E-Rate News Brief

May 22, 2025

Contents

E-Rate Tips

- **June 30, 2025 is the last day to receive recurring services for FY2024**. If the same service provider will continue to provide your recurring service after June 30, 2025, you must use the Funding Request Number (FRN) approved for FY2025 when you are invoicing for recurring services that start on or after July 1, 2025.

- **Recent FCC E-Rate Program Suspensions**. On April 16, 2025, the [FCC suspended](#) seven individuals convicted of fraud related to their participation in the E-Rate program. From 2010 to 2016, corporations controlled by several of these individuals, Peretz Klien, Susan Klein, Ben Klein, and Sholem Steinburg, requested over $35 million in E-Rate funds and received over $14 million in E-Rate funds, but they did not provide much of the equipment for which they billed the E-Rate program. Two E-Rate consultants, Simon Goldbrener and Moshe Swartz, along with a school official, Aron Melber, were also suspended for their roles in the fraudulent conduct. The FCC's Enforcement Bureau suspended each individual from further participation in all federal universal service programs, including the E-Rate program, and began proceedings to debar them from future participation in these programs. Please visit our [Suspension and Debarment](#) webpage for more information.

- **Visit our updated webpages** including the [Schools and Libraries E-Rate Overview](#), the [E-Rate Glossary](#), and user guides for [FCC Form 486](#) and [SPIN Changes](#).

Funding Year (FY) 2025 Commitments

FY2025. USAC released FY2025 Wave 4 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) on May 15. As of May 21, FY2025 commitments total over $1.04 billion.

On the date that FCDLs are issued, you can access your FCDL notification from the **Notifications** section of your landing page in EPC.

You can also use the [E-Rate Search Commitments Tool](#) to look up prior-year commitment data.

WCB Clarifies Service Provider E-Rate Certification Obligations

The FCC Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB) released an order ([DA 25-394](#)) on May 7 addressing 19 appeals regarding E-Rate reimbursements in situations where the service provider went out of business or otherwise did not file its required **FCC Form 473 (Service Provider Annual Certification (SPAC))**. Twelve appeals were granted and seven appeals were denied. WCB granted appeals where the service provider did not submit the FCC Form 473 because it was **out of business, in bankruptcy proceedings, or was otherwise unable to submit** the certification.

WCB directed USAC to create a process whereby USAC will generate a unique Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN) that can be used to create the FCC Form 473 for the specific funding year required to process the applicants' requests for reimbursement that would be available only in instances where the service provider is defunct or otherwise incapable of filing the FCC Form 473. **This process may not be used where the service provider is operational but will not certify the annual FCC Form 473 as required by E-Rate program rules**.

WCB also directed USAC to conduct service checks to confirm the approved, eligible equipment and services were delivered to the applicant and to conduct payment verifications to confirm that the applicant paid their service provider for the full cost of the eligible services and equipment prior to using the USAC-generated FCC Form 473 to process the requested BEAR payment.

In cases where the service provider was operational but was unwilling, refused to, or failed to submit the required FCC Form 473, **WCB directed USAC to refer these service providers to the Commission's Enforcement Bureau for violating section 54.504(f) of the Commission's rules** on a going forward-basis.

If you are a service provider that participates in E-Rate, you are required to annually certify your compliance with program rules by **filing your SPAC** form **for every funding year**. Ideally, SPAC forms will be filed in July of the applicable funding year so that invoices, whether submitted by the service provider or by the applicant using the BEAR method to invoice, can be timely processed.

Applicants can check the status of their existing service provider's current SPAC/FCC Form 473 by searching for their funding request numbers (FRNs) for any year in the [E-Rate FRN Status Tool FY2016+](#) and looking in the "**SPAC Filed?**" column. In EPC, service providers can click on their SPIN and check the **FCC Form 473/SPAC Filed** field to see what funding years they have already submitted SPACs for.

Applicants can also check potential and existing service providers' SPAC/FCC Form 473 filing history using the E-Rate Service Provider Download Tool and checking the **FCC Form 473 SPAC Filed** column. Applicants can make filing an annual SPAC a requirement on the FCC Form 470 or in a RFP document, if they choose to use this requirement as a bid evaluation criterion during their E-Rate vendor selection process.

Service providers can learn how to submit the FCC Form 473 in **Module 2: File an FCC Form 473** in the SP Course 1: Submitting and Certifying Invoices in EPC learning module.

