



FUNDS FOR LEARNING

2026 E-rate Trends Report

What E-rate applicants said in 2026, and what they asked for.
Findings from the 2026 National Survey of E-rate Applicants and
funding year 2026 requests as filed.

Funds For Learning, LLC · Edmond, Oklahoma · fundsforlearning.com

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1. About E-rate and the annual Trends Report

About the E-rate discount program

The Schools and Libraries Universal Service Support Mechanism, commonly called the E-rate program, gives eligible schools, libraries, and consortia discounts on the goods and services that connect K-12 students and library patrons to the Internet. The Federal Communications Commission sets the rules; the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) administers the program.

Category One pays for the connections that bring the Internet to a school or library. Category Two pays for the equipment and services, such as Wi-Fi and network switching, that carry it inside the building. Discount rates rise with the poverty level of the community served and are higher for rural applicants. Each year, applicants post their needs for competitive bidding, choose a vendor, and request a discount on FCC Form 471. USAC reviews each request, commits the funds, and disburses the discount.

About the annual Trends Report

The report draws on two sources. The 2026 National Survey of E-rate Applicants, Funds For Learning's sixteenth annual survey of the people who handle E-rate for schools, libraries, and consortia, was open from May 5 to July 29, 2026. FY2026 funding request data as filed with USAC are drawn from Funds For Learning's E-rate Manager® platform as of April 15, 2026. In funding year 2026, 21,237 applicants filed funding requests with 3,616 service providers.

The survey received 2,460 responses, more than in any year since comparable counts began in 2015. The 2,435 responses used in this report (chapter 11 explains the 25 set aside) correspond to 11.5% of the 21,237 applicants that filed FY2026 funding requests.

The yearly tables behind the charts are in chapter 10.

The report presents what applicants said and what the request data show. Funds For Learning's views on the Commission's 2026 proposals are in its comments in those proceedings.

This report is not an encyclopedic review of the program, and while we strive to be fair and impartial, it is not a scientific analysis conducted by an independent third party. We hope it catalyzes discussion, generates new ideas, and leads to further improvements in this vital program.

Funds For Learning sells no E-rate eligible services, holds no SPIN, and accepts no payments from service providers tied to their sales to applicants.

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2. A note from John

Thank you to the 2,435 people who answered this year's survey. That is the most responses we have received in the twelve years we can compare, and it came from people who had plenty else to do this spring.

The FCC has asked whether the E-rate program has finished its work. That is a fair question to ask of any program, and it deserves a real answer. Our part of the answer is this report. We asked the people who file the forms and run the networks, and we put what they told us next to the Commission's questions, in the Commission's order.

Here is some of what they said. 95.9% say E-rate funding is vital to their connectivity goals. 90.8% say they can depend on it every year, which is the highest that number has been since we started asking in 2016. 78.6% say competitive bidding lowers their prices. 60.5% say the application process is fast, simple, and efficient. That last number was 34.7% ten years ago. It has come a long way, and it still has a long way to go.

I do not think this work finishes. Three out of four respondents expect their bandwidth needs to grow over the next three years. Seven in ten expect to upgrade their Wi-Fi networks in the same period. The students keep coming, and a network that was enough five years ago is being asked to do more.

This survey is the voice of the applicant. The schools and libraries that count on this program are trusting the Commission to get this right, and the most useful thing we can do for them is make sure that voice is in the record.

Thank you for reading it.

John D. Harrington

Chief Executive Officer, Funds For Learning®

3. Key takeaways

The funding request data show what applicants asked for. They do not show what applicants need and cannot request, or how the program looks from the applicant's side. The 2026 National Survey of E-rate Applicants, the sixteenth annual survey, asks applicants directly: 2,460 responses, of which 2,435 are the basis of this report, equal to 11.5% of the 21,237 applicants that filed FY2026 funding requests.

Higher on every measure since 2016. The five statements about the program that the survey has carried since 2016 all stand between 11.3 and 33.9 points above their first-year values. Agreement that E-rate funding is vital to the organization's Internet connectivity goals rose from 84.6% in 2016 to 95.9% in 2026 (948 and 2,435 responses), and agreement that competitive bidding lowers prices rose from 44.7% to 78.6%. No statement moved more than 1.3 points from 2025 (Table A1).

Applicants depend on E-rate every year: 90.8%. 95.9% of respondents agree that E-rate funding is vital to their organization's Internet connectivity goals (2,435 responses). 90.8% agree that their organization can depend on E-rate funding every year, the highest value in the item's eleven-year series, which began at 64.9% in 2016 (942 responses).

Process ease is still the lowest of the three goals: 60.5%. Applicants say the program is meeting two of the FCC's three goals: 94.9% agree that it is achieving affordable access to high-speed broadband and 89.2% agree on cost-effective spending (2,289 responses). On making the application and other E-rate processes fast, simple, and efficient, 60.5% agree and 20.0% disagree.

Wi-Fi upgrades, bandwidth growth, and eligible services. 99.0% of respondents call Wi-Fi extremely or very important to their organization's mission (2,255 responses), and 71.2% of those with a Wi-Fi network expect to need an upgrade within three years. 76.1% expect their Internet bandwidth needs to increase over the next three years (2,268 responses), the lowest value in a series that began at 90.1% in 2016. 97.5% say network security and network management goods and services should qualify for E-rate support (2,198 responses), and 86.6% say dual, spare, or failover Internet should (2,147 responses); 18.0% have dual Internet connections and 62.0% say they would if E-rate rules allowed it. In the request data, Category Two requests for FY2026, the first year of the new five-year budget cycle, total \$2,535,670,890 in pre-discount cost, 27.6% above FY2025's \$1,987,042,318.

Administration measures fall: USAC satisfaction 82.8%. 82.8% of respondents are very or somewhat satisfied with USAC (2,408 responses; 2025: 86.6%). Among EPC users, 68.4% say the portal meets their needs extremely or very well (1,837 responses; 2025: 72.1%). On the USAC-managed bidding portal adopted for FY2028, 57.5% agree it will increase their organization's administrative burden and 30.7% agree it is necessary to ensure the integrity of competitive bidding (2,289 responses). 70.6% of respondents have one trained E-rate person in their organization, or none (2,180 responses), and 56.4% of all respondents use a consultant for at least one reason (2,435 responses).

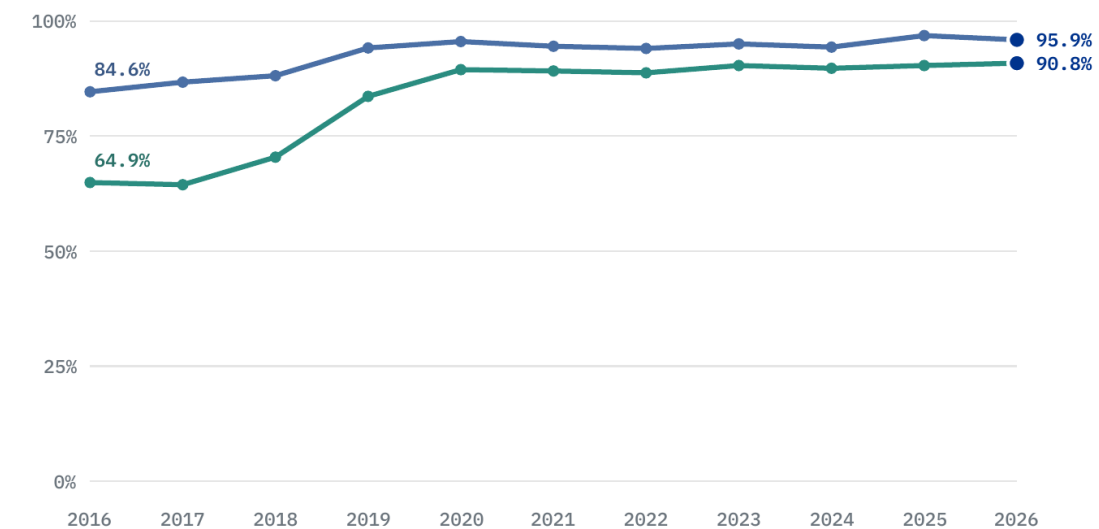
4. The decade: 2016 to 2026 against the FCC's three goals

Since 2016 the survey has asked eight questions in the same words every year: five statements about what E-rate does for the respondent's organization, and three on whether the program is achieving each of the goals the Commission set for it in the 2014 E-rate Modernization Order. Four more track administration: two on USAC, asked since 2019, and two on the E-rate Productivity Center, one of them asked since 2016. Values are top-two shares (chapter 11); yearly values are in Tables A1 to A3 in chapter 10.

What E-rate does: five statements, 2016 to 2026

All five statements are higher in 2026 than in 2016, by 11.3 to 33.9 points. Agreement that competitive bidding lowers prices rose the most, from 44.7% to 78.6% (2,435 responses), a series high. Agreement that the organization can depend on E-rate funding every year rose from 64.9% to 90.8%, also a series high. Agreement that E-rate funding is vital, the highest of the five in 2016 at 84.6%, rose the least, to 95.9%. Nothing moved more than 1.3 points between 2025 (1,329 responses) and 2026.

E-rate funding is vital / we can depend on E-rate every year, 2016 to 2026 (% strongly agree + agree)



■ E-rate funding is vital to our Internet connectivity goals

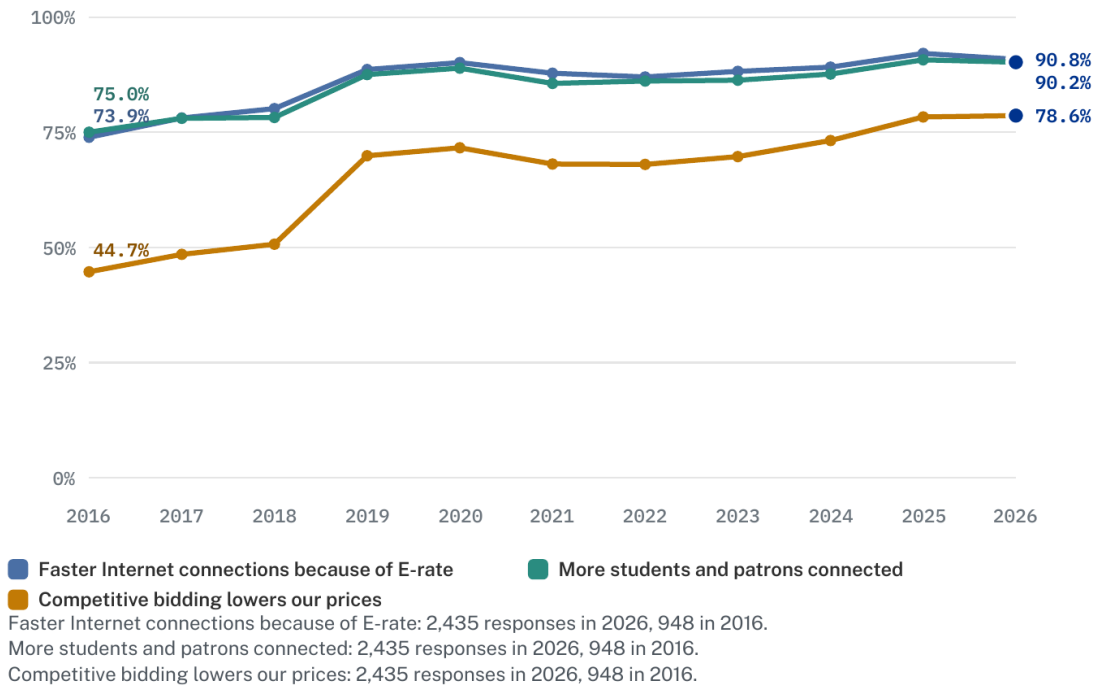
■ Our organization can depend on E-rate funding every year

E-rate funding is vital to our Internet connectivity goals: 2,435 responses in 2026, 948 in 2016.

Our organization can depend on E-rate funding every year: 2,435 responses in 2026, 942 in 2016.

SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

What E-rate does: faster connections, more students and patrons connected, lower prices, 2016 to 2026 (% agree)



SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

“E-rate has been the single best, consistent program libraries have had in the 20+ years I have been here. While I think EPC could make the application more understandable, it has been exceptionally consistent for a very long time which removes a huge burden for library directors.” Oklahoma library

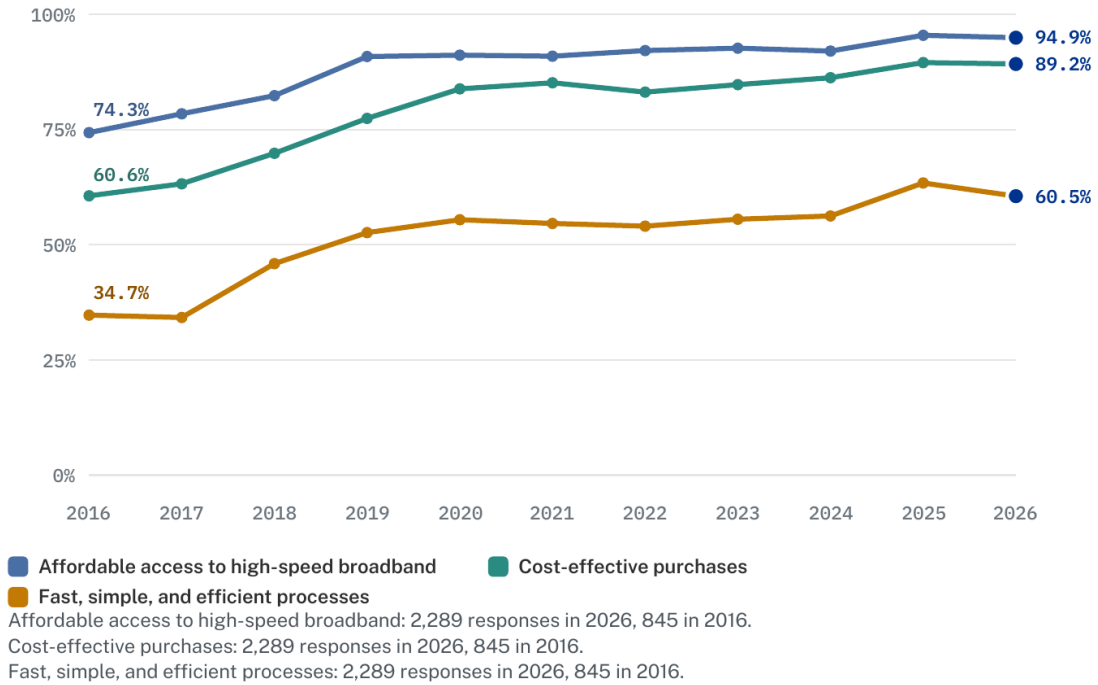
“In extreme rural communities E-rate is the only way we can afford connecting our schools and libraries.” Alaska school district

The FCC’s three goals

Goal 1 is ensuring affordable access to high-speed broadband sufficient to support digital learning in schools and robust connectivity for all libraries. Goal 2 is the cost-effectiveness of spending for E-rate supported purchases. Goal 3 is making the E-rate application process and other E-rate processes fast, simple, and efficient.

