

- FY 2022 Application Window
- Funding Status for 2021-2022
 - E-Rate
 - ECF
- Affordable Connectivity Program Update
- Updates and Reminders
 - Upcoming Dates
- No USAC ECF Newsletter or E-Rate News Brief This Week

FY 2022 Application Window

The FY 2022 Form 471 application window will open on **Wednesday, January 12, 2022**, at 12:00 noon EST and will close on Tuesday, March 22, 2022, at 11:59 p.m. EDT.

USAC's [Special Edition E-Rate News Brief of December 21st](#), announcing the FY 2022 window, provided tips for first-time filers, Category 2 budget planning, competitive bidding, and browser updates. Most importantly, the News Brief reminded applicants to update their EPC entity profiles before the close of the Administrative Window now scheduled for January 10th at 11:59 p.m. EST. Once the Administrative Window is closed, entity profiles will be locked for the duration of the application window.

Funding Status for 2021-2022

E-Rate:

Wave 37 for FY 2021 was released on Thursday, December 23rd, for a total of \$15.0 million including \$34 thousand for one North Carolina applicant. Cumulative commitments are now \$2.51 billion including \$84.6 million for North Carolina. Nationwide, USAC has now funded 98% of the FY 2021 applications representing 89% of the requested funding.

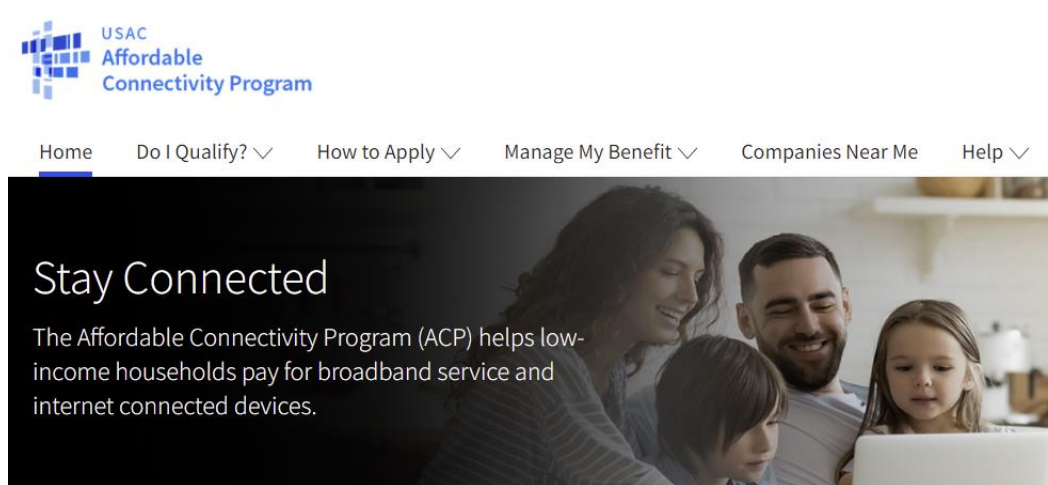
ECF:

ECF Wave 6 was released on Monday, December 20th, for a total of \$603 million including \$16.8 million for forty-four North Carolina applicants. Cumulative commitments are currently \$3.83 billion including \$127 million for North Carolina. The latest wave includes funding for both first and second window applications. Total authorized disbursements as of last Friday are \$76 million.

Affordable Connectivity Program Update

Although the final rules are not yet in place, the Affordable Connectivity Program (“ACP”) is set to commence on December 31st replacing the Emergency Broadband Benefit (“EBB”) Program that is set to end on December 30th (with a 60-day transition period for existing EBB subscribers).

Last week, USAC [announced](#) the establishment of a special Affordable Connectivity Program [Consumer Website](#).



The primary reason that we are highlighting ACP in our weekly E-rate newsletter is that the program could potentially be used to support household internet services for students, library patrons, and staff. Some schools and libraries did promote the use of EBB discounts for this purpose and may choose to do the same with ACP. Two advantages of the ACP program are that it is funded at the \$14.2 billion level, which should support ongoing internet discounts for 4-5 years, and that the program has increased eligibility by raising the income ceiling from 135% of the federal poverty guidelines to 200% of the federal poverty guidelines.

