- Funding Status for E-Rate and ECF
    - E-Rate for FY 2022
    - ECF for 2021-2023
- IES Home Internet and Device Survey
- ESL Reply Comments and Cybersecurity
- Updates and Reminders
    - Upcoming Dates
    - FCC Rule Waivers for Hurricane Ian

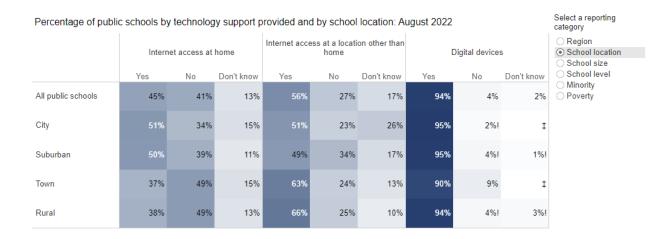## Funding Status for E-Rate and ECF

E-Rate for FY 2022:

Wave 25 for FY 2022 was issued on Thursday, October 6th, for $12.6 million, none for Carolina. Cumulative commitments to date are $2.55 billion including $64.3 million for North Carolina. . Nationwide, USAC has funded 96.0% of the FY 2022 applications representing 83.9% of the requested funding.
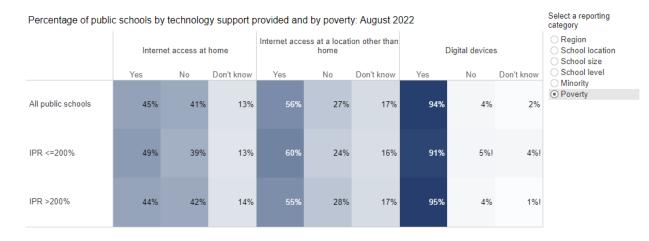
ECF for 2021-2023:

Wave 22 for Windows 1 and 2 and Wave 8 for Window 3 were released on Wednesday, October 5th, for a total of $96.5 million of which $95.8 million was for Window 3 applicants. Funding in last week's waves included $6.29 million for fourteen North Carolina applicants. Total commitments for all three ECF windows are $6.00 billion including $171 million for North Carolina. Nationwide, USAC has funded 96.4% of the applications from ECF windows one and two and 35.0% of applications from ECF window three. Total disbursements as of last Friday remain at $1.89 billion.

IES Home Internet and Device Survey

Based on survey data collected this past August by the Institute of Education Sciences ("IES"), 94% of public schools surveyed reported providing digital devices to students who need them, whereas only 45% of public schools were providing internet access to students who need access at home. The 45% home internet service coverage is down from 71% reported in a similar study conducted the previous year. As shown in the table below, the provision of devices by city and suburban schools was marginally higher than for town and rural schools, but the discrepancies on the provision of home internet services were significant — perhaps a function of internet costs and availability.

Percentage of public schools by technology support provided and by school location: August 2022

	Internet access at home			Internet access at a location other than home			Digital devices		
	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know
All public schools	45%	41%	13%	56%	27%	17%	94%	4%	2%
City	51%	34%	15%	51%	23%	26%	95%	2%!	‡
Suburban	50%	39%	11%	49%	34%	17%	95%	4%!	1%!
Town	37%	49%	15%	63%	24%	13%	90%	9%	‡
Rural	38%	49%	13%	66%	25%	10%	94%	4%!	3%!

Select a reporting category
- ○ Region
- ⊙ School location
- ○ School size
- ○ School level
- ○ Minority
- ○ Poverty

One aspect of the study we focused on was the provision of home internet service by poverty level as shown in the following table. The key determinant here is the income-to-poverty ratio ("IPR") above or below 200% of the federal poverty threshold set for a family's size and structure.

Percentage of public schools by technology support provided and by poverty: August 2022

	Internet access at home			Internet access at a location other than home			Digital devices		
	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know
All public schools	45%	41%	13%	56%	27%	17%	94%	4%	2%
IPR <=200%	49%	39%	13%	60%	24%	16%	91%	5%!	4%!
IPR >200%	44%	42%	14%	55%	28%	17%	95%	4%	1%!