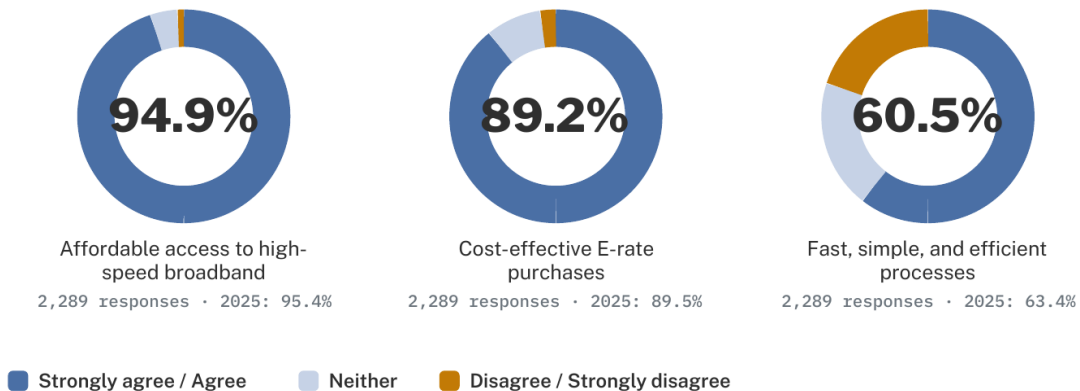
Affordability rose 20.6 points, from 74.3% in 2016 to 94.9% in 2026 (2,289 responses). Cost-effectiveness rose 28.6 points, from 60.6% to 89.2%. Process ease rose 25.8 points, from 34.7% to 60.5%. All three 2026 values are the second-highest in their series, behind 2025 by 0.5, 0.3, and 2.9 points. Process ease remains the lowest of the three, 34.4 points below affordability in 2026. Disagreement is concentrated there: 20.0% disagree that the program is achieving it and 19.5% neither agree nor disagree, against 1.0% disagreeing on affordability and 2.4% on cost-effectiveness.

The E-rate program is achieving the FCC's goal: % agree, 2016 to 2026



SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

The E-rate program is achieving this FCC goal (% strongly agree + agree, 2026)



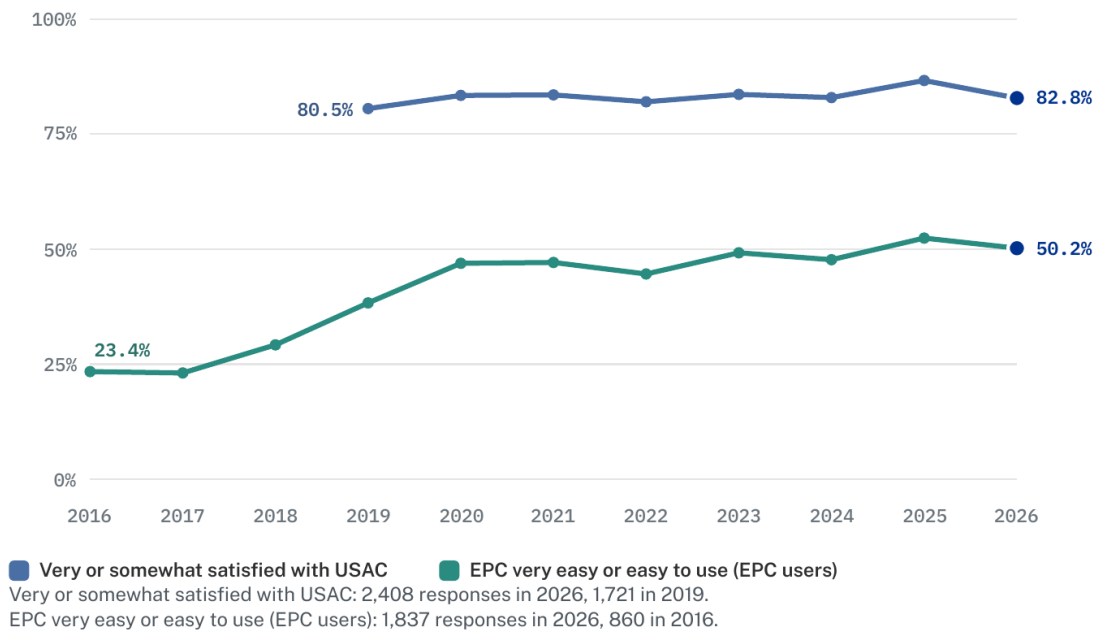
SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

“Over the years, efforts by FCC to make the E-Rate program easier have generally made it harder (less familiar and predictable) - until it changes yet again.” Oklahoma school district

Administration: USAC and EPC

All four administration measures are higher than in their first year and below their 2025 values, the highest in each series. Satisfaction with USAC was 80.5% in 2019, 86.6% in 2025, and 82.8% in 2026 (2,408 responses). EPC ease of use has the largest change: 23.4% called it very easy or easy to use in 2016, 52.4% in 2025, and 50.2% in 2026 (1,837 responses; the EPC items are asked of respondents who used EPC in the filing window, 77.6% of those asked).

Satisfied with USAC (since 2019) and EPC very easy or easy to use (since 2016), 2016 to 2026



SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

5. FY2026 request data

The figures in this chapter are FY2026 Form 471 requests as filed, from E-rate Manager®, as of April 15, 2026 (chapter 11). Nothing here is a commitment or a disbursement; FY2026 commitments are still being issued.

Applicants and requests

21,237 applicants filed FY2026 funding requests with 3,616 service providers. 19,405 requested Category One services and 12,442 requested Category Two, up from 11,648 in FY2025. FY2026 is the first year of the FY2026 to FY2030 Category Two budget cycle.

Category One requests total \$2,144,057,324 before discounts, of which \$1,730,315,248 is the E-rate discount requested; Category Two requests total \$2,535,670,890, of which \$1,889,096,742 is the discount requested. The E-rate share of pre-discount cost is 80.7% in Category One and 74.5% in Category Two. Category One, an annual purchase of recurring service, is 6.6% below FY2025's \$2,296,503,324 in pre-discount cost, the lowest of the eleven years in the chart below. Category Two, capital spending against a five-year budget, is 27.6% above FY2025's \$1,987,042,318.

Sites supported

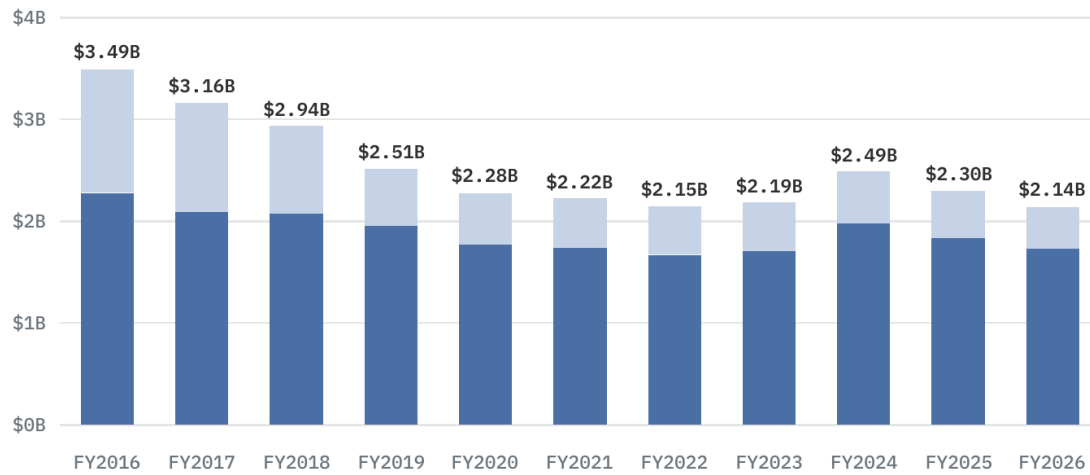
FY2026 applications list 130,929 sites for Category One and 70,971 for Category Two. The Category Two count is the highest in the series, 1,309 above FY2025's 69,662; the Category One count has stayed between 129,324 and 132,174 since FY2016.

Sites listed on applications by service category, FY2016 to FY2026



SOURCE: E-RATE MANAGER® • SITES ON APPLICATIONS AS FILED; RECIPIENT RECORDS AS OF AUGUST 11, 2026

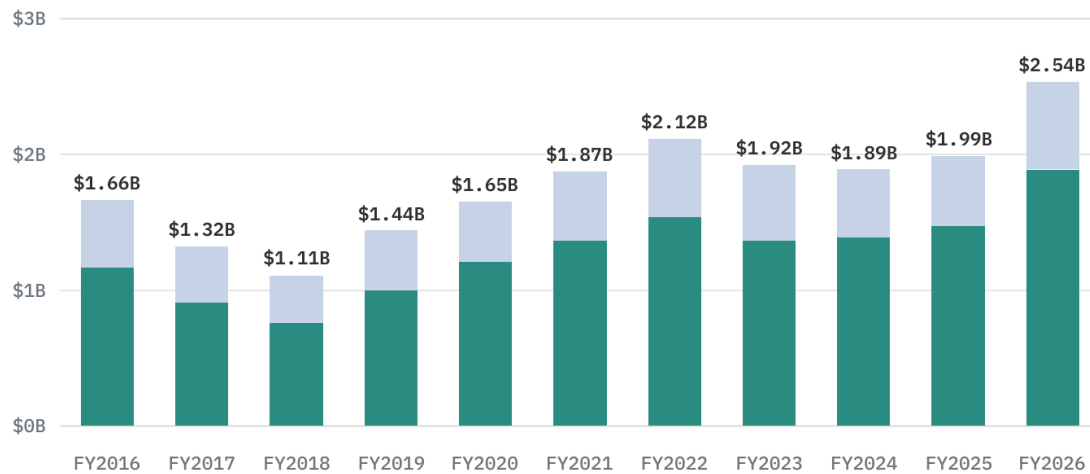
**Category One requests as filed, FY2016 to FY2026 (billions of dollars):
E-rate discount requested and applicant share**



■ E-rate discount requested ■ Applicant share
Bar labels: total pre-discount cost of requests as filed.

SOURCE: E-RATE MANAGER® • REQUESTS AS FILED; FY2026 AS OF APRIL 15, 2026, EARLIER YEARS AS OF THE DATES IN TABL

**Category Two requests as filed, FY2016 to FY2026 (billions of dollars):
E-rate discount requested and applicant share**



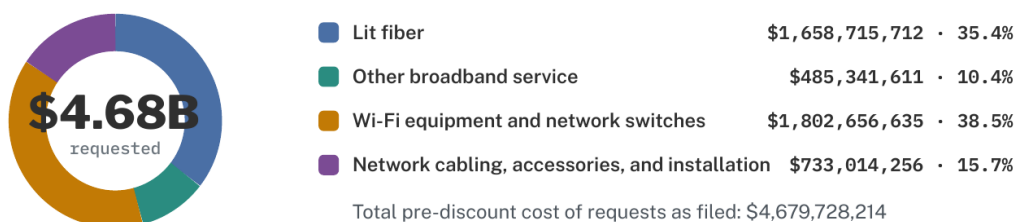
■ E-rate discount requested ■ Applicant share
Bar labels: total pre-discount cost of requests as filed.

SOURCE: E-RATE MANAGER® • REQUESTS AS FILED; FY2026 AS OF APRIL 15, 2026, EARLIER YEARS AS OF THE DATES IN TABL

Allocation of FY2026 requested services and products

Of the \$4.68 billion requested for FY2026 before discounts, lit fiber accounts for \$1,658,715,712, or 35.4%; other broadband services for \$485,341,611, or 10.4%; Wi-Fi equipment and network switches for \$1,802,656,635, or 38.5%; and network cabling, accessories, and installation for \$733,014,256, or 15.7% (Table A7 in chapter 10 defines the groups). Lit fiber's share was 39.9% in FY2025 and the Wi-Fi equipment and switches share 32.8%. In FY2026 the order is reversed, and Wi-Fi equipment and switches is the larger group.

Allocation of FY2026 requested services and products (pre-discount cost)



SOURCE: E-RATE MANAGER® • REQUESTS AS FILED; FY2026 AS OF APRIL 15, 2026, EARLIER YEARS AS OF THE DATES IN TABL

The largest Category Two functions requested for FY2026 are data distribution, \$741,477,025 in pre-discount cost; wireless data distribution, \$452,276,397; and licenses, \$423,057,316.

“Our highest cost for our small rural district is LAN maintenance. Since E-Rate discontinued this service it has drastically hurt our district.” Texas school district

6. The 2026 survey

Funds For Learning's sixteenth annual survey of E-rate applicants was open from May 5 to July 29, 2026. It received 2,460 responses, and 2,435 are the basis of this report.

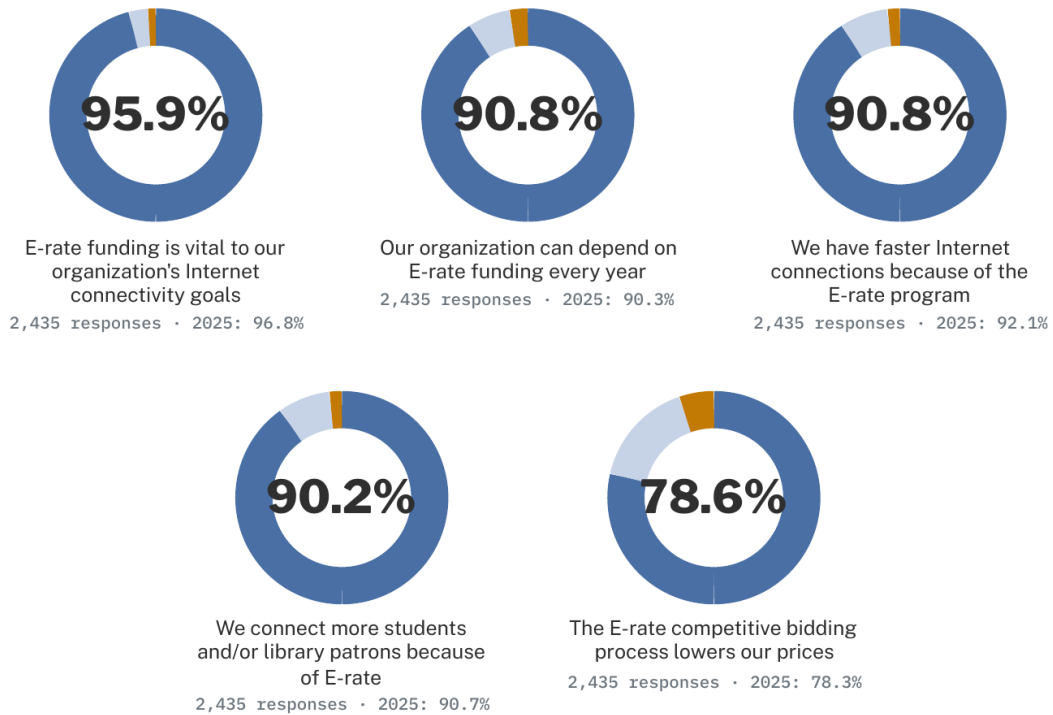
Funding request data give an incomplete picture. Services that are not eligible for discounts do not appear on Form 471, and there is no regular channel through which applicants tell the FCC how the program's administration is working.

Response counts vary by question. The figure reported for every agreement item is the share who strongly agree or agree; for other scales it is the top two answers (chapter 11). Forward-looking questions are in chapter 7; the eleven-year series are in chapter 4.

6.1 E-rate support

Applicants continue to describe E-rate as essential, and the numbers move little from year to year. 95.9% agree that E-rate funding is vital to their organization's Internet connectivity goals (2,435 responses; 2025: 96.8%), and 83.4% strongly agree. 90.8% agree that their organization can depend on E-rate funding every year (2025: 90.3%), the highest value in the item's eleven years. 78.6% agree the competitive bidding process lowers their prices (2025: 78.3%), the highest in a series that started at 44.7% in 2016.

