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Funding Status for 2021-2022

E-Rate:

Wave 35 for FY 2021 was released on Thursday, December 9th, for a total of \$14.2 million, none for North Carolina. Cumulative commitments are now \$2.47 billion including \$84.4 million for North Carolina. Nationwide, USAC has now funded 98% of the FY 2021 applications representing 88% of the requested funding.

ECF:

Five ECF funding waves have been issued to date. Cumulative commitments are now \$3.22 billion including \$111 million for North Carolina. To date, all ECF funding has been for applications submitted in the first ECF window and represents decisions on 56% of the initial requests with an approval rate averaging almost 91%. Total authorized disbursements as of last Friday were \$57 million.

Initial ACP Comments

By the close of the initial comment period last Wednesday, the FCC had received well over one hundred responses to the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (“NPRM”) ([DA 21-1453](#)) on the new Affordable Connectivity Program (“ACP”). ACP is the successor program (see our [newsletter of November 22nd](#)) to the Emergency Broadband Benefit (“EBB”) program providing discounted internet access and connected devices to low-income families. ACP is a \$14.2 billion program — more than four times the size of the earlier EBB program — authorized under the Infrastructure Act that the FCC is charged with implementing on an accelerated basis at the end of December. Not surprisingly, many of the comments dealt with issues related to fostering a smooth EBB-to-ACP transition.

Of longer-term importance to schools and libraries, the following set of comments focused on the need, partially addressed in the NPRM, for bulk billing arrangements whereby discounts could be applied to: (a) multiple dwelling units such as low-income housing complexes or homeless centers;

or (b), multi-family subscription plans that could extend — and expand — school and library plans currently being funded under the ECF program. We direct your attention to the following comments:

[California Emerging Technology Fund](#)
[City of Boston et al](#)
[City of Seattle](#)
[EducationSuperHighway](#)
[E-Rate Central and SHLB Coalition](#)
[Public Knowledge, Common Sense Media](#)
[Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future](#)
[T-Mobile USA](#)

We encourage schools and libraries to support these positions in reply comments that are due by December 28th. Assuming that the FCC can be convinced to provide school and library support, interested parties might also want to participate in USAC-hosted [ACP training sessions](#) scheduled for later this week.

For schools and libraries that had previously encouraged eligible student families and library patrons to take advantage of the EBB discounts, we suggest reaching out again to those families and patrons to alert them of the coming transition. Although final ACP rules have not been finalized, the FCC did release an Order ([DA 21-1524](#)) last week waiving certain EBB rules and clarifying aspects of the EBB-to-ACP transition for participating EBB subscribers and suppliers. Last Friday, USAC released a [summary](#) of the FCC's actions. For current or potential EBB participants, the key points are as follows.

- December 31st is the effective starting date for the ACP program.
- With a few exceptions (requiring reverification of eligibility), EBB subscribers will continue to receive internet discounts of up to \$50 per month for an additional 60 days (through March 1, 2022) before being subject to the ACP program's \$30 per month cap.
- Eligible households, not currently EBB participants, will still be able to enroll in the EBB program until 6:00 p.m. EST on December 30th (thus making them eligible for the higher 60-day discount cap).
- EBB subscribers, currently limited to certain provider internet service packages, will henceforth be able to apply their EBB — and subsequently ACP — discounts to any of their service providers' internet plans.

Updates and Reminders

Upcoming Dates:

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| December 14 | FCC open meeting to consider an NPRM on an E-rate competitive bidding portal (see our newsletter of November 29th). |
| December 14 | USAC webinar: Affordable Connectivity Program Overview (register). Note: Technically this webinar is designed for service providers but should provide a useful overview for other interested parties. |

- December 15 First of five [Broadband Grant Program Public Virtual Listening Sessions](#) hosted by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (“NTIA”) in connection with the five new grant programs, designed to expand broadband services nationwide, authorized and funded by the Infrastructure Act ([register](#)).
- December 16 USAC webinar on the ECF reimbursement process ([register](#)).
- December 17 Form 486 deadline for FY 2021 covering funding committed in Wave 19. More generally, the Form 486 deadline is 120 days from the FCDL date or from the service start date (typically July 1st), whichever is later. Upcoming Form 486 deadlines for 2021 are:

Wave 20	12/24/2021
Wave 21	12/30/2021
- December 28 Reply comments due on the new Affordable Connectivity Program ([DA 21-1453](#)) (see article above).

Senate Confirms New Term for Commissioner Rosenworcel:

Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel, the current FCC Chairperson, was confirmed by the Senate last week for another five-year term. She has been a major advocate for solving the Homework Gap and we view her term extension to be distinct plus for E-rate and related school and library broadband programs.

The Senate did not move forward last week on the appointment of Gigi Sohn who has been nominated to fill the fifth — and currently vacant — FCC Commissioner slot. A Senate vote on Ms. Sohn may not occur until next year.

USAC ECF Newsletter Dated December 7 – Invoice Deadline Clarification

[USAC’s Emergency Connectivity Fund Program Newsletter of December 7, 2021](#), summarizes the recent FCC Order ([DA 21-1499](#)) standardizing the ECF invoice deadline for all 2021-2022 purchases of equipment and services as August 29, 2022 (see our [newsletter of December 6th](#)). USAC also announced a webinar on the ECF reimbursement process for Thursday, December 16th (see registration link above).

The remainder of last week’s ECF Newsletter repeats information from earlier versions.

Newsletter information and disclaimer: This newsletter may contain unofficial information on prospective E-rate developments and/or may reflect E-Rate Central's own interpretations of E-rate practices and regulations. Such information is provided for planning and guidance purposes only. It is not meant, in any way, to supplant official announcements and instructions provided by USAC, the FCC, or NCDPI.

Additional North Carolina specific E-rate information is available through our Web site — <http://www.e-ratecentral.com/us/stateInformation.asp?state=NC>. Note that this site provides easy access to formatted North Carolina applicant E-rate histories via the Billed Entity Number (“BEN”) search mechanism in the upper left-hand corner. Detailed information can be obtained by “drilling down” using the links for specific funding years and individual FRNs.

If you have received this newsletter from a colleague and you would like to receive your own copy of the North Carolina E-Rate Forum, send an email to join-ncerate@lists.dpi.state.nc.us. Please include your name, organization, telephone, and e-mail address.

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