Responding to Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) Review Questions in EPC

In the April 2025 E-Rate News Brief, we provided an overview of the PIA review process. In this issue, we are including details about receiving and responding to PIA questions in the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC).

Receiving PIA Questions

EPC generates an email to let you know that questions are available through the EPC **News** tab. The notification in the EPC **News** tab reads: **From the FCC Form 471 Review Team**. The notification includes identifying information from your form, along with your PIA reviewer's name, telephone number, and a hyperlink to your question(s) (the blue bar at the bottom of the notification).

> **TIP:** Enter "471 Review Team" in the **News** search box and click **Enter** to find these notification(s) more easily.

You can also locate your questions in the **My Tasks** section of your EPC landing page. The hyperlinked name for each task is "Respond to Notifications for FCC Form 471 [form number]."

The **News** item hyperlink takes you to the complete list of PIA questions, but the **My Tasks** hyperlinks take you to the individual questions. For example, if you receive five PIA questions, you will see a list of all five questions if you use the **News** search option, and five separate tasks if you use the **My Tasks** option.

If you submitted more than one FCC Form 471 that requires PIA review, you will receive a separate set of questions for each form. However, if the same question applies to all your forms, your reviewer can link that question so that you only must answer it once. Provide the response to the inquiry for the first application. For subsequent inquiries on other forms, direct the reviewer to the first application that contains the response.

Accessing Questions

Click the hyperlink on the **News** tab in EPC to access the **Summary** page of the FCC Form 471, then click the **Review Inquiries** hyperlink to access your PIA questions.

The **Review Inquiries** page is the applicant's dashboard (repository) for all PIA questions for each application. Click on the hyperlink from the **Tasks** tab to access the dashboard directly. You can also select the **Records** tab, then **FCC Form 471**, then search for your FCC Form 471 number using the search function. When you locate your form, click the **FCC Form 471 Number** hyperlink and then **Review Inquiries** from the top navigation.

You can perform the following actions from the **Review Inquiries** page by clicking the appropriate button at the top of the page:

1. **Click on the "Respond to Inquiries" button to view and respond to your PIA questions**.

When you click this button, you will see the **Pending Inquiries** and **Submitted Inquiries** dashboards. These dashboards list the status of the PIA outreach, which includes the type of outreach, the date the reviewer sent the notification, the response due date, and the reviewer's name and telephone number. You will know if someone in your organization has viewed the inquiry because a blue eye icon will appear in the "Read" column.

- o "Pending" inquiries are questions submitted by the PIA reviewer to the contact person.

- o "Submitted" inquiries are responses that were submitted to the PIA reviewer.

When you select a pending inquiry, a template is displayed listing the PIA question(s) associated with that inquiry. You can enter your answers in the template, upload supporting documentation (a single document or multiple documents), and/or provide additional narrative information. The system allows you to begin working on your answers and then save your work for later by clicking the **Save & Close** button. To return to your work, choose **Review Inquiries** while in the FCC Form 471 record.

- o Only one user can work on a specific inquiry at one time, although different users can work on different inquiries simultaneously.

- o One user can allow another user to review and/or edit their work by saving the draft response as described above and then exiting the inquiry.

You must provide complete answers and respond to all the questions. Contact your PIA reviewer if you are unsure of what to do or if you need additional clarification.

- o If you do not respond to your PIA reviewer's questions within seven days, or if your response is incomplete, you will receive a reminder notification, and your state E-Rate coordinator will also receive a notification.

- o If you have not responded after 15 days and have not requested an extension (see below), we may process your application with the information on hand, which may lead to a reduction or denial of funding.

After you have finished your response, click the **Submit** button to send it to the PIA reviewer. Your submitted response will then appear in the **Submitted Inquiries** dashboard. Click the **Submitted Inquiries** header to expand this dashboard.

2. Requesting an extension of time to respond.

You can request additional time to respond to your PIA review questions. We automatically grant a seven-day extension for your first request, and EPC will adjust your original 15-day response due date and display the result.

Subsequent extension requests are not automatic but must be reviewed by a PIA manager. If you require a second extension to respond to your PIA review questions, please reach out to your reviewer to explain the reason for the second extension. If we grant your request, EPC will show the extended date on the **Review Inquiries** dashboard. If we deny your request, our denial message will appear in the comments section at the bottom of the original PIA **News** notification.