What applicants say about the program (% strongly agree + agree, 2026)



■ Strongly agree / Agree
 ■ Neither
 ■ Disagree / Strongly disagree

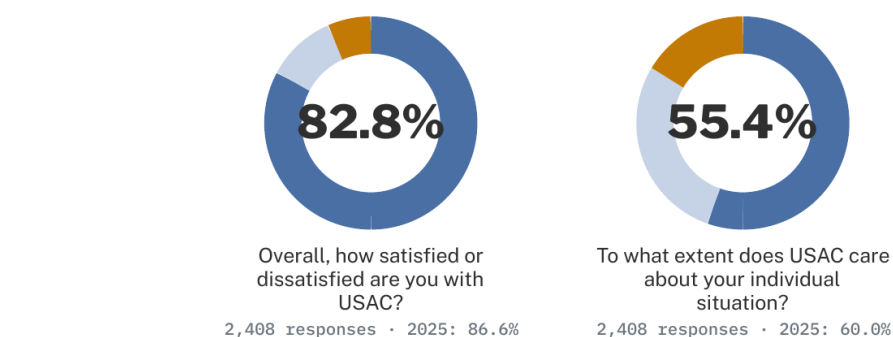
SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

“Without erate funding we would have to make deep cuts to other library services to finance our internet.” Oklahoma library

6.2 USAC's administration

Applicants' experiences with USAC are mixed. 82.8% are very or somewhat satisfied with USAC (2,408 responses; 2025: 86.6%, 1,314 responses), a change of -3.8 points. 55.4% say USAC cares about their individual situation a great deal or a lot (2025: 60.0%), a change of -4.6 points. The 2025 values were the highest in both series. Comments praise helpful staff and describe frustration with review delays, repeated document requests, and decisions that arrive after the summer installation window has passed.

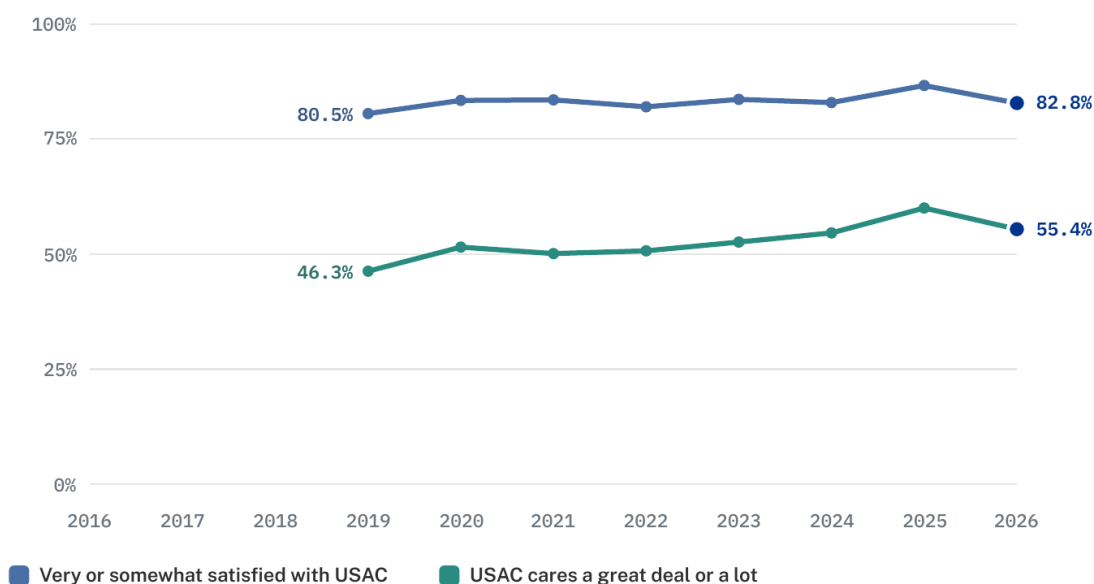
USAC: satisfaction and responsiveness (top-two responses, 2026)



■ Top two responses ■ Middle response ■ Bottom two responses

SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

USAC: satisfied (very or somewhat) and cares about our situation (a great deal or a lot), 2019 to 2026



■ Very or somewhat satisfied with USAC ■ USAC cares a great deal or a lot

Very or somewhat satisfied with USAC: 2,408 responses in 2026, 1,721 in 2019.

USAC cares a great deal or a lot: 2,408 responses in 2026, 1,721 in 2019.

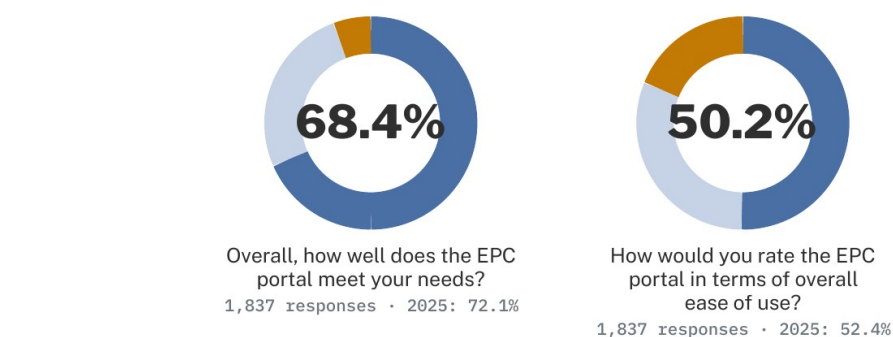
SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

“Processing speed has become an issue recently with E-Rate requests. If proposals take 6-months or more to approve (finally approving in the fall), it puts us into next year (summer) for install, and by then models may have changed. This was never an issue in years past, but we have missed the spring purchasing window and summer install windows the past two E-Rate cycles now.” Michigan school district

6.3 USAC's E-rate Productivity Center

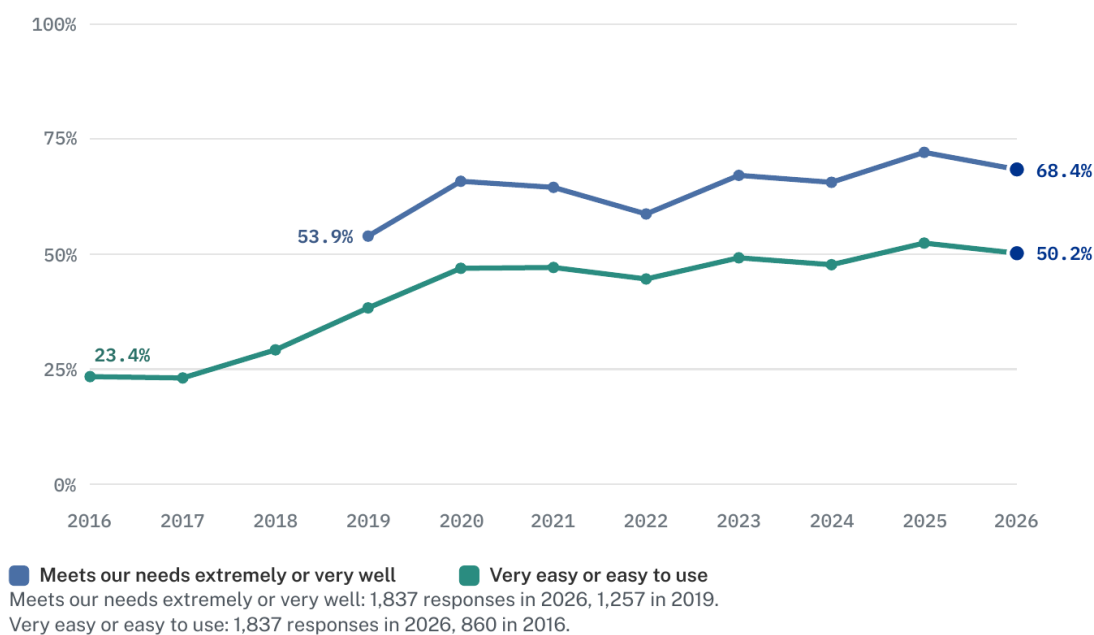
77.6% of respondents used EPC during the FY2026 filing window (2,385 responses). Among those users, 68.4% say the portal meets their needs extremely or very well (1,837 responses; 2025: 72.1%, 1,074 responses), a change of -3.7 points. 50.2% rate EPC very easy or easy to use (2025: 52.4%), a change of -2.2 points; the item has risen from 23.4% in 2016. Comments still describe the portal as cumbersome and name password resets, navigation, and form wording that is hard to follow for people who use the system a few times a year.

The EPC portal, among respondents who used it (top-two responses, 2026)



SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

EPC among users: meets needs extremely or very well (since 2019) and very easy or easy to use (since 2016)



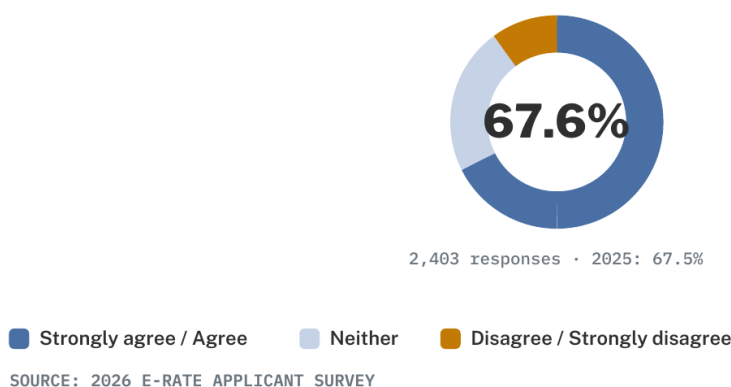
SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

“The EPC is not intuitive. As we only use it once a year, I have to pull up directions on where to find things. Many of the questions asked as part of the application process are worded in a way that I find difficult to understand, even though I have been handling our e-rate needs for over 10 years.” Iowa school

6.4 The homework gap

Since 2017 the survey has asked whether insufficient Internet access to the home of students or library patrons is a significant issue in the respondent’s community. 67.6% agree (2,403 responses; 2025: 67.5%, 1,304 responses). The figure has come down from its 2020 high of 90.1% and is unchanged from 2025. Library respondents describe their buildings as the main public access point for residents who have no connection at home.

Insufficient Internet access to the home of students or library patrons is a significant issue in our community



“We live in a very rural town with a population of [amount]. There are no businesses that provide free internet. There isn’t even a coffee shop here. We are also very low income based and more than half of our students qualify for free and reduced lunch. Access to wifi provides students and patrons with services they cant get anywhere else.” Idaho library

6.5 The bidding portal

In FCC 26-30, the Commission placed E-rate competitive bidding in a USAC-managed online portal beginning with FY2028. Both survey items are new in 2026. 57.5% agree that requiring bidding to go through the portal will increase the administrative burden on their organization (2,289 responses), and 5.0% disagree. On whether the portal is needed, opinion divides evenly: 30.7% agree that it is necessary to ensure the integrity of the competitive bidding process, 30.6% disagree, and 38.7% neither agree nor disagree. Some comments welcome a single system and expect it to be fair; others raise the participation of smaller and rural service providers, state procurement law that already governs their bidding, and applicants who receive one bid or none.

“I am very concerned about a bidder portal. We sometimes get no bids, so I wouldn’t know that until too late to ask providers to bid on my projects. It just adds unnecessary red tape to what is working very well now.” Iowa school district

6.6 Who does the work

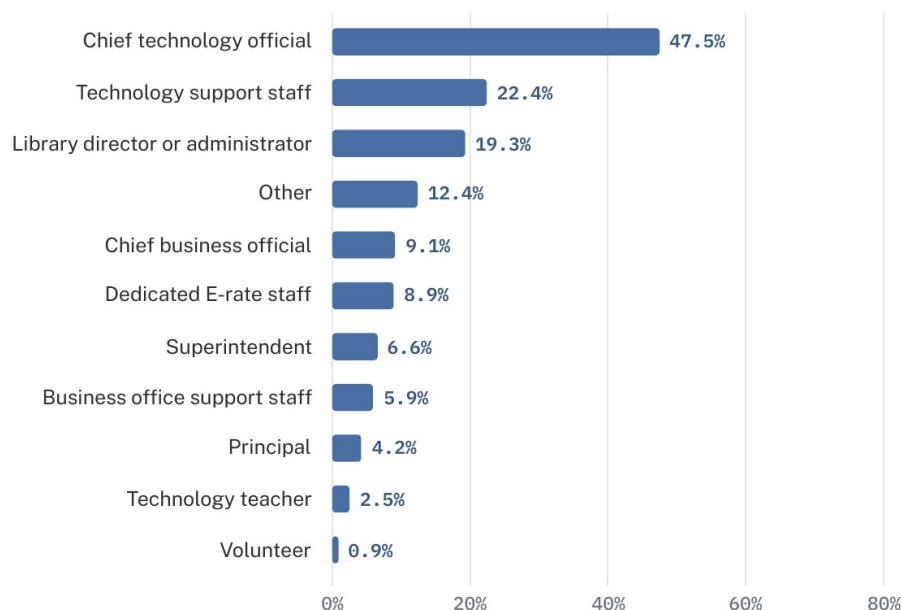
The chief technology official is named most often as responsible for E-rate applications, by 47.5% of the 2,165 who answered; dedicated E-rate staff are named by 8.9%.

70.6% report one staff member or none trained in or with expertise in the program’s rules and procedures (2,180 responses), and 12.5% report none at all. Those who do the work are experienced: 72.2% have worked with the E-rate program for five or more years (2,180 responses; 2025: 68.9%, 1,220 responses), up from 63.1% in 2016.

The survey measures consultant use as scale and reasons only. 63.0% of those who answered the consultant block use a consultant for at least one reason (2,180 responses); on the all-respondent basis used in prior years, the only basis comparable across years (chapter 11), the share is 56.4% (2,435 responses). Among consultant users (1,373 responses), the reasons named most often are that they cannot keep up with all the regulations, 79.2%, and that they do not have the time, 64.5%.

The USAC News Brief is the most-used source for keeping up with E-rate, named by 68.5% of the 2,114 who answered, followed by third-party newsletters and listservs at 45.8%. A sixth option, “Review form instructions before filing,” last carried data in 2017 and is left out of Table A14 in chapter 10.

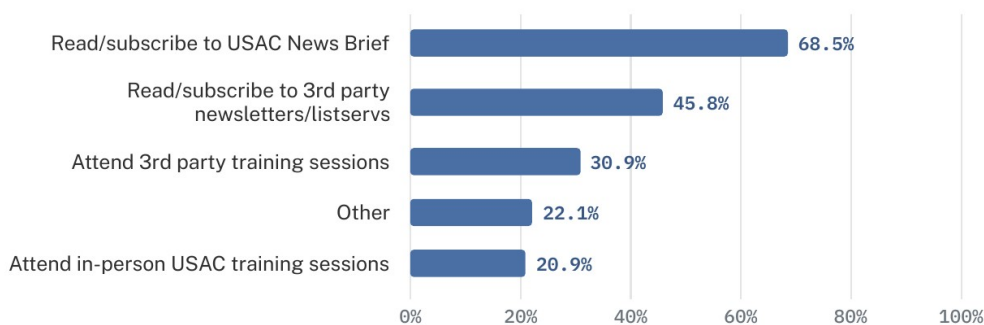
**Who is responsible for the E-rate applications in your organization?
(share of block answerers; check all that apply)**



2,165 responses. Check all that apply.

SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

How do you stay up to date on E-rate? (share of block answerers; check all that apply)



2,114 responses. Check all that apply.

SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

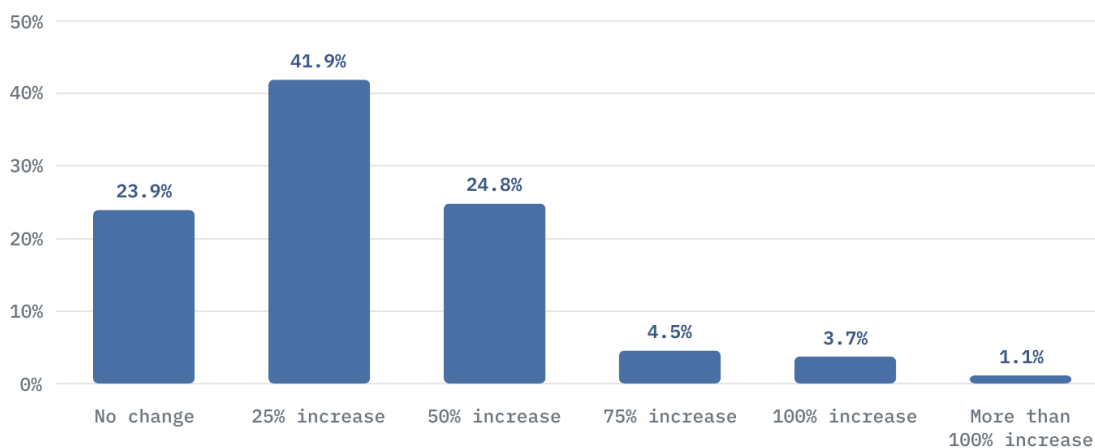
“The process is a little cumbersome for small districts like us, we have to outsource someone to file the paperwork for us as we do not have the time or expertise.”
Arizona school district

7. Emerging needs

7.1 Bandwidth

Asked how much they expect their Internet bandwidth needs to change over the next three years, 76.1% of respondents expect an increase (2,268 responses; 2025: 76.8%, 1,256 responses), a change of -0.7 points. The 2026 value is the lowest in the eleven-year series, which began at 90.1% in 2016, and the share has come down in every year since 2021 (Table A15 in chapter 10). The item asks about three years; the Commission's question in FCC 26-41 about future connectivity needs asks about five to ten.

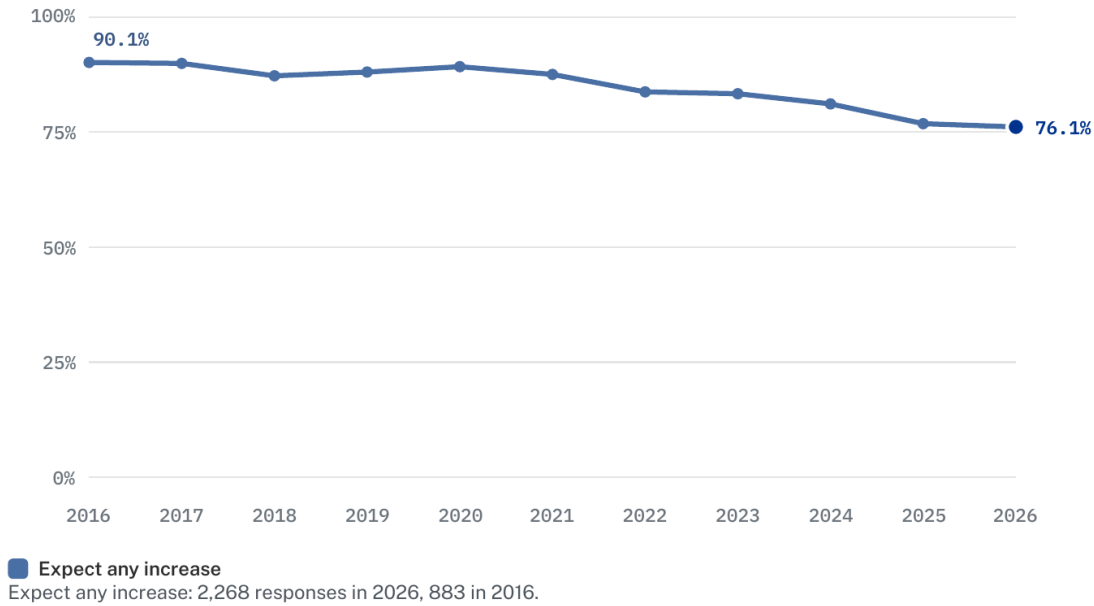
How much do you expect your Internet bandwidth needs to change over the next 3 years?



2,268 responses.

SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

Expect Internet bandwidth needs to increase over the next three years, 2016 to 2026

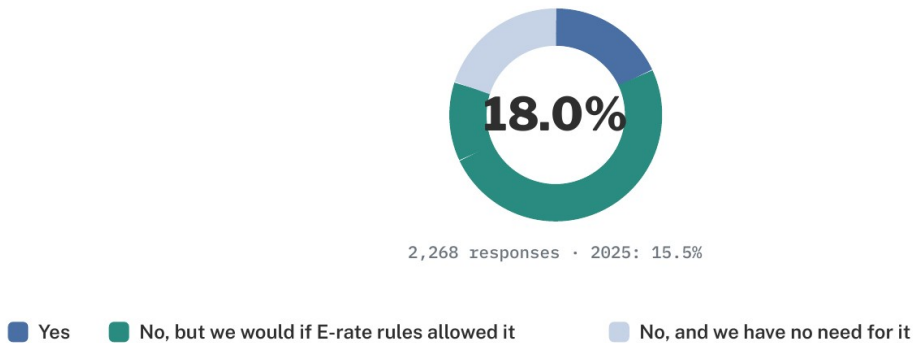


SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

7.2 Resilience: dual Internet connections

Respondents were asked whether they have dual Internet connections, for load balancing or high-availability Internet. 18.0% have them (2,268 responses; 2025: 15.5%, 1,256 responses), a change of +2.5 points and the highest value in the series, which began at 13.4% in 2018. 62.0% answered “No, but we would if E-rate rules allowed it,” and 20.0% answered “No, and we have no need for it.” On eligibility, 86.6% say dual, spare, or failover Internet should qualify for E-rate support (2,147 responses; 2025: 86.1%, 1,196 responses; section 7.4).

Do you have dual Internet connections?



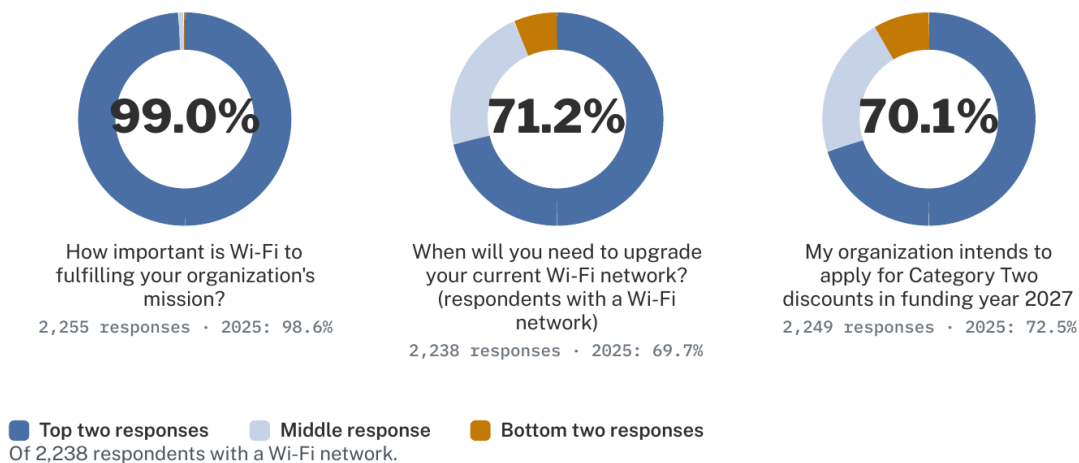
SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

“Dual internet connections should be allowed at a single BEN location.” Colorado school district

7.3 Wi-Fi and Category Two

99.0% of respondents say Wi-Fi is extremely or very important to fulfilling their organization's mission (2,255 responses; 2025: 98.6%, 1,253 responses), which ties the series high. 71.2% of those with a Wi-Fi network expect to need an upgrade within three years (2025: 69.7%), a change of +1.5 points; the 0.8% who report no Wi-Fi network are excluded from that base. 70.1% intend to apply for Category Two discounts in funding year 2027 (2,249 responses; 2025: 72.5%, 1,249 responses), a change of -2.4 points.

Wi-Fi and Category Two (2026)



SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

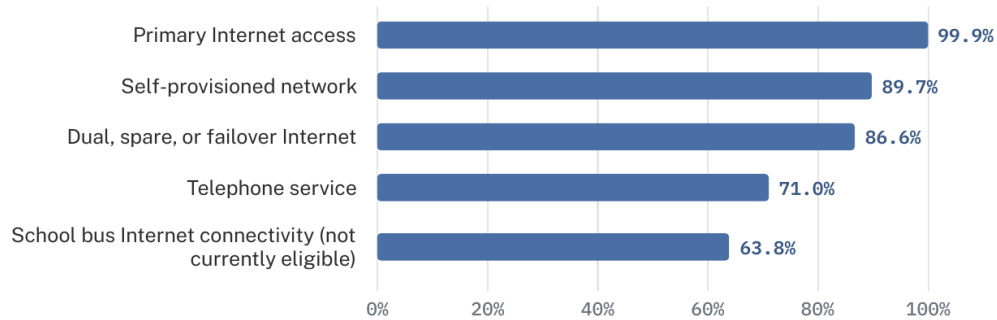
“Increase in Cat 2 budget is needed. With the higher cost of eligible network equipment increasing every year, the budgets are not sufficient to purchase core equipment such as switches, APs and cabling upgrades.” California school district

7.4 Eligible services

Respondents were shown two lists, Category One services and on-campus Category Two goods and services, and asked for each whether it should qualify for E-rate support (Table A19 in chapter 10). Support for the core services is close to unanimous: 99.9% for primary Internet access, 99.3% for Wi-Fi, switches, and other data networking equipment, and 97.5% for network security and network management goods and services. Six of the ten items are below their 2025 value, by 0.4 to 5.8 points, and four are above, by 0.2 to 0.5 points.

The school bus Internet connectivity option was labeled “(currently eligible)” in error (chapter 11); the Commission’s Declaratory Ruling of September 30, 2025 (WC Docket No. 13-184) ended that support. The 2026 figure is an opinion on a formerly eligible service, and its change from 2025 is not like-for-like.

Which Category One services should qualify for E-rate support? (% yes)

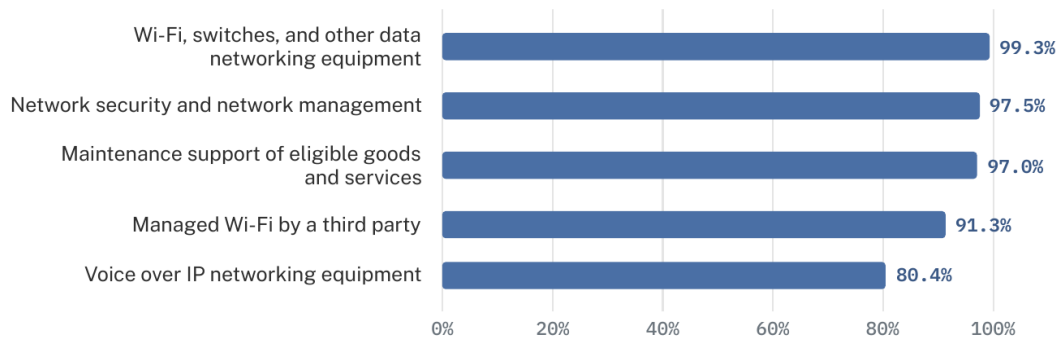


Responses per item from 2,117 to 2,224.

School bus Internet connectivity is not currently eligible for E-rate support (FCC Declaratory Ruling, September 30, 2025); the item reads as an opinion on a formerly eligible service.

SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

Which on-campus Category Two goods and services should qualify? (% yes)



Responses per item from 2,143 to 2,215.

SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

“Cybersecurity is as essential as Internet and WIFI for operating a school. Firewalls and content filters should be fully eligible under category 2 (similar to access points and wireless controllers).” Michigan school district

8. Policy context

The 2026 proceedings

DA 26-367 (Public Notice, April 15, 2026) sought comment on USAC's processes and oversight. FCC 26-30 (Report and Order, May 1, 2026) placed E-rate competitive bidding in a USAC-managed portal from FY2028. FCC 26-41 (June 26, 2026; WC Docket Nos. 26-133, 13-184, 21-93, and 21-455; comments due October 13, replies November 12) asks whether the program's mission is complete and whether it should be narrowed or sunset, whether the eligibility of Internet access and internal connections survives *Loper Bright*, and whether the discount matrix and the program's geographic reach should change; it then proposes consultant regulation and administrative changes. FCC 26-52 (August 7, 2026; WC Docket No. 26-173; comments due September 30, replies October 30) asks who administers the Fund and on what terms. The survey instrument was designed before FCC 26-41 and FCC 26-52 were released, so none of its items was written to answer the Commission. Sections 1 to 7 follow the order of the Commission's questions; Funds For Learning's positions on the proposals are in its comments in the proceedings.

§1. Whether the program's mission is complete

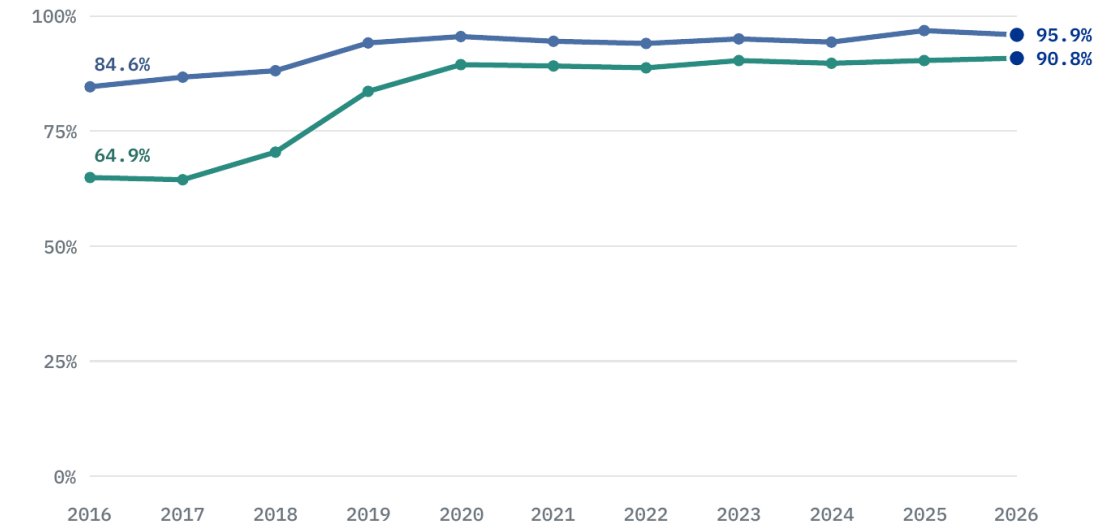
The Commission asks whether §254(h) has been satisfied, whether E-rate should be limited or sunset, and whether Congress intended the program to operate indefinitely; how far schools and libraries use E-rate funds on a recurring basis and how their ability to afford those services would change if support ended; and whether the program's structure is consistent with §254 given other federal broadband funding (91 FR 52627 to 52628).

On items asked every year since 2016 (2026: 2,435 responses; 2016: 948, unless noted), 95.9% agree that E-rate funding is vital to their organization's Internet connectivity goals (2016: 84.6%), and 83.4% strongly agree; 90.8% agree that their organization can depend on E-rate funding every year (2016: 64.9%, 942 responses), the highest value in the series.

On recurring use, 21,237 applicants filed FY2026 requests, and the number has stood between 21,185 and 24,025 in every year since FY2016 (Table A4 in chapter 10). Mission-critical language is the most common theme in the open-ended comments (26.9% of substantive comments).

The survey has no item on other federal broadband programs and none on children's online safety.

E-rate funding is vital / we can depend on E-rate every year, 2016 to 2026 (% strongly agree + agree)



■ E-rate funding is vital to our Internet connectivity goals

■ Our organization can depend on E-rate funding every year

E-rate funding is vital to our Internet connectivity goals: 2,435 responses in 2026, 948 in 2016.

Our organization can depend on E-rate funding every year: 2,435 responses in 2026, 942 in 2016.

SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

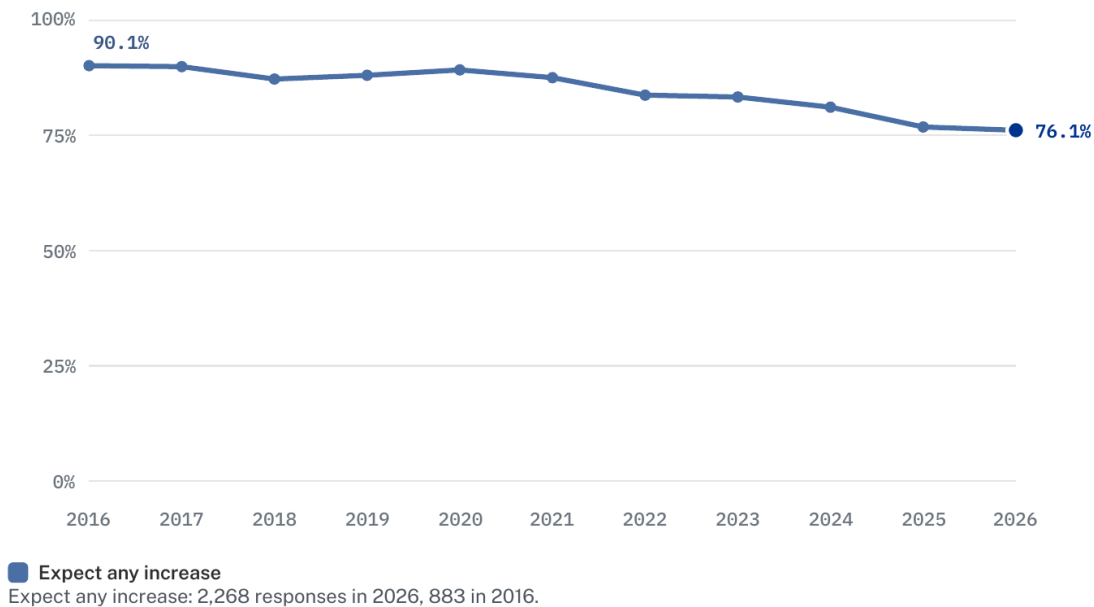
§2. Needs inside and outside the current scope

The Commission asks how connectivity needs will change over the next five to ten years and whether E-rate should be updated for them, why demand has fallen below the cap, and whether schools and libraries have needs outside the program's current scope (91 FR 52628). The survey's bandwidth item asks about the next three years.

On that horizon, 76.1% expect their Internet bandwidth needs to increase (2,268 responses), the lowest value in the series. 18.0% have dual Internet connections (2,268 responses), the highest in that series, which began in 2018, and another 62.0% answer "No, but we would if E-rate rules allowed it." 97.5% say network security and network management goods and services should qualify for support (2,198 responses).

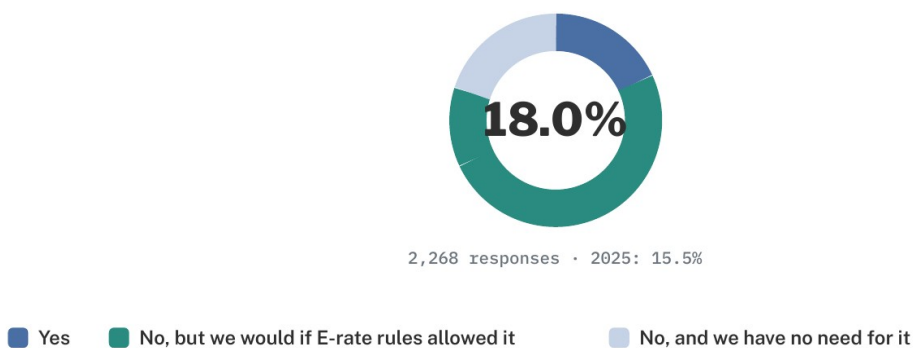
Category Two requests as filed for FY2026, the first year of the FY2026 to FY2030 budget cycle, total \$2,535,670,890 in pre-discount cost (FY2025: \$1,987,042,318); Category One requests total \$2,144,057,324 (FY2025: \$2,296,503,324). Cybersecurity is a theme in 14.5% of substantive comments, and program scope, including requests for eligibility of servers, licenses, voice, and devices, in 18.8%.

Expect Internet bandwidth needs to increase over the next three years, 2016 to 2026



SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

Do you have dual Internet connections?



SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

§3. Eligible services under review

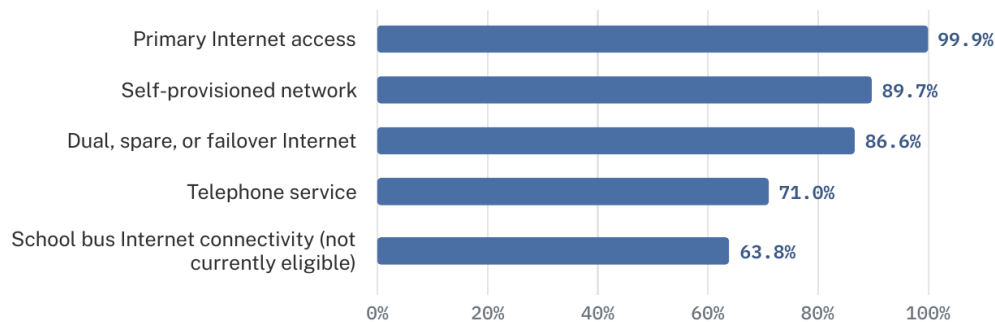
The Commission asks whether any currently eligible services are no longer necessary or are inconsistent with the statute; whether the 2014 expansion to special construction, dark fiber, and self-provisioned networks remains justified; whether to reverse the presumption that on-

premises activity serves an educational purpose; and whether managed internal broadband services should continue, and on what reimbursement terms (91 FR 52628 to 52629, 52640).

Asked whether each currently eligible service should qualify, applicants answer near the top of the scale: primary Internet access, 99.9% (2,224 responses); managed Wi-Fi by a third party, 91.3% (2,195 responses); self-provisioned network, 89.7% (2,155 responses). School bus Internet connectivity, 63.8% (2,117 responses; 2025: 69.6%, 1,181 responses), is no longer eligible (Declaratory Ruling of September 30, 2025, WC Docket No. 13-184); the 2026 option was annotated “(currently eligible)” in error, so the 5.8-point change is not a like-for-like comparison (chapter 11).

Of the \$4.68 billion in FY2026 pre-discount requests, lit fiber accounts for \$1,658,715,712 and other broadband services, including dark and self-provisioned fiber, wireless, and copper, for \$485,341,611 (chapter 5). The survey has no item on special construction, dark fiber, other funding sources, or the educational-purpose presumption.

Which Category One services should qualify for E-rate support? (% yes)

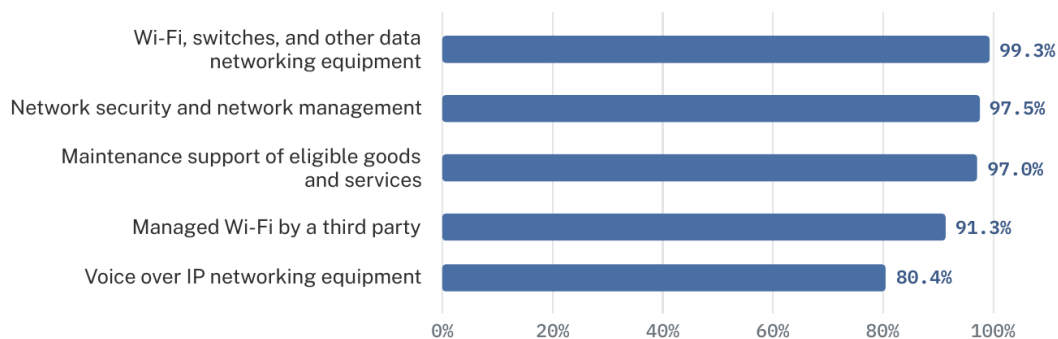


Responses per item from 2,117 to 2,224.

School bus Internet connectivity is not currently eligible for E-rate support (FCC Declaratory Ruling, September 30, 2025); the item reads as an opinion on a formerly eligible service.

SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

Which on-campus Category Two goods and services should qualify? (% yes)



Responses per item from 2,143 to 2,215.

SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

§4. Who does the work, and why applicants use consultants

The Commission asks about the role and incentives of vendors and consultants, their influence on selections, and safeguards (91 FR 52629). The FNPRM proposes to define “consultant” as any non-employee assisting with any aspect of the program, with or without a fee, and proposes an annual certification and disclosure form (FCC Form 5654) that applicants without a consultant would also file, an individual registration database with annual training, a ban on percentage-based fees, and letters of agency with fee-agreement retention (91 FR 52635 to 52638).

The survey measures scale and reasons only. 63.0% of those who answered the consultant block use a consultant for at least one reason (2,180 responses); on the all-respondent basis, the only one comparable across years (chapter 11), the share is 56.4% (2,435 responses). Consultant users (1,373 responses) most often say they cannot keep up with all the regulations, 79.2%, or do not have the time, 64.5%. 70.6% report one or no staff trained in the program’s rules and procedures (2,180 responses), and 12.5% report none. The survey has no item on fee structures, letters of agency, or artificial intelligence tools.

Reasons for using a consultant (share of consultant users; check all that apply)



1,373 responses. Check all that apply.

SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

§5. The discount matrix and geography

The Commission asks whether NSLP and urban or rural status remain effective for calculating support, whether a disproportionate share flows to large, well-resourced districts, whether rural discounts should exceed urban, whether to phase out the lowest-NSLP areas, whether E-rate should be limited to rural or single-provider areas, and how §254(b)(3) comparability applies (91 FR 52629 to 52630).

The survey does not ask about discount rates, and this report does not compare groups of respondents; it describes who answered. Of the respondents who described their organization

rather than giving a Billed Entity Number (chapter 11), 62.2% are rural and 37.8% urban (1,607 responses); 88.3% are public and 11.7% non-public (1,622 responses). Equity and access is the topic of 9.8% of the 695 comments; several library respondents describe their buildings as the only public Internet access in their communities.

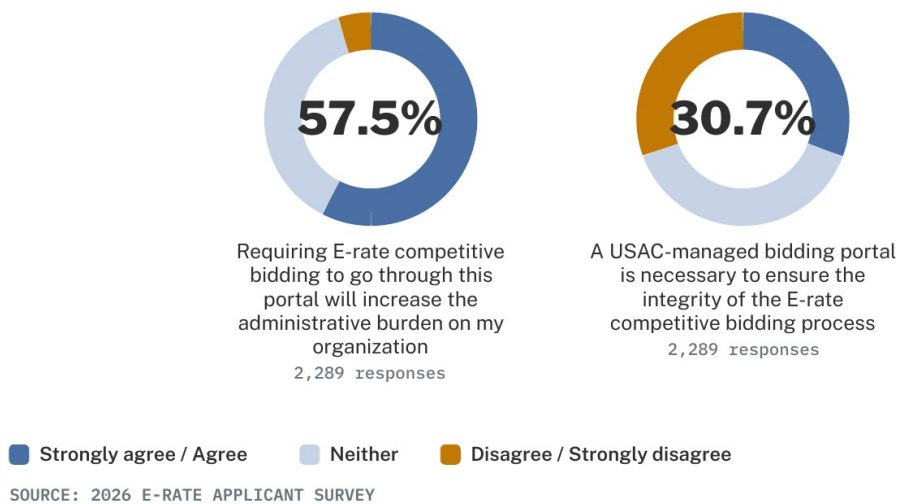
§6. Administration and the bidding portal

The Commission asks about service substitutions in writing, a June 30 SPAC deadline, Form 479 timing, codified certifications, and a knowledge-of-rules certification; about cost-effectiveness with one or no bids, including reseller margin caps, Open Data reimbursement caps, pricing justifications, and the bidding portal's role; and about the Kalamazoo exception and the lowest corresponding price rule. FCC 26-52 asks about turnaround reporting and shot clocks, budget sub-caps, and audit and recovery authority.

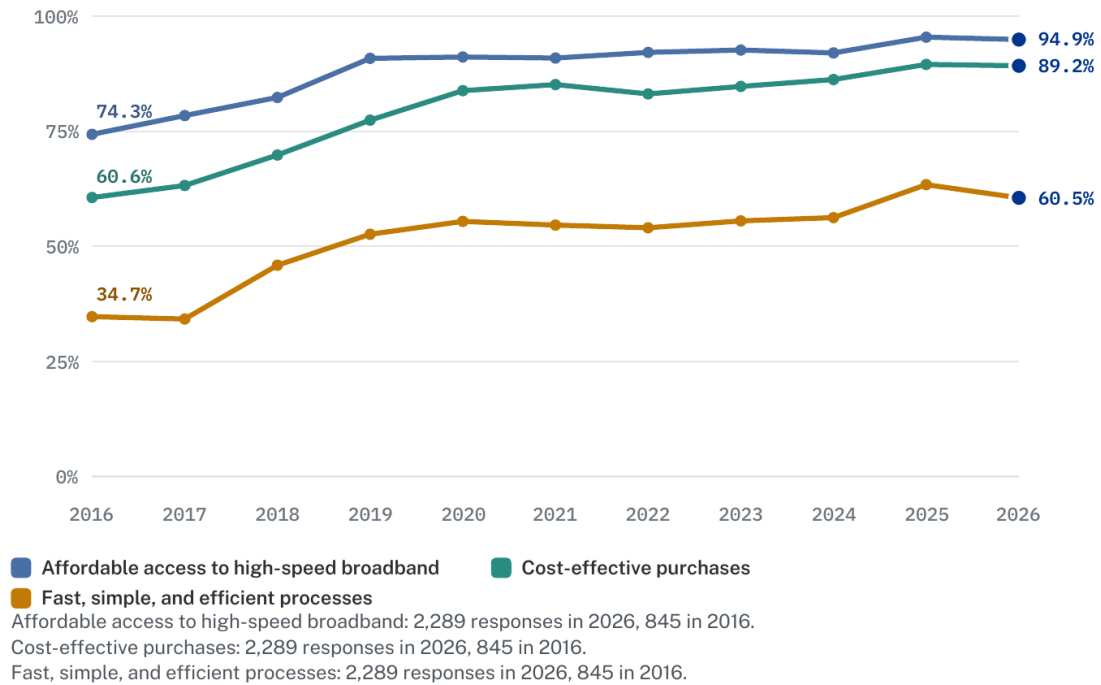
60.5% agree the program is achieving the FCC's third goal, making the application process and other E-rate processes fast, simple, and efficient (2,289 responses; 2025: 63.4%, 1,271 responses), and 20.0% disagree. 82.8% are very or somewhat satisfied with USAC (2,408 responses; 2025: 86.6%, 1,314 responses), and 50.2% of EPC users rate EPC very easy or easy to use (2025: 52.4%). Process friction is a theme in 24.5% of substantive comments and EPC usability in 9.6%.

Two items on the bidding portal adopted in FCC 26-30 (WC Docket 21-455) are new in 2026: 57.5% agree that requiring competitive bidding to go through the USAC-managed portal will increase the administrative burden on their organization (2,289 responses; 5.0% disagree, 37.5% neither), and 30.7% agree that a USAC-managed bidding portal is necessary to ensure the integrity of the competitive bidding process (30.6% disagree, 38.7% neither). The bidding portal is a theme in 12.1% of substantive comments. The survey has no item on contract dates, bid counts, unit pricing, service substitutions, the SPAC deadline, or lowest corresponding price.

The USAC-managed competitive bidding portal (% strongly agree + agree, 2026)



The E-rate program is achieving the FCC's goal: % agree, 2016 to 2026



§7. What the survey does not measure

The 2026 instrument has no item on screen time, device ownership, Internet filtering, CIPA compliance or Internet safety policies, third-party device restrictions, or public hearings, and it does not measure educational outcomes (91 FR 52630). It has none on whether an applicant could absorb an extrapolated recovery or how pay-and-dispute would change participation (WC Docket 26-173), and none on whether schools and libraries would keep filtering and an Internet safety policy if E-rate obligations fell away, or what network-level filtering would cost. These gaps are stated in chapter 11. The homework gap item concerns access at home and is reported in chapter 6.

