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Final 2 Days of the Initial Application Filing Window - Apply Now for Emergency Connectivity Fund Program Support!

August 11, 2021

ECF Application Window Countdown: 2 Days To Window Close

The Emergency Connectivity Fund Program application filing window will be open for 2 more days! Eligible schools and libraries **must apply by this Friday, August 13, 2021 at 11:59 p.m. ET. Do not wait until the last day to submit your application.** 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.

Have any last-minute questions? Please see below for more information on this week's extended ECF Customer Support Center hours and the Office Hours Sessions that are being held TODAY!

Today's Focus: Unmet Needs

Question of the Day

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.

Frequently Asked Questions

How should applicants determine their 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 ECF 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 on the application.

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 ECF funding in a timely manner, just as they do for the E-Rate Program.

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.

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 ECF support for a new connected device?

If a device is no longer sufficient for a student to engage in remote learning, ECF 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." Schools should document how they determined that the existing devices were inadequate.

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.

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?

Yes. 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.

Extended CSC Hours

Applicants and service providers can 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. **Extended hours will be available during the following days this week:**

- Wednesday, August 11, 2021: 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET
- Thursday, August 12, 2021: 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET
- Friday, August 13, 2021: 8 a.m. to 11:59:59 p.m. ET (last day of application filing window)

Need Help?

There are still two opportunities for applicants and service providers to ask questions and get information about the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program application process. Register for this week's office hour sessions being held TODAY.

- Wednesday, August 11 @ 3 p.m. ET: Emergency Connectivity Fund Overview Office Hours – [Register](#)
- Wednesday, August 11 @ 4 p.m. ET: Emergency Connectivity Fund Overview Office Hours for Tribal Applicants - [Register](#)

For More Information

More detail on the Program is available in the [FCC Order](#) that established the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program. To learn more, please visit [EmergencyConnectivityFund.org](https://www.emergencyconnectivityfund.org) and sign up for Emergency Connectivity Fund Program emails. The FCC's announcement of the application filing window is available on their [website](#).

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.