3. Submitting a request to modify FCC Form 471 information.

To provide additional information or correct existing information on your FCC Form 471 in advance or during the process of responding to PIA questions, you can submit modifications to your FCC Form 471 by clicking the **Submit Modifications Request** button on the **Review Inquiries** page.

Tips for responding to inquiries.

Below are some tips for ensuring you provide complete responses.

- Enter a response in all fields; enter "N/A" when not applicable.

- Do not open the same task (inquiry) in multiple tabs or windows.

- When receiving outreach from a reviewer, please review the entirety of the ask and content of the outreach. There may be various response options. In many cases, the applicant may be able to directly provide the needed response and material without additional research or engaging state officials to obtain information.

- When providing a response, be prepared to cite the source of the information.

- **USAC does not request personally identifiable information** (PII). You **should not submit PII** with a response. If PII is part of a response document, **it must be redacted** prior to submission to USAC.

If you have unique situations, reach out to your reviewer to discuss these scenarios. These requests can be escalated for additional clarification or guidance, if needed.

Summer Contact Period ("Summer Deferral") Starts May 23, 2025

USAC processes program forms and requests as promptly as possible to issue timely decisions. If information is missing or incomplete, we may request additional information and/or documentation about your form or request. During this time of year, our most common reason for initiating contacts is to obtain more information about your FCC Form 471 to complete PIA reviews.

Starting May 23, 2025, if our first attempt to contact you is **on or after** May 23, and we do not receive a response to our questions, we will put your application(s) on a deferred status and will continue the review of your application(s) sometime after September 5, 2025. This period is known as the "summer deferral period." During this period, which runs from the Friday before Memorial Day (i.e., May 23, 2025) through the Friday following Labor Day (i.e., September 5, 2025), please note the following:

o You can always contact us or respond to our pending questions to restart the review of your application(s) if you become available before September 5, and we encourage you to do so to expedite the review of your application(s).

o If the PIA reviewer has already contacted you and you wish to designate someone to answer questions in your absence, be sure to send your designee's contact information to your PIA reviewer. If the PIA reviewer has not contacted you and your designee will be checking your messages, be sure that you have provided written authorization for your designee to answer questions about your application(s).

o If the PIA reviewer makes contact with someone representing your organization but that person is not in a position to answer PIA questions, they should clearly state to the PIA

reviewer that the review of your application(s) should remain on hold until you are available.

PIA questions are posted in EPC, and you will also receive an email from EPC notifying you to respond to the questions. Full- and partial-rights users on the organization's account can see and respond to the PIA questions.

If our first attempt to contact you is **before May 23**, the automatic summer deferral period does not apply, and you will be required to timely respond to PIA requests. Please respond promptly to any PIA requests for information or documentation. During the summer deferral period, USAC will only continue reviews of forms and requests where documentation has already been received, or participants have responded to information requests sent in EPC. If participants do not respond during these periods, the form or requests will be placed in a deferred status until the deferral period ends, at which time we will continue our regular review process.

Filing the FY2025 FCC Form 486

After applicants have received a Funding Commitment Decision Letter (FCDL) with a positive funding commitment and services have started for the funding year, they must file an FCC Form 486 (Receipt of Service Confirmation and Children's Internet Protection Act Certification Form). The FCC Form 486 notifies USAC that services have started and certifies the status of the applicant's compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA).

Applicants can file an FCC Form 486 for FY2025 as soon as they receive a funding commitment from USAC. Be sure to verify your status under CIPA and, if you are a member of a consortium, that you have completed your FCC Form 479 (Certification by Administrative Authority to Billed Entity of Compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act Form) and provided it to your consortium leader.

Applicants can file an FCC Form 486 early – that is, before services have started, under certain conditions. For the applicant to file early, all the following must be true:

- o **Receipt of positive funding decisions**. You must have received an FCDL with at least one positive funding commitment. In EPC, you will not be able to file an FCC Form 486 for an FCC Form 471 Funding Request Number (FRN) unless USAC has issued a commitment for that FRN.

- o **Service start dates and contracts**. You must confirm with your service provider(s) that the service(s) for your approved funding commitments will start in July of the funding year. You must also confirm that those services will be provided to the eligible entities identified on the FRNs. Except for services to be delivered under non-contracted, tariffed, or month-to-month arrangements, applicants must have a contract or other legally binding agreement with the service provider(s).