9. Open-ended responses

The survey ends with an open comment box, and 754 respondents used it. Their comments are printed as written, edited only to protect the identity of the respondent: names, specific institutions and towns, vendors, and identifying figures are replaced in brackets. Each comment was read and grouped by its main topic. Fifty-nine entries such as “n/a” are left out; the other 695 follow.

The topics are the six used in the 2025 edition, mission-critical, cybersecurity, equity and access, process friction, EPC usability, and kudos, plus three added this year: the bidding portal, consultant rules, and program scope. A comment may touch two topics. Shares below are of the 695 comments.

Topic	Main topic (comments)	Share of comments	Main or second topic (comments)	Share
Mission-critical	161	23.2%	187	26.9%
Process friction	141	20.3%	170	24.5%
Program scope	91	13.1%	131	18.8%
Cybersecurity	73	10.5%	101	14.5%
Bidding portal	68	9.8%	84	12.1%
Kudos	61	8.8%	94	13.5%
EPC usability	48	6.9%	67	9.6%
Equity and access	26	3.7%	68	9.8%
Consultant rules	9	1.3%	30	4.3%
Other	17	2.4%	20	2.9%

Source: 2026 E-rate applicant survey. 754 respondents left a written comment.

Key themes

CONTINUED RELIANCE: The most common theme is dependence on the program. Respondents describe E-rate as the reason they can afford their connections, and many say a loss of support would force cuts elsewhere in their budgets.

PROCESS AND ADMINISTRATION: About a quarter of substantive comments describe the process as slow or burdensome: decisions that arrive months after filing, review questions

repeated from year to year, document retention, and the fear of an error. Comments about the E-rate Productivity Center as software are a separate and smaller group.

THE PROGRAM'S SCOPE: Requests to change what the program funds are the third most common theme: Category Two budgets and the per-student multiplier, licenses and maintenance, servers, voice service and VoIP equipment, and student devices. Requests for network security and cybersecurity services are counted separately and are the fourth most common topic.

THE BIDDING PORTAL: Nearly one comment in eight mentions competitive bidding or the USAC-managed portal adopted for FY2028. Both views appear below. The survey item on the portal's necessity divided 30.7% agree, 30.6% disagree (chapter 6).

KUDOS: About one comment in seven thanks the program, USAC staff, or a state coordinator, or describes an improvement.

The comments

All 695 comments follow, grouped by main topic and numbered. Each is printed as written, edited only to protect identity, with the respondent's state and applicant type; where the respondent gave neither, the comment is attributed to an E-rate applicant.

Mission-critical (161 comments)

1. "The E-rate program is vital to ensuring we have proper internet service for our school system." *E-rate applicant*
2. "It could always be improved, but it is necessary for the schools." *California school district*
3. "Our school is very dependent on the E-rate program" *South Dakota school*
4. "we rely heavily on this program to help us to give students and staff the tools to provide the best education possible." *Arkansas school district*
5. "This program is an enormous part of our success and ability to provide state-of-the-art networking and connectivity from all of my users and students." *Idaho school district*
6. "E-Rate is absolutely necessary for our rural library. With out it we would have a very difficult time aiding our patrons with all their needs and wants." *Oklahoma library*
7. "We could really use help with cybersecurity services and equipment. We could also use help with voice services (both providers and internal equipment), but that is a lower priority. EPC has slowly but surely improved, which we appreciate. Like most districts in Oregon (and likely nationwide), we struggle for funding and the E-rate program is the only way we've been able to keep our wired and wireless network up to modern standards as well as provide enough Internet bandwidth to keep core services (that is, teaching and learning) functional. As the reliance on stable and fast Internet access continues to grow, it would help us tremendously to receive E-rate funding for a redundant ISP connection. Too many services stop functioning when we lose Internet connectivity, leading to lost learning time and lesser outcomes for students." *Oregon school district*
8. "Our district really appreciates the ability to work with E-Rate USAC to offer internet to our students and help with discounts that really help our budget for a large district. E-Rate has been a tremendous help with network upgrades that the district could not afford in the past (we did not pass a bond in 2019). Without E-rate support, we would not have been able to complete upgrades in a timely manner in relation to the current older district infrastructure. This program is vital to districts like mine and is greatly appreciated!" *Michigan school district*
9. "There is no way we could provide internet service for our library patrons without the support of e-rate. If any service was added I do think security should be included in e-rate." *Georgia library system*

10. "If we lose our E-rate program this will vastly effect our services to our community. We are one of the poorest parishes in the state and it is vital to our community that we are able to keep this service!" *Louisiana library*
11. "E-Rate has been extremely beneficial to our student learning at our school. We could not have done it without the support of E-Rate funding." *New Mexico school*
12. "E-rate allows libraries to provide internet access at lower rates. If libraries had to pay full rate for internet access, many of the necessary programs libraries provide would have to be cut, for example, Summer Reading would not be possible without low rate internet access." *New Mexico library system*
13. "E-rate is *very* valuable to our public library. Connectivity is so important that if the program were to go away, or if it were to become exceptionally difficult to apply and qualify for, we would have to adjust our operating budget and cut other vital services as a result." *New Jersey library system*
14. "Our school would not have access to curriculum, parent portal or reimbursement process without erate." *New Mexico school district*
15. "Erate is critical for our district to provide quality learning experiences for our students." *Kentucky school district*
16. "We love it. Please do not take away this funding opportunity." *Texas school district*
17. "Without Erate, I don't know if my school could afford connectivity. We are in a rural part of Oklahoma, and the choices are very minimal." *Oklahoma school*
18. "Thank you. It would be a challenge if we lost any of our current E-rate discounts." *New York library system*
19. "Our small town library could not function without E-rate program." *Oklahoma library*
20. "With out e-rate I would not have our new work running at the speeds we require. Equipment would be outdated and would constantly break down. Having a 2nd back up line for internet is very important in today's world. If a line goes down then most of our services are dead in the water." *Illinois school district*
21. "As a rural school district, the E-Rate grant is essential to the viability of our technology infrastructure." *Missouri school district*
22. "Having e-rate has been the only way the library could afford wi-fi service. Having category 2 has been a game changer in our libraries upgrade." *Alaska library*
23. "The FCC should enhance the program not take away from or eliminate the program. Schools could not afford the higher necessary bandwidth without help from this program." *Missouri school*
24. "Without the services that USAC has provided our school district over my time at this school (20 plus years) our educational needs would have not been met. Eighty percent discount to upgrade and support our network has been a cost our school district has been willing to support." *Arkansas school district*
25. "The E-Rate program has played a critical role in helping our district maintain a modern and secure network infrastructure. As [a large school district] in the state, keeping our network current not only protects us from cybersecurity risks but also helps safeguard the broader educational community that relies on interconnected systems and services." *Arizona school district*
26. "Our small rural library relies on the funding from e-rate to provide our patrons with the best internet available in our area. We greatly appreciate it." *Oklahoma library*
27. "This program makes it possible to provide a quality program to our students" *Pennsylvania school*
28. "E-rate is critical to student learning in today's and our future's work environments. It is really a mission critical resource for our district, and many others in our area (particularly rural districts)." *Oregon school district*
29. "The E-Rate Program is vital to providing access to all children - at school and in the local library." *California school district*
30. "Our community would be devastated with the loss of erate funding. The library would not be able to afford the bandwidth needed to support the needs of the community." *Iowa library*
31. "E-rate funding is very important to our school district allowing us to keep our network up to date. The entire E-rate process, however, is very inefficient." *Pennsylvania school district*
32. "Erate it vital to us and many districts" *Pennsylvania school district*
33. "ERate funds are essential for our work and to provide students, staff and the district with the necessary gear and funding to provide relevant education to our students." *Colorado school district*
34. "The E-Rate program is a vital service that has been leveraged by several educational entities to provide critical internet services for three

- decades. Ensuring the program continues without adding bureaucratic layers that do not add any real substance would be a disservice and frankly isn't needed. Instead, some time and effort should be spent updating the eligible services list to include support for redundant circuits, etc. This would ensure stability across networks and may reduce overall costs to the organization." *California library system*
35. "E-rate is a vital program to our district. Without this funding we would not be able to upgrade our networking equipment." *Kentucky school district*
 36. "The E-rate program has provided us with funding support to assist us in providing the necessary internet and wireless access required to educate our students." *Ohio school district*
 37. "Without E-rate we would struggle to provide services needed by our community." *Virginia library system*
 38. "We are a very rural school district. Without the E-rate program we could not afford the price of equipment to provide access to high speed internet." *Kentucky school district*
 39. "Keep the program, essential to our growth" *West Virginia school district*
 40. "This is a vital program for us, which allows us to provide internet services to our member libraries and to continue to provide necessary equipment to manage those internet services. Without this program, services would be drastically reduced and the financial impact would be felt throughout all of our covered communities." *E-rate applicant*
 41. "Please don't take E-rate away from rural libraries." *New York library system*
 42. "E-Rate is integral to our school district. Without it, we could not afford internet access nor wifi hardware." *Colorado school district*
 43. "Without E-rate, we would not be able to maintain our network or support the district's educational mission. We are already under financial pressure, and the loss of discounts would cause us to cut access and availability of the internet." *Wisconsin school district*
 44. "We are in a mostly rural area and this program is vital to our ability to serve our patrons." *Virginia library*
 45. "We desperately rely on E-Rate to help fund internet and equipment." *Missouri library system*
 46. "This program is vital to the success of our district's digital learning program. Capacity going forward needs to be able to scale with our needs and provide for evolving and necessary data protection requirements" *New Jersey school district*
 47. "E-Rate Support allows us to maintain highspeed Internet Connections at each of our [amount] rural library locations. We would have a hard time managing the cost of Internet services without this support. These internet connections are a critical component in allowing us to provide quality library services to our communities. We could not do business as we know it without these connections and that support." *Kansas library system*
 48. "E-Rate makes IT personal life more smooth and stable with budget consistency." *Tennessee school*
 49. "We are a rural low socioeconomic community. Without E-rate our students and District would suffer and likely not be able to maintain the services, hardware, or bandwidth we currently have. Thank you USAC and FCC." *California school district*
 50. "E-rate funding is vitally important to schools. Over the last decade, it has been shown that technology plays a vital role in education. Schools need enterprise level IT equipment, but are limited by K-12 budget constraints. The E-rate program helps to bridge this gap allowing schools to maintain enterprise level infrastructure, while operating on a K-12 budget. Schools are also easy targets for cyber threats and attacks, due to budgetary restrictions. It would be a welcome change to allow E-rate funding for cybersecurity measures." *Pennsylvania school district*
 51. "I cannot even imagine how poor the state of our network would be without E-Rate funding. It is a terrifying prospect for our urban district, and even more dire for the rural districts around us." *Idaho school district*
 52. "[our ESD] is located in a very rural and remote area (we are [amount] miles away from the nearest [vendor], [vendor], [vendor], [vendor], etc). There is no doubt in my mind that we would not have a fiber internet connection to our building or our five small/remote school districts. We could not financially support the level of bandwidth we currently have (dubbed 'adequate' by most metrics) without the e-rate program. We appreciate this program and credit it for allowing our students to have consistent access to the larger world outside our little community." *Oregon consortium*
 53. "E-rate funding for internet, networking, etc. is vital to our district's mission and budget. Cyber

- attacks are an imminent threat. E-rate should cover cyber security.” *Colorado school district*
54. “Without E-rate we would not have the budget to maintain a high-availability network in our schools.” *Idaho school district*
 55. “As a rural, low-income school district, E-rate is essential for supporting students with competitive learning opportunities and fueling community growth. Expanding the program to cover backup internet connections and cybersecurity solutions would help ensure we can maintain that connectivity the program was originally designed for.” *E-rate applicant*
 56. “The EPC portal is user-friendly, and assistance is consistently accessible when needed. Expanding eligible equipment to include all components necessary for internet operations — particularly servers — would further enhance its value. Without the E-rate program, our school system would be unable to provide the high-quality education that our students currently experience. This program plays a critical role in ensuring reliable connectivity and supporting modern learning environments.” *Tennessee school district*
 57. “Without E-rate, our district would be unable to provide internet access to students in our schools. It would simply be too expensive.” *Tennessee school district*
 58. “If we didn’t have access to eRate funding, we would not be able to afford even the basic internet access required for State testing in our district. Our district has an extremely high poverty rate and a low tax base. This funding is the only way we can deliver quality internet services to our students.” *Tennessee school district*
 59. “The E-rate program is essential to our school district’s ability to maintain necessary internet and network infrastructure. Without this support, we would be forced to take drastic measures to accommodate these costs within our existing budget. We believe the program’s graduated discount structure is fair and appropriately targets those with the greatest need. Additionally, we strongly recommend that CIPA filtering costs be made E-rate eligible, as the program already mandates CIPA compliance as a prerequisite for funding.” *Tennessee school district*
 60. “E-rate is vital to the development and success of our schools and our students.” *Tennessee school district*
 61. “We are a rural school district. Without E-Rate, we would have subpar internet. You have made it happen for us year after year! Thank you! We hope you will cover cyber security items in the future.” *Illinois school district*
 62. “Without erate we would not have the internet speed and srvice we have now..” *Tennessee school district*
 63. “If e-rate is taken away, our district will not be able to sustain the level of service that we are currently providing. I also believe cyber-security services should be covered by e-rate as well. Many school districts lack the funds to be able to provide adequate cyber-security protections without specific grants or e-rate funds. Cyber-security protections are no longer a want, but a need.” *Michigan school district*
 64. “The Erate program is critical to the [our district]’s ability to connect to the Internet. We are a small rural organization with limited connection opportunities.” *Colorado school district*
 65. “E-Rate is the only reason we can afford the network upgrades we need from year to year, and the internet speeds we need to operate on the level we are now.” *Tennessee school district*
 66. “The e-rate program is vital to providing the network infrastructure and internet connectivity for our school district.” *Florida school district*
 67. “I have used the eRate program since 2014. It has saved our district many thousands of dollars. It would significantly harm our district if eRate were to go away. I would love to also see EDR/MDR services be an eRate-able product.” *Ohio school district*
 68. “I am writing to express my strongest opposition to the proposed restructuring, capping, or sunseting of the E-Rate program. As an educator deeply invested in our students’ future, I can state unequivocally that our school cannot afford these critical internet services without E-Rate subsidies. Eliminating or reducing this funding will immediately place our children at a severe academic deficit and strip away the essential resources they need to learn. The proposal to roll back E-Rate ignores the reality of modern education. Today, virtually all mandatory state testing, national assessments, and educational benchmarks have gone fully digital. Without robust, E-Rate-funded broadband, our school will lack the bandwidth required to administer these required exams. We cannot hold students accountable to digital standards while simultaneously cutting off the very infrastructure required to access them. Furthermore, I strongly oppose any measures to exclude early childhood education from this

