



- Funding Status
  - E-Rate for FY 2026 – Application Window
  - E-Rate for FY 2025
  - Cybersecurity Pilot Program
- Updates and Reminders
  - Upcoming Dates
  - FCC Streamlined Decisions
- USAC Cybersecurity Pilot Program Newsletter Dated January 5<sup>th</sup>
- USAC E-Rate Special Edition News Brief Dated January 8<sup>th</sup>

## Funding Status

### *E-Rate for FY 2026 – Application Window:*

**Application Window:** The Form 471 application window for FY 2026 will open midday on Wednesday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, and close on Wednesday, April 1<sup>st</sup>, at 11:59 p.m. EDT. The administrative window, giving applicants an opportunity to update their EPC entity profiles, will close on Friday, January 16<sup>th</sup>, at 11:59 p.m. EDT.

**For additional guidance**, see USAC’s [E-Rate News Brief dated December 18th](#).

### *E-Rate for FY 2025:*

USAC issued Wave 36 for FY 2025 on Thursday, January 8<sup>th</sup>, for \$10 million, none for North Carolina. Total funding for FY 2025 as of Wave 36 stands at \$2.51 billion, including \$53.2 million for North Carolina. Currently, USAC has funded 94.7% of submitted applications, representing 84.8% of the dollars requested.

### *Cybersecurity Pilot Program:*

USAC did not issue a Cyber Pilot funding wave last week. After one Cyber wave, issued December 17<sup>th</sup>, funding for the Cybersecurity Pilot Program stands at \$18.7 million.

## Updates and Reminders

### *Upcoming Dates:*

January 16      FY 2025 Form 486 deadline for applicants funded in Wave 22. More generally, the Form 486 deadline is 120 days after the FCDL date, or the Service Start Date (typically July 1<sup>st</sup>), whichever is later. The next Form 486 deadlines for FY 2025 are:

Wave 23	01/23/2026
Wave 24	01/28/2026
Wave 25	02/06/2026

- January 16 In preparation for the opening of the FY 2026 application window, the EPC Administrative Window is closing at 11:59 p.m. EDT. At that point, EPC applicant profiles will be locked until after the application window closes.
- January 21 The FY 2026 Form 471 application window opens at noon EST. The window will close at 11:59 p.m. EDT (no fooling) on April 1, 2026.  
To meet the minimum 28-day posting requirement and still be able to file a Form 471 by April 1<sup>st</sup>, a Form 470 for FY 2026 must be filed no later than March 4, 2026. Waiting until the last day to file a Form 470 is strongly discouraged.
- January 22 USAC webinar on the E-Rate pre-commitment process ([register](#)).
- January 27 USAC webinar on Cyber Pilot invoicing ([register](#)).
- January 28 Invoice deadline, and deadline to request an invoice deadline extension, for FY 2024 non-recurring services.
- February 19 USAC Q&A session on the E-Rate pre-commitment process ([register](#)).
- February 28 Extended invoice deadline for FY 2024 recurring services for applicants with approved extension requests.

*FCC Streamlined Decisions:*

The FCC issued another set of “streamlined,” precedent-based appeals and waivers on January 2<sup>nd</sup>. As with past streamlined decisions, applicants facing similar problems to those addressed in these decisions may garner useful information by carefully reading the additional FCC explanations found in the footnotes. The original appeal and/or waiver requests can be found online in the FCC’s [Electronic Comment Filing System](#) under Docket 02-6 (E-Rate), Docket 23-234 (Cyber) or Docket 21-93 (ECF).

One unusual aspect of the December decisions was the denial of twelve waiver requests for late-filed Cybersecurity Pilot Form 471s, including one reportedly filed only 21 minutes after the deadline. This is a clear indication that the FCC is not applying the same “...14-day grace period that the Commission has established for applications for E-Rate funding” (to quote from one denied waiver request). In footnotes to its denial decisions, the FCC explained its stricter late-filing waiver policy in the Cyber Pilot Program, stating:

Cybersecurity Pilot participants were provided from March 18, 2025, to September 15, 2025 (i.e., 181 days or six months) to file a Cybersecurity Pilot FCC Form 471, this window is substantially longer than the E-Rate application filing window period. The Petitioners have not provided justification as to why they were not able to file the form within this six-month period, nor have they demonstrated that special circumstances were met to justify extending this deadline.