- o **Certifications**. You must certify that there are signed contracts covering all the services listed on the FCC Form 486, except for those services provided under tariff or on a month-to-month basis. You must also certify that you are authorized to submit the FCC Form 486 on behalf of the billed entity; that you have examined the form; and that to the best of your knowledge, information, and belief, all statements of fact provided on the form are true.

You can review the text of all the certifications on the FCC Form 486 after you have completed your entries for the required information on the form. Please review the certifications carefully to make sure that you can accurately make them as of the start of the receipt of discounted

services. **Do not forget** to check the **Early Filing** box if you are filing on or before July 31 and services have not yet started.

CIPA Reminders

In general, school and library authorities must certify that: (1) they have complied with the requirements of CIPA; (2) they are undertaking actions, including any necessary procurement procedures, to comply with the requirements of CIPA; or (3) CIPA does not apply because the services do not require compliance with CIPA.

The administrative authority – the relevant authority with responsibility for the administration of the school or library – must report the status of compliance with CIPA.

- o If you are the administrative authority for the school or library and you are the billed entity, you certify your status of CIPA compliance on your FCC Form 486.

- o If you are the administrative authority but not the billed entity (e.g., a member of a consortium and the consortium files for discounted services on your behalf), certify your CIPA compliance status on the FCC Form 479 and provide a copy of that form to your consortium leader. Your consortium leader must have copies of FCC Forms 479 on file from all its members before it can accurately make the appropriate CIPA certifications on the FCC Form 486 on behalf of its members.

The CIPA page explains the requirements and actions you must undertake to demonstrate compliance with the CIPA requirements, including having an Internet safety policy, using a technology protection measure, and holding a public hearing/meeting to present the Internet safety policy. It also has information on the timing of CIPA compliance and the documentation required to demonstrate CIPA compliance.

(!) **Reminder: Take Steps to Protect Your E-Rate Data**

Be aware of recent schemes to get access to your data!

Scammers employ various tactics, including phishing (see below), to try and obtain your user information. They might impersonate legitimate businesses or individuals through emails, text messages, or phone calls, and request sensitive data like your usernames, account numbers, and passwords. USAC has become aware of recent schemes conducted by individuals to obtain access to users' EPC accounts and/or obtain applicant information including:

1. Scammers have attempted to **pose as personnel affiliated with USAC or as affiliates of the applicant's existing consultant (a common scam known as "phishing")**. Many applicants use consultants to prepare E-Rate program forms and applicants are responsible for granting appropriate permissions in EPC to consultants to act on their behalf. Make sure you know who your consulting firm contacts are and that they have only the appropriate level of permission in EPC. Types of EPC rights include:

   - **View Only Rights** – Can view certain information about forms, invoices, or post-commitment transactions.

   - **Partial Rights** – Can view and prepare forms, invoices, and post-commitment requests but cannot certify any forms nor reply to USAC outreach. All certifications must be sent to a Full Rights user.

- **Full Rights** – Can view, prepare, submit, and certify the forms and any post-commitment requests. A Full Rights user can provide responses to outreach from USAC reviewers and can sign/certify documents sent for review or response.

2. Scammers have also represented themselves as a "USAC specialist" to attempt to gain access to an applicant's EPC account.

Be sure to take appropriate precautions and maintain proper skepticism before providing individuals with your proprietary information or granting access to your EPC account.

Be Aware of Phishing Scams

Users of USAC systems (EPC) should be aware of emails or other attempts by malicious actors to have them click links, open attachments, or provide sensitive information. USAC will only contact E-Rate participants via EPC or from email addresses from the domain ending in "@portal.usac.org". Phishing attacks have grown more sophisticated and phishing emails may look like official communications from USAC (see picture), including using the USAC logo or email addresses that are similar to those that come from @portal.usac.org or usac.org.

Here are some best practices to detect possible phishing scams:

- Do not click on links or open attachments from unknown or unexpected emails.

- Verify the sender's email address and look for subtle inconsistencies (misspellings, strange domains, etc.). For example, links such as usac,org (comma instead of period), usac.com, or an email from usac@site.org should make you suspicious.

- Be cautious of urgent or alarming language, especially messages urging immediate action or requesting login credentials.

