change with the requested Emergency Connectivity Fund Program support.

While the FCC has not dictated specific data collection requirements for estimating the unmet need for students, schools must describe how and when they collected the information that they use for the estimates provided in their responses.

There is no such data collection requirement for libraries to estimate the unmet need

for library patrons. However, both schools and libraries must certify that they are seeking support for eligible equipment and/or services for students, school staff, and/or library patrons that would otherwise lack adequate access.

We encourage applicants to make their best efforts to estimate what they will need and apply for Emergency Connectivity Fund Program funding in a timely manner, just as they do for the E-rate program. Applicants may seek funding for only one fixed broadband connection per location and only one connected device and/or Wi-Fi hotspot per student, school staff member or library patron.

For more information regarding Unmet Needs please visit the [FCC FAQs](#). Additionally, see the Frequently Asked Questions below for some of the most recently added FAQs on Unmet Needs.

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, July 28, 2021.

- Wednesday, July 28 @ 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 and an Emergency Connectivity Fund FCC Form 471 Walkthrough video, 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

Are libraries limited to lending Emergency Connectivity Fund-funded equipment and services to K-12 students?

No, there is no restriction that library-owned devices be loaned to K-12 students.

If a school reopens, and students and school staff are attending school in person, is off-campus equipment or service for that student or teacher still eligible for Emergency Connectivity Fund support?

Yes. Such equipment and services are eligible if needed to meet the remote learning needs of students, such as homework, or school staff who would otherwise lack sufficient access to connected devices and/or a broadband internet access connection while off campus.

Are applicants required to conduct competitive bidding, like they do for the E-Rate program?

No. There are no Commission-mandated competitive bidding requirements for the Emergency Connectivity Fund, but schools and libraries are required to certify that they have complied with state, local and Tribal procurement requirements.

Does an applicant using SPI invoicing need to register with SAM.gov?

No, applicants in the ECF Program whose service providers will file invoices on their behalf for Emergency Connectivity Fund reimbursement (SPI invoicing) are not required to register in SAM.gov.

Can a school who has received ESSER or CARES Act funds to buy connected devices/hotspot devices apply for Emergency Connectivity Fund Program funding?

It depends. While Emergency Connectivity Fund rules do not permit applicants to receive duplicative support for equipment or services that have already been reimbursed through other federal or state programs, an applicant may seek funding for any portion of the costs of the equipment or services that were not covered. They may also seek support to address ongoing unmet needs that are not covered through other funding sources.

Does a school need to use a survey to demonstrate unmet need on their application?

No. Schools are required to provide best estimates of the unmet need at the time they

submit their application and may use whatever method they deem appropriate for estimating unmet need. The estimates could be based on the results of a survey, but a survey is not required.

If a district-owned connected device was assigned to a student, but the device is no longer sufficient to engage in remote learning (for example, a three-year old laptop), can the district request Emergency Connectivity Fund support for a new connected device?

Yes. If a device is no longer sufficient for a student to engage in remote learning, Emergency Connectivity Fund support can be used to provide a new device. Applicants must certify on their funding application that they are only seeking support “for eligible equipment and/or services provided to students and school staff who would otherwise lack connected devices and/or broadband services sufficient to engage in remote learning.”

Can an applicant request funding for connected devices or Wi-Fi hotspots for all of its students as part of a 1:1 device initiative?

No. Applicants must certify, as part of their funding application, that they are only seeking support for eligible equipment and/or services provided to students and school staff who would otherwise lack access to connected devices or broadband services sufficient to engage in remote learning.

If students have devices at home, but they are inadequate for the students to participate in remote learning (e.g., due to age or not meeting minimum technical requirements), can schools still buy a device for them?

During the initial application filing window, applicants may only seek support for eligible equipment and/or services for students that lack access to connected devices and broadband connections sufficient to engage in remote learning during the upcoming school year. We leave it up to schools to determine whether a student’s existing device is sufficient to engage in remote learning. Applicants must also certify on their funding application that they are only seeking support “for eligible equipment and/or services provided to students and school staff who would otherwise lack connected devices and/or broadband services sufficient to engage in remote learning.” Schools should document how they determined that the existing devices were inadequate.

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

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.

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.