- program. Rather than dismantling E-Rate, the FCC should expand it to permanently cover Head Start and Pre-K programs. Digital literacy and access do not begin in kindergarten; our youngest learners need these resources to build a strong foundation before entering elementary school. E-Rate is not an optional luxury or a primary cause of harmful screen time. It is a mandatory, backbone utility for 21st-century classrooms. Removing this lifeline will widen the digital divide and harm the students who need our support the most. I urge the Commission to protect and expand E-Rate to ensure every child has an equal opportunity to succeed.” *Puerto Rico school*
69. “We would be lost without the funds we receive via e-rate!” *New York library system*
 70. “Our small, rural, public library needs high-speed internet for the community we serve as high-speed internet connections are spotty in our area. We currently receive a 70% reimbursement of funds for these services, which are highly used by our patrons. Without E-rate, we could not maintain the high-speed internet infrastructure needed to fulfill this service to our community.” *Michigan library*
 71. “As a public school district, we cannot operate without E-rate. The funding required to operate and maintain a safe and efficient network for a school district is very expensive but necessary. E-rate funding makes this possible for already funding limited school systems.” *Tennessee school district*
 72. “This funding is absolutely essential to our school network.” *New York school district*
 73. “we are a 501(C)(3) library and would not be able to afford the secure, fast and reliable services our patrons need without e-rate funding.” *New Mexico library*
 74. “E-Rate is very valuable to rural, small, and even medium-sized cities. There are many libraries that would need to reduce service levels and services if e-rate was decreased or eliminated.” *California library*
 75. “E-rate is a vital funding source for K-12 public education in our current state. To be completely honest, screen time is an issue in K-12. But screen time is an issue at home too. Something that is an epidemic in our world right now. Students should see less device usage. However, we still need internet access, instructional technology for teachers and staff, and devices for students to use due to online testing each year. Moving the bidding process to the EPC portal is vital to ensure funds are being used correctly. ECF funds were spot on during COVID and helped so many schools. Most schools would have been lost without them. But it increased screen time tremendously. Screen time vs current Erate funding are two entirely different conversations. We need Erate funding nationwide for out internet access and network infrastructure. But I also believe its vital to decrease screen time.” *Arkansas school district*
 76. “Without Erate funds, our district will not be able to afford network upgrades.” *Kentucky school district*
 77. “My District could not afford to purchase updated network infrastructure or reliable internet access without the E-Rate program. I would like to see new industry standard network security become eligible for funding. EPC is a good platform. USAC manages the E-Rate program fairly well. The FCC needs to stop threatening to cancel E-Rate funding for small rural districts. Large districts can absorb costs better, but small rural districts cannot. We simply do not have the funding.” *Colorado school district*
 78. “The E-rate Program is essential for our district. Without the funds the program supplies we could not afford the products needed to run a secure and resilient network for the capacity required.” *Tennessee school district*
 79. “I am writing to express a vital need for the continuation of full, unreduced E-Rate support for broadband internet connectivity. The FCC’s Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 26-41) asks whether the program should be narrowed or reoriented under the assumption that its initial connectivity objectives have been achieved. Respectfully, the ‘mission’ is far from completed. The true goal of the Universal Service principle has always been affordable broadband access—not simply the technical presence of a connection. Without the E-Rate discount mechanism, our schools would absolutely not be able to afford the necessary business-class services required to keep hundreds or thousands of students connected simultaneously. While children’s screen time and online safety are important societal debates that local communities and school boards must resolve, the operational reality of modern education cannot be ignored. Today, major textbook publishers deliver their curriculum primarily online, and mandatory state achievement testing is administered entirely online. A vast world of knowledge and essential educational tools are now available to students exclusively through digital means. If

- E-Rate funding for broadband internet access is reduced, capped, or withdrawn, it will not stop schools from needing the internet; instead, it will reignite the internet connection gap — especially in rural and underfunded communities. Schools will be forced to make devastating cuts to already overextended budgets just to keep basic broadband service active. I urge the Commission to safeguard the core connectivity funding of the E-Rate program so that schools can continue to provide the affordable, high-speed access required to educate our students.” *E-rate applicant*
80. “As a small community of approximately 5,000 residents, we would be hard-pressed to fund the technology and broadband infrastructure that E-rate supports without USAC assistance. The program is essential to maintaining reliable internet access for our schools and library, and losing or reducing this support would have a significant impact on our ability to provide these services. At the same time, the administrative requirements can be challenging for small organizations with limited staff. Simplifying EPC, reducing unnecessary paperwork, and providing clearer, more consistent guidance would make participation much more manageable. Faster application processing, improved transparency into review status, and earlier release of the Eligible Services List would also help small communities better plan their budgets and technology projects. The E-rate program is a vital investment in small and rural communities, and we appreciate the support it provides. Continued efforts to simplify the process while preserving funding will help ensure communities like ours can continue to provide reliable connectivity for students and library patrons.” *Oklahoma library*
 81. “E-rate has saved our library significant money when tech infrastructure ages/fails. There are truly not enough dollars in our annual budget to maintain a truly up-to-date, and secure network for our staff and patrons. In this time of cybersecurity attacks, libraries are vulnerable since our systems lag behind and proper support for our systems is not something most libraries can afford to employee SME in-house.” *Indiana library system*
 82. “The ERate funds our needed for our school to fund our internet and wifi needs.” *Texas school district*
 83. “We could not offer the level of internet access without eRate.” *Oklahoma library*
 84. “Our Library relies on the E-rate program to provide internet service for our patrons and customers.” *Ohio library*
 85. “Our small town library could not function without E-rate program funding. Thank you. We are grateful.” *E-rate applicant*
 86. “Our county depends greatly on the E-Rate program to provide internet and network infrastructure to provide the best learning environment for our students and teachers. After all, we are in the business of teaching students and E-Rate gives us the best advantage to make that happen. Please do not take this away from our studentsdistrict.” *Tennessee school district*
 87. “Without erate funding we would have to make deep cuts to other library services to finance our internet.” *Oklahoma library*
 88. “E-Rate is critical to public schools and will negatively impact students and public education.” *Kentucky school district*
 89. “E-rate is extremely important for our library. Access to the internet is one of the most important, if not the most important, services used by our patrons. E-rate makes it much easier to support those needs and manage a shrinking budget when need for funds and internet access is at an all time high.” *Idaho library system*
 90. “The fast, reliable internet connection our rural library receives is not a luxury, it is an absolute necessity for our staff, patrons, educators, and students. As the Director of a small rural library with a limited operating budget, I rely heavily on the financial support provided through the E-rate program to make that service possible. I know from firsthand experience that providing reliable broadband is expensive. During my seven years as Director, there was one year when I missed the E-rate filing deadline and did not receive funding. Even though we lost that support, I knew our community could not go without internet access, so I had no choice but to absorb the cost. That meant making painful cuts to staff wages, staff hours, library programs, and materials for that fiscal year. It was one of the hardest budget decisions I have ever had to make, and I promised myself I would never let it happen again. Many of the people we serve simply cannot afford high-speed internet at home. Some are still limited to dial-up service or broadband plans with less than 15 GB of data each month. Our library gives them access to a fast, dependable connection where they can complete homework, attend online classes, apply for jobs, access government

services, conduct business, connect with family, and upload or download files in minutes instead of hours. For many in our community, the library is their only reliable connection to the digital world. If you decide to eliminate or significantly reduce the E-rate program, I hope you fully understand the real-world consequences of that decision. In small rural communities across Idaho and throughout the country, you will be taking away a resource that people depend on every single day. You will also force library directors like me to make impossible choices, redirecting already limited operating funds away from staff, collections, programs, and services just to keep the internet on. I ask you to remember that behind every budget line is a community. Behind every funding decision are students trying to complete assignments, seniors accessing healthcare, job seekers applying for work, and families who have nowhere else to turn for reliable internet. The E-rate program is not an unnecessary expense, it is an investment that keeps rural communities connected and ensures that libraries can continue serving the people who need them most. Please do not take that opportunity away.” *Idaho library*

91. “Please do not get rid of this service. We are rural and rely on this service to connect to the internet” *Idaho library*
92. “The E-rate program is extremely important to our organization. Our small rural community depends on our library for internet usage. With our limited budget we would not be able to provide needed services to our community. Older patrons who can’t afford internet rely on us as well as students who use the library to proctor online exams for them which makes obtaining a degree a possibility.” *Idaho library*
93. “It’s a lifeline for our library operations and services. We have such a small budget that we would be lost without eRate to help us with the internet.” *Idaho library*
94. “Rural libraries really need E rate programs!!!” *Idaho library*
95. “Having E-rate pay for our internet provides a great relief of burden for our small rural library” *Idaho library*
96. “Our tiny rural library has a correspondingly tiny budget. Without e-rate, we would not be able to provide the internet accessibility that is vital to our farming community.” *Idaho library*
97. “The E-Rate program is invaluable to the success of our public schools and libraries. It provides essential funding that is critical to ensuring students, educators, and community

members have access to reliable, high-speed internet, an infrastructure that is no longer optional but foundational to learning, communication, and opportunity. If this funding is reduced or eliminated, many schools and libraries would face serious challenges in maintaining the connectivity needed to support modern education and public services. In states where technology infrastructure is already underfunded, losing E-Rate support would widen existing gaps and leave communities without the resources they need to thrive in an increasingly digital world. Protecting E-Rate means protecting equitable access to education, information, and opportunity for all.”

Idaho library

98. “We really need Erate program and its a big help.” *Idaho library*
99. “We are a small library, but our town is growing so fast our internet needs will be increasing and having funds available through E-rate is imperative!” *Idaho library*
100. “E-rate has been instrumental in keeping our networking technologies up to the task of educating our students in this always-online era of cloud services.” *Pennsylvania school district*
101. “Erate has been a huge asset for our school district. Without it our students wouldn’t have access to the resources that help them advance their learning” *Nebraska school district*
102. “E-rate is very important for us to be able to continue providing internet services to our patrons.” *West Virginia library*
103. “We heavily rely on this program.” *West Virginia library*
104. “Our agency depends on the discounts and services that the E-Rate program provides” *West Virginia library*
105. “E-Rate is very important to us.” *Rhode Island school district*
106. “Over the years, our library has relied heavily on the E-Rate program, and it has been an invaluable resource. Through E-Rate, we have been able to provide high-speed internet for our community, offer mobile hotspots for patrons to check out, and receive significant support with technology infrastructure during our library expansion. E-Rate assistance has helped us with internet connectivity, network and camera cabling, server closet needs, and continue to be instrumental with MIBS. These investments would have been difficult — if not impossible — to achieve within our regular budget. Simply put, E-Rate has saved our library a tremendous amount of money, reduced countless

- technology-related challenges, and allowed us to provide better services to our patrons. I am incredibly grateful for the program and the opportunities it has provided our library and community." *Idaho library*
107. "The E-rate program is critical to helping us a library fulfill our mission of connecting our patrons to information. We would struggle to pay for internet without the E-rate program." *Idaho library*
 108. "I fear that we would not have Internet for our patrons and our operations with E-rate support." *Missouri library*
 109. "Without the funding of E-Rate services for our rural community, our small library would not be able to afford the internet service we now have. Our low-income area residents depend on our ability to offer them high speed internet in our library as they don't all have it at home." *Idaho library*
 110. "E-rate is very vital to provide internet to students and members of the public who use libraries. It's as essential as water or electric and it's impossible to function in this world without it." *Indiana library system*
 111. "ERATE is vital to the success of our internet, we should also be considered rural not urban." *Idaho school district*
 112. "The E-Rate program is essential to our library's ability to provide quality internet access for our patrons in the community. A significant percentage of our community lacks access to the internet. In general, internet access such as broadband fiber, microwave, and cellular connectivity is difficult to obtain in our area due to limitations in installation in most locations. Our patrons use our internet for everything from online classes and research to general searching, studying, telehealth, and more. Without the support of E-rate, our library would not be able to afford internet access, and a very large portion of our community and patronage would lose all access to the internet." *Idaho library*
 113. "Without E-Rate funds, we would not be able to afford updates to our network and WiFi equipment. Please keep this extremely vital program." *Pennsylvania school district*
 114. "This has been an essential service to our students. We are in the digital age and we are very remote. We will not be able to compete educationally with areas that have assessable and plentiful internet. The digital divide will immediately occur again with the loss of services." *Alaska school district*
 115. "E-rate is vital to our library. It enables us to serve a growing population and ensures that we have reliable connections for students and job seekers." *Idaho library*
 116. "We could not provide services to our rural community without e-rate. It is a vital program. The platform for applying is terrible and not user friendly and I am not technologically challenged." *Idaho library*
 117. "Without E-rate, there would be a significant burden on our budget. We are very appreciative of what USAC provides." *Tennessee school district*
 118. "Erate is a vital part of K12 schools to keep funding down. Without it, we'd be having much different conversations about technology in our schools, for both education and business work." *North Dakota school district*
 119. "In extreme rural communities E-rate is the only way we can afford connecting our schools and libraries." *Alaska school district*
 120. "The E-Rate program is extremely important to us in order to maintain our mission for equal and easy access to information. Thank you!" *New Jersey library*
 121. "Without this program our meager budget would be adversely affected by the cost of providing this integral service to our community." *Connecticut library*
 122. "We are a small library with an even smaller budget. When phone service was no longer eligible, it negatively affected our budget. E-rate is important for us to provide necessary internet services for our community and patrons... especially in our rural setting with few other free wi-fi options." *Kansas library*
 123. "I don't know what we would do without E-rate. It has changed our school's possibilities." *Missouri school district*
 124. "I'm a small and rural library, and we need the e- rate to provide quality internet to our community." *Idaho library*
 125. "I've been filing erate for over 18 years for my district. The removal of telephony eligibility was tough. We are a small district and erate assists covering our expenses. With erate covering our communication hardware and software it is a tremendous boost to our ability to cover costs. With CyberSecurity becoming a bigger threat and considered part of the communication factor, it would be helpful to have this as a covered expense." *Iowa school district*
 126. "It is a must for our function to continue." *North Carolina library system*

127. "The E-rate program is a necessity to schools and libraries, ESPECIALLY right now as costs for everything are increasing and our freedom to access information is being unjustly challenged and/or restricted. The E-rate program is significant to rural areas, both small and large, keeping them connected digitally. Not having the E-rate program would create a significant digital divide to all communities, especially those who are either further away or don't have enough funding." *Louisiana library system*
128. "This is an extremely important program that our schools rely on for funding and providing access and approved gear for internet services, etc." *Florida school district*
129. "The E-Rate is critical to our district. The only way we could afford keeping our wireless structure up to date is by using the E-Rate program. Thank you!" *New Jersey school district*
130. "E-Rate helps provide vital connectivity to our extremely remote community in Alaska" *Alaska library*
131. "E-rate funding is vital to our district's ability to provide and maintain the basic technological needs of a K-12 institution. Without funding, I believe our staff and students would lack the necessary resources to support teaching, learning, and long-term success." *Texas school district*
132. "Rural schools need E-rate. Stopping this program would severely impact our school and our students. We rely on the E-rate program for internet and instruction." *Arizona school*
133. "Maintaining a quality network for our public school would be a financial burden if not for E-rate. We would have to reduce spending in critical areas if we had to fund 100% of necessary network upgrades." *Arizona school district*
134. "ERate funding is vital to our district. We would not be able to afford the same bandwidth, capacity, or capabilities without this funding, which would significantly hinder academics, operations, and safety within our district." *Arizona school district*
135. "Our rural schools would not be able to afford Internet Access without E-Rate. The funding and support we get from the E-Rate program is vital to our school's Internet Access." *Oklahoma school district*
136. "E-rate is vital for my small rural community. It allows our small local library to have broadband and equipment to run the broadband." *Idaho library*
137. "Funding for e-rate has been extremely helpful and very critical for some schools. Losing funding for this would be a big deal." *California school*
138. "E-rate is incredibly important to the overall technology operations in school districts. I would argue that it should be expanded to include new cybersecurity and data security priorities." *Ohio school district*
139. "In a time of tightened budgets, the program is vital for schools and libraries to meet connectivity needs" *Illinois school district*
140. "I have participated with the E-rate program as an applicant since 2002, across multiple public libraries. Small rural libraries depend on the e-rate program to connect our communities to the wider world. E-rate has saved over \$25,000 for the libraries I have worked for in the last 20 years. Please preserve this program as it now exists for the sake of little libraries just like mine." *Pennsylvania library*
141. "E-rate is essential to my libraries' financial survival. Many of my smaller branches rely on its funding to provide faster internet speeds. Without the E-rate program, our libraries would suffer and one branch would have to cut back so significantly that the impact on the community would be devastating." *Arizona library system*
142. "Our rural library system has benefited from E-rate funding for more than 20 years, and it is crucial to serving our communities effectively with a limited budget." *Arizona library*
143. "E-rate has provided our small school district with fiber internet connectivity in a poorly connected portion of the state. We love it!!! Without the financial benefit of the E-rate program, our district would have to change our position on internet connectivity due to funding. This would destroy the educational benefits our students receive because of the benefits of fiber connectivity." *Illinois school district*
144. "Please keep erate available to libraries, especially in rural areas." *Arizona library*
145. "E-Rate is an essential part of [our district]'s technology budget and long-term technology plan. Without this program, we would not be able to provide the level of service, connectivity, and technology access required to support our students and staff." *California school district*
146. "Without E-Rate, our digital environment for our [amount] students and [amount] teachers/employees (not to mention our