More interestingly, depending upon the final FCC rules, ACP could provide even greater benefits for schools and libraries. In their initial [comments](#) on the FCC’s NPRM ([DA 21-1453](#)), the Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (“SHLB”) Coalition and E-Rate Central proposed the following:

- The NPRM’s provision making multiple dwelling units (“MDUs”) — e.g., low-income apartment complexes and mobile home parks — eligible for bulk ACP discounts should be expanded to explicitly include homeless shelters. This would provide schools with a tool to reach students residing in these facilities. Particularly in large cities, the number of students being deprived of remote learning opportunities is significant. In New York City, for example, an [estimated](#) 28,000 students were living in homeless shelters last year.
- More broadly, by allowing discounts on bulk internet subscriptions, as are currently being funded for schools and libraries under the Emergency Connectivity Fund (“ECF”), ACP could become a transitional replacement for ECF as that funding runs out later this year or next. Providing a seamless ECF-to-ACP transition would avoid a potentially major

disruption of internet service to student families and library patrons who would otherwise have to establish their own individual ACP subscriptions.

We highlight these two proposals at this point because the reply comment deadline on the ACP NPRM is tomorrow, December 28th. We strongly encourage anyone agreeing with one or both positions, to file supporting reply comments. In the simplest form, this would take only a few sentences filed as an Express Comment (see our [Guide to Reading and Filing FCC Comments](#)) in FCC docket 21-450.

As one example of a slightly more detailed statement of support, here are two paragraphs from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's [reply comments](#):

Eligibility of homeless shelters for the ACP

We think the need for broadband internet access in homeless shelters is obvious. In this regard, we support the comments filed by several parties that the Commission should explicitly state in its regulations that homeless shelters are eligible for the ACP. It is often assumed that homeless shelters provide support for individuals who are single. But this is not always the case. At any given time—and often through no fault of their own—families find themselves homeless. The children in these families need internet access from the shelter so they don't fall even further behind in their studies. Because of the transient nature of homeless shelter populations, the comments filed by E-rate Central and the Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition propose that the Commission make the shelters themselves eligible for ACP support.⁸ We very much support this suggestion.

Transitioning from the Emergency Connectivity Program to the Affordable Connectivity Program

Many schools and libraries are currently participating in the Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) Program. Unfortunately, this program is scheduled to end June 30, 2022. However, this end date is not mandated by statute but is a regulatory decision made by the FCC. We support the recommendation in comments filed by the E-rate Central and the Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition that the Commission extend the ECF end date to June 30, 2023.⁹ We also agree with the comments by these two organizations that schools and libraries now engaged in bulk purchasing of broadband internet access for students and patrons under the ECF Program be able to also continue their bulk purchases as they transition to the Affordable Connectivity Program.

Updates and Reminders

Upcoming Dates:

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| December 28 | FCC reply comments due on the new Affordable Connectivity Program (DA 21-1453) (see article above). |
| December 30 | Form 486 deadline for FY 2021 covering funding committed in Wave 21. 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 22	01/07/2022
Wave 23	01/14/2022
Wave 24	01/21/2022
Wave 25	01/28/2022

January 7	Last day of the PIA winter deferral period.
January 10	Close of the Administrative Window; last chance to update EPC entity profiles for FY 2022. Thereafter, entity profiles will be locked until the close of the Form 471 application widow.
January 12	Opening of the FY 2022 application window.
January 17	FCC comments due on the Future of the Universal Service Fund Notice of Inquiry (FCC 21-127) (see our newsletter of December 20th). Reply comments are due January 31 st .
January 28	Invoice filing deadline for FY 2019 and FY 2020 non-recurring services.
February 25	Extended invoice filing deadline for FY 2020 recurring services.
March 22	Close of the FY 2022 application window at 11:59 p.m. EDT.

No USAC ECF Newsletter or E-Rate News Brief This Week

Other than the Special Edition E-Rate News Brief announcing the FY 2022 application window (referenced above), USAC did not release any regular Newsletter or News Brief this week.

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.

In compliance with federal law, the NC Department of Public Instruction administers all state-operated educational programs, employment activities and admissions without discrimination because of race, religion, national or ethnic origin, color, age, military service, disability, or gender, except where exemption is appropriate and allowed by law.