Select a reporting category
- ○ Region
- ○ School location
- ○ School size
- ○ School level
- ○ Minority
- ⊙ Poverty

Recognizing that most schools are no longer relying on remote learning, it is disappointing, but perhaps not surprising, to see the 71%-to-45% drop in school-supported home internet services even with continued ECF funding available to higher discount schools. We continue to believe that home internet access is important for all students and that financial support, in one form or another, is necessary to ensure access for low-income families. If the schools are not providing that support directly, it behooves them to help educate student families below the 200% IPR level about the Affordable Connectivity Program ("ACP") that provides discounts of up to $30 per month on internet services.

To assist in this effort, the FCC and USAC have developed a broad source of multilingual outreach material to explain the ACP program, to help families determine eligibility, and to guide them through applying for discounts. Both schools and libraries may find that their current internet providers would welcome an opportunity to jointly encourage ACP enrollment.

ESL Reply Comments and Cybersecurity

Reply comments on the FCC's proposed Eligible Services List for FY 2023 (DA 22-878) were due last Thursday. By Friday, the following replies had been posted on the FCC's Electronic Comment Filing System:

> Advanced Data Services ("ADS")
> Aruba
> Consortium for School Networking ("CoSN")
> Crown Castle
> Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
> State Educational Technology Directors Association ("SETDA")

As was the case with the majority of the initial ESL comments (see our newsletter of September 26th), these reply comments stressed the need to make advanced cybersecurity equipment and services eligible for E-rate funding. Although the FCC has traditionally indicated that the annual ESL proceeding is not the forum in which to consider, much less adopt, major eligibility changes, we hope that this year's many ESL comments will encourage the FCC to initiate a cybersecurity eligibility rulemaking.

Supporting this view has been the very public ransomware attack on Los Angeles Unified School District (see our newsletter of September 19th and LAUSD's letter to the FCC Commissioners co-signed by over 1,100 local and state education agencies, as well as by national organizations including E-Rate Central). LAUSD has since indicated that the hackers have begun publicly releasing some of the data that they had collected from the LAUSD system thus highlighting the difficulty of dealing with ransomware attacks, whether hackers are paid or not.

In this regard, we note the statistics released by security software maker SpyCloud indicating that 65% of ransomware victims paid but only 32% recovered their data. In some cases, the data was sold to other cybercriminals even after the ransom was paid. Worse still, a report from Cybereason found that 80% of ransom payers were hit again, often with higher demands.

These are not new problems. To put it as nicely as we can, the FCC needs to get off the stick!

Updates and Reminders

Upcoming Dates:

October 18   Beginning of USAC's fall virtual E-rate training program (see registration information on USAC's Webinars page).

Program Overview	October 18
Pre-Commitment Process	October 20
Category 2 Budgets	October 25
EPC Administrative Window	October 27
Post-Commitment Process	November 3
Eligible Services	TBA

October 24	Nominations due for six USAC Board of Directors positions (see DA 22-877).
October 25	EPC administrative window opens to permit E-rate entity updates.
October 28	Invoice deadline for FY 2021 recurring service FRNs and/or the deadline for requesting a one-time 120-day extension to February 27, 2023.
October 31	The first Form 486 deadline for FY 2022 Waves 1-11, committed before July 1, 2022.

FCC Rule Waivers for Hurricane Ian:

Paralleling actions taken two weeks ago for applicants in Puerto Rico affected by Hurricane Fiona, the FCC released a similar waiver Order (DA 22-1063) for "Affected Disaster Areas" in Florida, North Carolina, and South Carolina impacted by Hurricane Ian. The waivers cover the following program areas:

E-Rate:

- An additional 150 days (to Monday, February 20th) to submit:
    - USAC and FCC appeals and waiver requests
    - Form 486s
    - BEARs and SPIs
- Extension of the special construction deadline from June 30, 2023, to June 30, 2024
- Elimination of the record retention requirement for records destroyed by Ian
- Increased flexibility for service and equipment substitutions

Emergency Connectivity Fund ("ECF"):

- An additional 150 days to submit USAC and FCC appeals and waiver requests
- A 150-day extension to respond to USAC administrative deadlines such as PIA requests
- Elimination of the record retention requirement for records destroyed by Ian
- Increased flexibility for service and equipment substitutions

The Order also provides relief for the Rural Health Care program, the Lifeline program, the Affordable Connectivity Program ("ACP"), the COVID-19 Telehealth program, and various rules affecting USF contributors.

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.