- FY 2023 Application Window

- Funding Status for E-Rate and ECF
    - E-Rate for FY 2022
    - ECF for 2021-2023

- K12 Cybersecurity Report from CISA

- Updates and Reminders
    - Upcoming Dates

FY 2023 Application Window

The FY 2023 Form 471 application window will close on Tuesday, March 28, 2023, at 11:59 p.m. EDT — see USAC's E-Rate Special Edition News Brief Dated January 18th.

Funding Status for E-Rate and ECF

E-Rate for FY 2022:

Wave 41 for FY 2022 was issued on Thursday, January 26th, for $2.71 million including $1.36 million for five North Carolina districts. Cumulative commitments to date are $2.82 billion including $71.1 million for North Carolina. Nationwide, USAC has funded 98.3% of the FY 2022 applications representing 94.3% of the requested funding.

ECF for 2021-2023:

Total commitments for all three ECF windows are $6.54 billion including $186 million for North Carolina. Nationwide, USAC has funded over 80% of the ECF applications representing roughly two-thirds of the requested funding. Window 3 applications are apparently now being funded down to the 65% rural band. Total disbursements as of last Friday were $2.69 billion.

K12 Cybersecurity Report from CISA

The Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency ("CISA"), working in cooperation with the Office of Management and Budget ("OMB"), is the coordinating agency for the execution of national cyber defense. As a part of this role, CISA has developed a suite of cybersecurity resources including a new report, released last week, entitled Protecting Our Future: Partnering to Safeguard K-12 Organizations from Cybersecurity Threats.

Highlighting the increasing risks faced by K-12 schools, the report includes the following chart of the growth of cyber attacks reported by schools from 2016 through 2021:
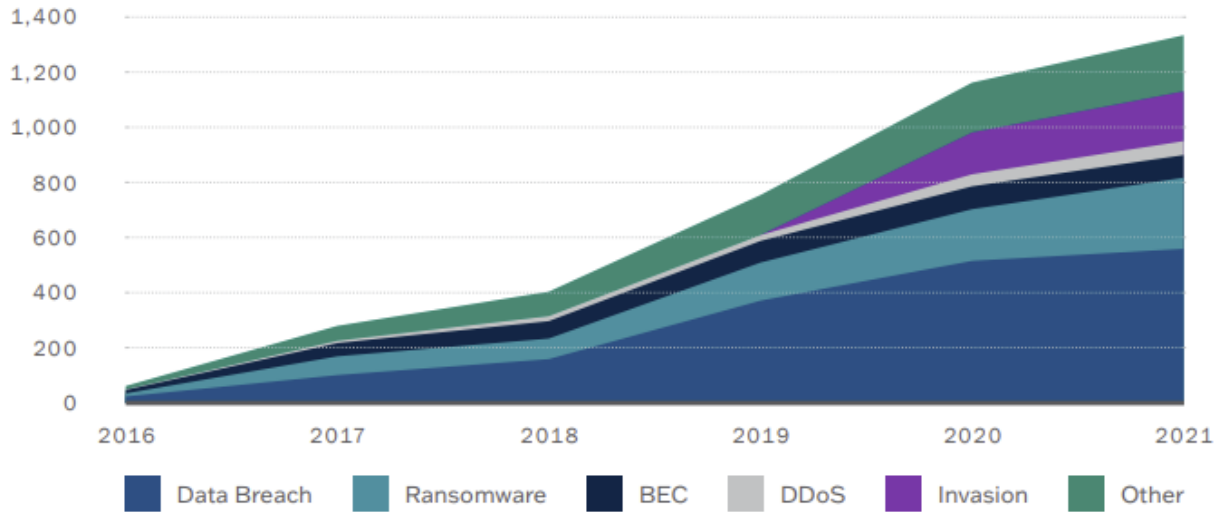

FIGURE 1: NUMBER OF PUBLICLY-DISCLOSED K-12 INCIDENTS BY INCIDENT TYPE: 2016-2021

As a starting point, CISA recommends the following six priority steps that schools should take to reduce cybersecurity risks:

1. Implement multifactor authentication ("MFA") to secure online accounts and databases.

2. Fix known security flaws by keeping systems patched with the latest software versions.

3. Minimize exposure to common attacks on vulnerable targets such as Remote Desktop Protocol ("RDP") servers.

4. Develop and exercise a cyber incident response plan.

5. Create a training and awareness campaign at all levels.

The CISA report recognizes that many schools are resource limited. To this end, CISA recommends the need for additional resources and suggests the following:

1. Work with state planning committees to leverage the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program ("SLCGP") and consider leveraging the Homeland Security Grant Program ("HSGP") that dedicates 7.5% of its funds to support critical cybersecurity infrastructure. Notably, this recommendation references the FCC's call for comments (DA 22-1315) on the use of E-rate funds to support advanced firewalls.

2. Utilize free or low-cost services to make near-term improvements (see Appendix 1 of the report).

3. Ask more of your technology providers. K–12 organizations should demand that all core educational technology products have critical security controls enabled for all administrator accounts at no additional cost.

4. Minimize security risks by eliminating or reducing on-premise systems in favor of more secure and resilient cloud-based systems.

Updates and Reminders

Upcoming Dates:

February 3   The Form 486 deadline for FY 2022 Wave 25. 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 are:

Wave 26	02/10/2023
Wave 27	02/17/2023
Wave 28	02/24/2023

February 13   Comments due on requests to allow the use of E-rate funds for advanced or next generation firewalls and/or other network security services (DA 22-1315). Reply comments are due March 30th.

February 16   FCC Open Meeting to include the consideration of an NPRM that would "…seek comments on improvements to the E-Rate program that would increase access for Tribal applicants generally as well as within the Tribal Libraries E-Rate Pilot Program" (see Public Draft).

February 28   Last possible date — **please do not wait until then** — to file a Form 470 for FY 2023 in order to: (a) meet the 28-day posting period; (b) close the bidding process and select the winning bidder(s); (c) sign any necessary contract(s); and (d) file the Form 471 application(s), all on the last day of the application window.

March 28   Close of the FY 2023 Form 471 application window at 11:59 p.m. EDT.