Emergency Connectivity Fund Program Newsletter

March 1, 2023

ECF Program Friendly Reminders

On March 1, 2023, the Wireline Competition Bureau released a Public Notice ([DA 23-166](#)) reminding Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) Program participants about their ongoing obligations to comply with program rules. In this newsletter, we review additional requirements of the ECF Program. We also remind participants that they are subject to audits and may be required to return their ECF funds if they do not comply with program rules. Please review the Public Notice and this newsletter, and reach out to us if you have any questions.

Device Storage, Usage, and Service

- The goal of the ECF Program is to provide eligible devices and broadband services to students, school staff, and library patrons who would otherwise lack sufficient access to these resources to be able to engage in remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, participants may only request ECF reimbursement for equipment and/or services that fulfill an actual unmet need of a student, school staff member, or library patron.
- Applicants should not be warehousing or requesting reimbursement for devices and/or equipment that are not being used by a student, school staff member, or library patron with unmet needs.
- Similarly, applicants and service providers should not seek reimbursement for the monthly recurring services associated with any devices or equipment that are not being used.

Replacement/Additional Devices or Equipment

- The purchase of extra devices or equipment to account for anticipated equipment loss, breakage, or future need is ineligible for ECF support.
- The ECF Program also limits support to one connected device and one Wi-Fi hotspot per student, school staff member, or library patron.

1:1 Device Initiatives

- Many school districts operate 1:1 device initiatives and may provide devices to all students regardless of their individual need. However, because ECF funding is limited, it is only available for eligible equipment and/or services provided to students, school staff, or library patrons who would otherwise lack access to such equipment and/or services sufficient to engage in remote learning. Therefore, 1:1 device initiatives are not eligible for ECF support unless the devices requested fulfill an actual unmet need of a student, school staff member, or library patron.

On-Campus Equipment and Services

- Equipment and services purchased for use solely at a school or library are ineligible for ECF support. While we recognize that many schools have returned to in-person learning and students may use the devices while

at school, we remind ECF participants that the purpose of the program is to provide support for students, school staff, and library patrons to engage in remote learning at locations other than at a school or library. Applicants and service providers may receive ECF support for eligible equipment and services used at locations that include, but are not limited to, the homes of students, school staff, and library patrons; community centers; churches; and any other off-campus locations where they are engaged in remote learning activities, such as homework.

- ECF-funded fixed wireless or wireline connections may not, however, be used on-campus and we encourage schools and libraries to seek support for their on-campus connectivity needs through the E-Rate program.

Asset and Service Inventories

- ECF Program participants are required to keep equipment and service inventories for each connected device, other piece of equipment, or broadband connection provided to students, school staff members, or library patrons. The specific requirements of the asset inventories are described in 47 CFR § 54.1715, as well as in the FCC's FAQ (#8.5 under document retention).

- The equipment inventory must identify:

  - 1) the device or equipment type (i.e., laptop, tablet, mobile hotspot, modem, router);

  - 2) the device or equipment make/model;

  - 3) the device or equipment serial number;

  - 4) the full name of the person to whom the device or other piece of equipment was provided; and

  - 5) the dates the device or other piece of equipment was loaned out and returned, or the date the school or library was notified that the device or other piece of equipment was missing, lost, or damaged.

- Applicants must also keep inventories of eligible services purchased with ECF support. The service inventories must include the following information:

  - (a) type of service provided (i.e., DSL, cable, fiber, fixed wireless, satellite, mobile wireless);

  - (b) broadband plan details, including: upload and download speeds and monthly data cap;

  - (c) the name(s) of the person(s) to whom the service was provided;

  - (d) the service address (for fixed broadband service only);

  - (e) the installation date of service (for fixed broadband service only); and

  - (f) the last date of service, as applicable, (for fixed broadband service only).

- For additional detail, please see DA 23-166. Please also note that USAC's ECF Document Retention page has recently been updated.

Eligible Use Policies and Signed Unmet Need Statements

- Libraries must provide patrons with a copy of an eligible use policy, which explains that the ECF-funded equipment or service is intended for library patrons who do not otherwise have access to equipment and/or services sufficient to meet the patrons' educational needs. In return, a patron must sign and provide a statement to the library saying that they would otherwise lack such access to such equipment and/or services if not for the equipment and/or service being provided by the library.

Document Retention and Production

- ECF Program participants are required to retain records related to their participation in the program. The records must be sufficient to demonstrate compliance with all ECF Program rules for at least **10 years** from

the last date of service or delivery of equipment. For example, applicants should keep copies of asset and service inventories, documentation of how they determined unmet need, and invoicing documents. Libraries should also retain their eligible use policies and signed library patron unmet need statements.

- Applicants are also required to maintain documentation supporting the actual costs of the requested equipment and/or services. The Commission adopted maximum support amounts to provide the simplest review process, but applicants and service providers may only be reimbursed based on the actual costs of the equipment and services. Additional information can be found at paragraph 69 of the FCC's ECF Report and Order.
- Participants are required to provide documentation if requested by the Commission or its delegates, including USAC and the Commission's Office of Inspector General.
- These requirements protect the integrity of ECF program and help to prevent waste, fraud, or abuse of the limited funds. Please also see DA 23-166 for additional detail.

For More Information

Please review the FCC's Emergency Connectivity Fund FAQs, which the FCC continues to update as new questions are received.

More detail on the ECF Program is available in the FCC Order that established the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program. For information on the program, please visit EmergencyConnectivityFund.org, join our training sessions, and sign up for Emergency Connectivity Fund Program emails.

Applicants and service providers can also contact the ECF Customer Service Center (CSC) with questions at (800) 234-9781 Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET or submit a case in the ECF Portal.

We appreciate your interest in the ECF Program and look forward to your ongoing engagement as we work together to close the Homework Gap!

Need Help? Contact Us!
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