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## Funding Status

### *E-Rate for FY 2024:*

Wave 13 for FY 2024 was released on Thursday, July 18<sup>th</sup>, for \$53.8 million including \$413 thousand for twelve North Carolina applicants. Total funding is now \$1.73 billion including 55.0 million for North Carolina. At this point, USAC has funded 84.7% of the originally submitted applications, representing 56.9% of the dollars requested.

## FCC Approves Wi-Fi Hotspot Order

As expected, albeit by a contentious 3:2 vote in its Open Meeting last Thursday, the FCC approved a Report and Order (and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking) making the loan of Wi-Fi hotspots for at-home usage to school students and library patrons eligible for E-rate funding as of FY 2025. The Order, which is only currently available in [draft](#) form, needs to be finalized and published in the *Federal Register* (for 30 days) before becoming final.

Following the Commission's vote, the FCC's news release noted that the Order would:

- “Allow schools and libraries to use E-Rate funding to loan out Wi-Fi hotspots and support high-speed internet access for students, school staff, and library patrons in both rural and urban parts of the country.
- “Adopt a budget mechanism that sets a limit on the amount of support that an applicant can request for Wi-Fi hotspots and services over a three-year period. In the event that demand for E-Rate support exceeds available funding in a given funding year, eligible on-premises category one and category two equipment and service requests will be prioritized and funded before eligible off-premises equipment and service requests.
- “Adopt numerous safeguards to protect the integrity of the E-Rate program, including measures to ensure the supported Wi-Fi hotspots and services are in use, are used for educational purposes, are not funded through other sources, and are properly documented for auditing purposes.
- “Require compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act.”

As discussed in our [newsletter of July 1](#), the three-year, pre-discount, hotspot budgets mentioned in the second bullet point above would be governed by the formulas below:

$$\text{Independent School or District Budget} = [\text{student count} \times \frac{20 \text{ hotspots}}{100 \text{ students}} \times \text{C1 discount rate}] \times \$630$$

$$\text{Library or Library System Budget} = [\text{square feet} \times \frac{5.5 \text{ hotspots}}{1000 \text{ square feet}} \times \text{C1 discount rate}] \times \$630$$

Applicants interested in applying for hotspots for FY 2025 should note the following two points:

- Like any E-rate service, contracts for hotspot equipment and services must be competitively bid via the Form 470 process. As discussed in our last few newsletters (most recently [July 15](#)), the availability of the Form 470 for FY 2025 has been delayed pending the approval of the hotspot Order. We expect the revised Form 470 to be available by the end of August.
- As indicated above, the FCC’s hotspot decision was controversial, split along party lines — three Democratic Commissioners approving and two Republican Commissioners dissenting. The basis for dissent, echoed by several senior Republicans in Congress, is that the FCC does not have the authority to use E-rate funds for off-campus services. If the presidential election results in a Republican win in October, the complexion of the FCC Commission will change, possibly later in 2025, to a 3:2 advantage in favor of the Republicans. If and when that occurs, hotspot eligibility may be reexamined.

## Updates and Reminders

### Upcoming Dates:

July 26	Form 486 deadline for FY 2023 Wave 49. More generally, the Form 486 deadline is 120 days from the FCDL date, or the service start date (typically July 1 <sup>st</sup> ), whichever is later. Upcoming Form 486 deadlines are:
	Wave 50                      08/02/2024
	Wave 51                      08/09/2024
	Wave 52                      08/16/2024
	Wave 53                      08/23/2024
	The first Form 486 deadline for FY 2024, for applicants funded on or before July 1 <sup>st</sup> , will be October 29 <sup>th</sup> .
August 1	USAC webinar on FCC Form 470/Competitive Bidding ( <a href="#">registration</a> ).
Late August	Current estimate of Form 470 availability for Funding Year 2025 (see our <a href="#">newsletter of July 15</a> ).
August 29	Invoice deadline for ECF Window 3 applications. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The government funding bill passed in March 2024, rescinds \$1.768 billion from the ECF program. As a result, the FCC and USAC are now prevented from: processing post-commitment requests to change service providers or invoicing methods; approving a commitment if an appeal or waiver is granted; or making upward commitment adjustments to resolve errors (see [USAC’s ECF Newsletter for June](#)).

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*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](mailto:join-ncerate@lists.dpi.state.nc.us). Please include your name, organization, telephone, and e-mail address.*

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