In other streamlined decisions ([DA 26-1](#)) for December, the FCC:

1. E-Rate Dismissed:
  - a. One Request for Review dismissed as moot where USAC had already taken the requested action.
  - b. Three requests rejected for failure to comply with the FCC's basic filing requirements.
  - c. One Request for Review dismissed to allow an appeal to be filed with USAC.
  - d. Eight Petitions for Reconsideration failing to identify any reasons warranting reconsideration.
2. E-Rate Granted:
  - a. One Request for Waiver where price was not the primary factor in the bid award, but the applicant had selected the lowest cost supplier.
  - b. One Request for Review adjusting a library's discount rate in line with the local school district's discount rate.
  - c. One Request for Waiver granting an applicant more time to respond to USAC's request for invoicing information.
  - d. One Request for Waiver granting the submission of USAC requested information only a few days late.
  - e. Two Requests for Waiver for Form 471 requests filed under the wrong category of service.
  - f. One Request for Waiver for a ministerial and clerical ("M&C") error citing the wrong FRN.
  - g. One Request for Waiver granting a late-filed extension of a service implementation.
  - h. One Request for Review to permit the timely submission of a Form 500.
  - i. Four Requests for Waiver on service implementation extensions for USAC decisions issued after the invoice filing deadline.
  - j. One Request for Waiver of the special construction service delivery deadline.
3. E-Rate Denied:
  - a. One Request for Review for a funding request on which no Form 470 had been filed.
  - b. One Request for Review for a violation of the 28-day bid selection rule.
  - c. Six Requests for Waiver for late-filed Form 471 applications.
  - d. One Request for Review for a late-filed Form 486.
  - e. Five Requests for Waiver for late-filed invoice deadline extensions.
  - f. Seven Requests for Waiver for late-filed appeals or waivers.
4. Cyber Pilot Dismissed:
  - a. One Request for Waiver dismissed as moot where USAC had already taken the requested action.
5. Cyber Pilot Denied:
  - a. Twelve Requests for Waiver for late-filed CBR Form 471s, appeals or waivers (see discussion above).
6. ECF Granted:
  - a. One Request for Review and/or Waiver for the early delivery of equipment.

- b. One Petition for Reconsideration granting a waiver of the ECF invoice filing deadline.
7. ECF Denied:
- a. One Request for Review of an entity deemed ineligible by the state.
  - b. Three Requests for Waiver for late-filed invoice deadline extensions.

### **USAC Cybersecurity Pilot Program Newsletter Dated January 5<sup>th</sup>**

[USAC's Schools and Libraries Cybersecurity Pilot Program Newsletter dated January 5, 2026](#), announces the availability of the [Cybersecurity Pilot FCC Form 471 Download Tool](#) in Open Data. Our initial review of the Tool shows that USAC will need to include a few additional date columns to fully alert applicants to all forthcoming deadlines regarding invoicing and annual reports.

To assist on invoicing, USAC has released the following two guides:

- [Pilot FCC Form 472 User Guide](#) for BEARs; and
- [Pilot FCC Form 474 User Guide](#) for SPIs.

A webinar on Cyber Pilot invoicing will be held on Tuesday, January 27<sup>th</sup>, at 3 p.m. EDT ([register](#)).

### **USAC E-Rate Special Edition News Brief Dated January 8<sup>th</sup>**

[USAC's E-Rate Special Edition News Brief dated January 8, 2026](#), announces the opening of the FY 2026 Form 471 application filing window on January 21<sup>st</sup>. The window will close at 11:59 p.m. EDT on April 1<sup>st</sup>. The News Brief notes that:

- First time filers must have established a user account in the E-Rate Productivity Center (“EPC”).
- Entity profiles should be updated during the Administrative Window that closes this coming Friday, January 16<sup>th</sup>, at 11:59 p.m. EDT.
- FY 2026 is the first year of the new five-year Category Two budgets.
- Competitive bidding, via the filing of a Form 470, should be completed as soon as possible.

---

*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.*

*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.*