- Hover over links to preview the destination URL before clicking — if it looks suspicious, do not proceed.
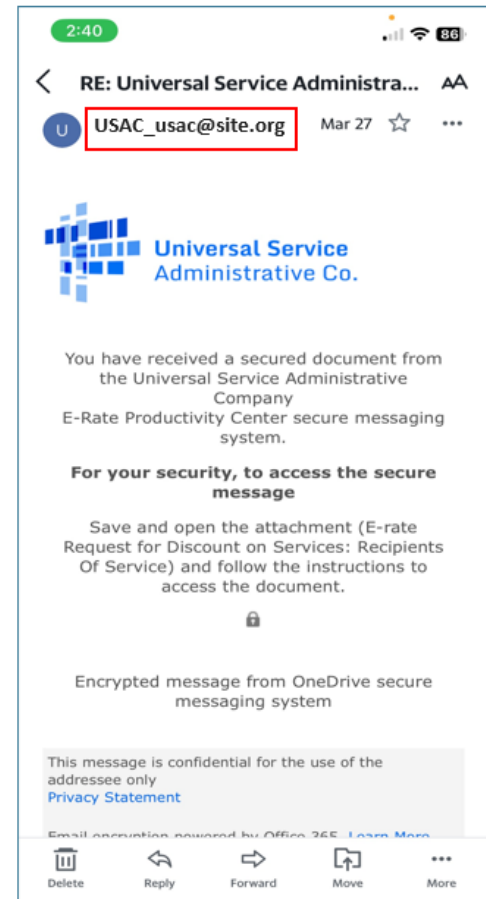
If you have opened a phishing email or attachment or clicked on a link, you can take the following steps to mitigate future issues, even if nothing appears to have happened.

1. Change all your passwords, starting with your work account and any others that may use the same or similar credentials.

2. Enable Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) wherever possible to strengthen account protection.

3. Run a full antivirus and malware scan on your device to ensure it has not been compromised.

4. Report the incident to your IT Security Team so they can assess the impact and take appropriate action.

If communications from USAC or EPC look suspicious, you can report the incident to USAC via a customer service case in EPC with the details of the sender, what makes you suspicious, and screenshots. You can also communicate with your USAC reviewer through EPC to confirm that USAC sent the communication or contact the Customer Service Center at (888) 203-8100 for additional help.

2025 Training and Outreach

USAC is coming to an event near you in 2025. Below are events that we will attend in the next few months where we can answer your E-Rate questions and upcoming E-Rate Webinars.

Conferences

- Visit USAC at the **American Libraries Association (ALA) Conference** (Pennsylvania), **June 26–30, 2025**. Event link.

- Visit USAC at **International Society for Technology in Education's ISTELive Conference** (Texas), **June 29–July 2, 2025**. Event link.

Upcoming Webinars

E-Rate Invoicing Applicant and Service Provider Training
June 12, 2025
2 p.m. to 3 p.m. E.T.

Register

- This webinar is designed to help E-Rate applicants and service providers of varying levels better understand the invoicing process, including the differences between the BEAR and SPI invoicing methods (FCC Form 472 and FCC Form 474). The webinar will also cover invoice deadlines, filing an invoice, reviews, and more. Applicants and service providers should review their respective eLearning Module courses prior to attending.

Service Provider Webinar
June 24, 2025
2 p.m. to 3 p.m. E.T.

Register

- This webinar is for Service Providers who are new to the E-Rate program. After attending this webinar, you will be able to: accurately describe what E-Rate is and the different steps of the E-Rate process, obtain a service provider identification number (SPIN), bid on projects, assist the applicant/beneficiary, certify compliance, and invoice USAC. Before attending this webinar, please review the E-Rate Program Overview webinar for a deeper understanding of the program.

Webinar Recordings

Beginning E-Rate Services Webinar (May 15, 2025). This [webinar](#) provided E-Rate participants with a high-level overview of the next steps in the E-Rate process after equipment and services are funded. It is recommended for E-Rate participants at all levels. View [webinar slides](#).

In-Person Training – Save the Dates in September 2025

E-Rate experts will provide training, discuss program updates, and answer questions from new and experienced participants. We will announce when registration opens in the next News Brief.

- **E-Rate Training**: September 9, 2025, Denver, Colorado.

- **E-Rate Training**: September 16, 2025, Washington, D.C.