- families) will be severely and adversely impacted.” *Texas school district*
147. “Losing erate funding would be a huge loss for the libraries I serve” *Kansas library system*
 148. “Without Erate, our [amount] member library district in our very rural area would not have internet at all.” *Arizona library system*
 149. “The E-rate program provides reliable internet connectivity and capital funding for our schools that is critical to teaching, learning, and school operations in the 21st century. It helps to level the educational playing field for students in our rural communities by ensuring they have access to the connectivity needed for online learning & assessments, career & technical education, and other essential educational services. E-rate funding allows us to spend our limited technology funds on cybersecurity and classroom technology rather than connectivity and infrastructure. If this funding was cut, we would need to cut teaching or other critical positions to maintain our internet services and tech infrastructure so that our students do not fall behind the rest of the world. Loss of funding for analog phone systems has been one of the deciding factors in moving to VOIP systems as we look to save money and maximize revenue wherever we can. The E-rate program is well regulated and ensures fair competition and lowered costs through the RFP process. The E-rate program is a critical part of our modern education system and allows students to connect to and learn about the modern world.” *Oregon school district*
 150. “We very much need and appreciate this service. Without it we would not be able to offer to our community free Wifi. Thank you!” *Alaska library*
 151. “eRate has enabled our district to update, keep current and maintain the network components and services at schools, other wise we would have outdated unsecure slow switches and Wi-Fi systems. We would not be able to have on line learning or one to one devices for students as the network would not be able to support it and we will never have the funds to do this ourselves for a district our size.” *New Mexico school district*
 152. “We are extremely grateful for this service. We would not be able to provide the level of service we provide to our students in our rural area if it weren’t for the E-rate program. Thank you.” *Arizona school district*
 153. “We need the support of E-rate to continue offering the services to our students. With budget’s shrinking from the state, we are desperate.” *Arizona school district*
 154. “E-rate has been an invaluable program for ensuring students in rural and remote communities have access to reliable broadband and modern network infrastructure. As technology has evolved, the program should continue to prioritize resilient Internet connectivity, cybersecurity, and network management services, which are now essential to daily school operations. I also encourage continued efforts to simplify EPC and reduce administrative complexity. Smaller districts often have limited staff, and additional reporting or procurement requirements can create a disproportionate burden. Clear guidance, intuitive systems, and streamlined processes would allow districts to spend more time supporting students and less time navigating compliance. Finally, please continue recognizing the unique connectivity challenges faced by rural and geographically isolated districts. Reliable primary and redundant Internet connections are critical for instruction, safety, communication, and continuity of operations.” *Alaska school district*
 155. “E-Rate is an incredibly important program for our rural school community. Without it, we would struggle with connectivity and providing high quality distance learning opportunities for our students.” *Illinois school district*
 156. “All are an essential and beneficial tool for our organization.” *California school*
 157. “With our school district qualifying at the highest level of discounts because of our UPP thresholds, it would not only be a detriment to what we could provide our schools without the funding but also a huge financial impact.” *California school district*
 158. “Our library could not provide the service we do without e-Rate to help us financially.” *Idaho library*
 159. “E-Rate is a critical funding source for our district.” *Iowa school district*
 160. “E-Rate is vital for our public library system. Many of our branches are in rural areas without access to broadband and with limited cell phone service. The addition of cybersecurity, VOIP, and backup/failover systems would have a very positive impact on our ability to better serve our communities. Thank you.” *Oregon library system*
 161. “We are the main public access for internet for people in our community. We would not be able

Process friction (141 comments)

162. “Is there a way to centrally upload EPC documentation commonly requested during PIA reviews — such as NSLP/CEP support — that can be reused across all E-Rate applications to validate the discount? In the past, I have seen different reviewers for WAN and Internet services request the same documents, which requires uploading the same information multiple times.” *Texas school district*
163. “Simplify and Reduce the time and effort required by Schools in relation to E-rate and EPC, etc. We simply do not have the personnel and expertise and often need consultants to take advantage of the programs more fully. Shift the onerous to the vendors and remove the unmanageable beauracratic record keeping requirements hoisted on the schools. Put that on the vendors and simplify and reduce them as well.” *Ohio school district*
164. “The paperwork is getting harder and harder for small solo librarian libraries to do to qualify.” *Tennessee library*
165. “Have said it before, but will say it again: the application process is not easy to understand. It’s hard to know under which category to put some of the needs we have.” *New York library*
166. “The program and its system of management has come a long way over the years. Please try and continue to simplify the program as much as possible to make it easier for applicants and service providers to use. Thank you.” *Mississippi school district*
167. “The changes that are happening to E-Rate is making it more of a burden for applicants—and probably service providers. Applicants are in serious need for help in cybersecurity and to streamline, not increase their work.” *Nebraska consortium*
168. “Process is long and lengthy with too many forms. Adding a portal will only make it worse. It should still have the bidding window but requirements and wait times are much too long.” *Massachusetts school district*
169. “The reviews are sometimes hard to understand. The questions need to be clearer. The PIA reviews that are due in 24 hours are really hard when you have staff that servie in more than one role. It would be nice to have the option to tag schools to the FRN and not to each individual line item. It is a lot of extra clicking.” *Wisconsin school*
170. “Currently concerned about the request to refund previous years Category II funds due to state of SC contract issues.” *South Carolina school district*
171. “We are still waiting for FCDL for 2025 and Cybersecurity pilot - PIA seems to take much longer now.” *California school district*
172. “Applying needs to be easier and less red tape. The forms are confusing for new applicants and the arbitrary filing windows need to be changed to set calendar dates.” *Arkansas school district*
173. “Cybersecurity FDCL are running behind, really need that letter sooner than later. Most districts have already got thiers over a month ago, we haven’t got ours yet. That’s my only issue right now, everything else is great....but the Cybersecurity FDCL in our hands would make it greater. Just hope is shows up in the next 4-5 days. The waiting game is tough. Thanks!” *Arkansas school district*
174. “The PIA reviews are extensive and unnecessary. Having to file Cat 2 as both Basic Maintenance and Internal Connections is redundant.” *Iowa school district*
175. “I’m not sure why, but the reviews are taking an inordinate amount of time in responding to 471 reviews and PIA answers. It can be frustrating to apply early and have your 471 certified in late January and still NOT hear anything. Then respond to a PIA question and not hear anything for 1 month!” *Ohio school*
176. “The program is extremely valuable. The paperwork can be overwhelming and confusing.” *South Dakota library*
177. “Program is still convoluted, difficult to naviagate all of the changes.” *Illinois school district*
178. “The jargon is what makes everything difficult for applicants, especially in rural areas.” *New Mexico library*
179. “The USAC auditors require more training to fully understand the E-rate process, requirements, and forms.” *Michigan consortium*
180. “PIA process is slow, cumbersome, arbitrary, and capricious.” *Pennsylvania consortium*
181. “I would like for USAC to be more consilient during their reviews. It seems that each reviewer has different tolerances for what is allowable.” *Alabama consortium*

182. "Even after some streamlining, paperwork and red tape seem excessive at times. While it is an extremely beneficial program, overregulation impedes manageability and innovation." *West Virginia school district*
183. "The current process is overly convoluted. It needs to be simplified, and we should have final decision-making authority." *Illinois school district*
184. "E-rate is of great benefit to schools and their ability to provide educational teaching and learning. The audits and questions could be handled better. Specifically, grouping questions and sending once instead of multiple rounds of single questions that may or may not be related." *Georgia school district*
185. "Allow tagging of buildings for the whole FRN, not just individual line items. Review questions are not always clear. 24 hours is not enough time for any review, even if it is a follow-up question. E-Rate people have other responsibilities as well, or could be sick or otherwise unavailable. Access to the eligibility of items and if they are only partially eligible. Vendors don't always know. Category 2 budget reviews should always be the last review. We have reduced the budget and then gotten an eligibility review of an item and the item was reduced. The reviewer wouldn't add the reduction amount back into the budget." *Wisconsin school district*
186. "Streamlining some aspects of EPC: * Too many clicks, especially when selecting/tagging entities for products & services. Could you tag entities for the full FRN rather than each line item? And there is no need to confirm the selection as you review the form 471 and could go back if you've made an error. Reviews * Category 2 budget reviews should always be the LAST review, not the first as sometimes an applicant reduces their application request to get within budget only to later have another item reviewed and reduced, causing applicants to lose funding in that year (and if it's the last year of the 5 year budget, it's just gone) *Consistency is lacking - review questions can swing wildly between staff* Some Yes/No review questions could be answered either way depending how an individual reads/interprets it - there should always be an Other option to explain why you answered Y/N. Bidding Portal * How (or will) the bidding portal be able to handle contracts that expire mid year?" *Wisconsin school district*
187. "The whole application/updating process is confusing and difficult" *Oklahoma library*
188. "USAC selective review process feels like a scam. Same questions being asked over and over again." *Georgia school district*
189. "The PIA review and appeal process continues to be determined largely by people translating the rules as they go along. Instead of trying to help, the process comes across as punitive and uncaring." *Michigan school district*
190. "The particular documentation required this year for enrollment data was not well suited to private schools, because many (most?) states do not keep enrollment data for private schools. This form includes concepts and terms such as EPC and self-provisioned network that some people will not be familiar with (I was not) and there should have been answer option to indicate that or 'I am unable to answer this question at this time.'" *Virginia school*
191. "We would like E-Rate to provide off-site training to help understand all these benefits and how we might use them in our facilities. It's been about 8 years ago since we went to a State-led training session. Off-site is best, not an online webinar." *Texas library*
192. "It is the most frustrating process I have encountered. Information from various sources is inconsistent. There is not a cohesive workflow based on needs/requests. I probably want be attempting this waste of time in the future." *Florida school*
193. "The program as a whole creates a relatively high administrative burden on our district. I wish funds were allocated in simpler way, more as an annual grant to each eligible entity based on a formula, in order to decrease administrative burdens on participating entities." *Minnesota school district*
194. "Process is still complicated and for busy administrators would not be possible without 3rd party assistance from organizations like [our consultant]" *California school*
195. "The USAC website and their customer service and reps are terrible. I have yet to call to receive help and get the help I need. They are not knowledgeable about the programs or the site and they are consistently rude." *Rhode Island consortium*
196. "REDUCE the administrative burden and length of time documentation must be saved. This requires money and storage which schools just don't have. Schools should be able to remove the cloud of indefinite and 5, 7 year, or longer uncertainty with the threat of funding clawback. 3 years is fair." *Ohio school district*

197. "Make the filing process more user-friendly for applicants who do not wish to use a consultant and prefer to handle the filings themselves."
Illinois school district
198. "This is my first year trying to file for e-rate. I will say that the website is confusing. I got both of the forms filed but am unsure what to do after I received bids. How do I accept a bid?"
Montana library
199. "There needs to be an easier way to deal with student count. I get a PIA every year and one year they changed the funding discount because they said I couldn't verify my count via third party. I don't know if it could be a state issue, but something should be done especially when I am talking about less than 120 students to count."
Kansas school district
200. "We have discontinued application as the time/admin burden now far outweighs the benefit to our organization."
Illinois library
201. "Our funding decisions have been later and later the last few cycles. It makes it difficult to fit summer project in over the summer when network upgrades are easier to complete with extra time and fewer disruptions to instructional time."
California school district
202. "We do not look forward to the erate process every year. It is a painful process both in length of time as well as hours having to be put in, questioned about every little thing (which is understandable, but the people doing the questioning do not understand technology which makes it hard to see how they can make a call that something isn't eligible based on their interpretation where someone else might interpret it as eligible). Each year I have to weigh the decision to worry with erate or not as I am the only one in my school organization to do it and my time is split many ways."
Illinois school district
203. "The delays in USAC's application processing have grown substantially over the past two years, specifically during PIA review. This seems to be caused by a combination of a lack of staffing and additional procedures that have been put into place for this process. In addition to this process, the overall lengthy and complicated application process serves as a barrier for many schools and libraries that would greatly benefit from this funding. The entire application process needs to be reassessed while still maintaining robust controls to prevent fraud. The new bidding portal mandate, from my perspective, is just another layer of unnecessary and costly administration. The controls around fraud and the bidding process are already highly robust through the PIA review process, the bidding matrix requirements, and the application requirements. This seems to be another layer of complication to discourage applicants from applying in order to make the program appear less effective and necessary than it truly is. Digital equity is a large problem in our local communities, disparately affecting the most financially and socially vulnerable. Instead of adding additional barriers for applications, this program needs to have barriers removed."
Illinois library system
204. "The EPC has improved but changes every year get confusing and some of the language doesn't always make sense. The review process can take a very long time and waiting for category 2 while it is a big discount is a pain. It can go from one fiscal year to the next leaving schools in a bind. I only use it when absolutely necessary because the process and length of time it takes for approval. The eligible service list should change with the times. Everyone is going Voip. We are required to be CIPA compliant but get no support for that. It's a huge cost and would be great if there was some funding for it."
Montana school district
205. "Overall, the E-rate program remains one of the most important federal supports for school technology infrastructure, particularly for rural and smaller districts that depend on predictable discounts for internet access, network equipment, and related services. USAC describes the program as supporting eligible services for schools and libraries, including internet access, telecommunications services, and related equipment, while the FCC's annual Eligible Services List provides the official guidance for what is eligible each funding year. My primary suggestion is to continue simplifying the process for applicants. EPC has improved over time, but it can still be difficult for smaller districts with limited administrative staff to navigate forms, entity profiles, funding requests, post-commitment changes, and invoicing requirements. More plain-language guidance, clearer status messages, fewer duplicative data-entry steps, and better auto-population from prior-year applications would reduce applicant burden. The Eligible Services List should also be as clear and practical as possible. In addition to the official eligibility descriptions, it would be helpful to include more real-world examples of eligible and ineligible services, especially for cybersecurity, managed network services, cloud-managed equipment, filtering, Wi-Fi, and emerging

- connectivity needs. Since the ESL is released before the Form 471 filing window and guides applicant planning, timely release and clear explanations are very important. I would also encourage the FCC and USAC to continue improving consistency in application review. Applicants benefit when PIA review questions are predictable, documentation expectations are consistent, and guidance is aligned across training materials, help desk responses, and EPC system prompts. More sample templates, model procurement language, and examples of acceptable documentation would be especially helpful for rural schools, small districts, and applicants without dedicated E-rate consultants. Finally, the program should continue evolving to reflect modern school operations. Connectivity is no longer limited to a school building; instruction, security, assessment, transportation, and district operations all depend on reliable broadband and secure networks. E-rate should remain flexible enough to support current and emerging technology needs while preserving accountability, competitive bidding, and responsible use of public funds.” *Oklahoma school district*
206. “The E-Rate program seems to be going backwards. It very difficult to manage the program with all the rules. All providers should be require to offer the same pricing for the same services. The providers hid cost and trick school employees who are overworked and undersupported.” *Michigan school district*
207. “For small schools like mine we do the applying for erate without a consultant and it can get burdensome to remember all the deadlines and do the paperwork every year. I wish there was a way to easily reapply and not have to do all the documentation every year multiple times.” *California school*
208. “The process and forms are very ‘federal government-esc’ in that the6 are overly complicated and tedious to fill out.” *New Hampshire school district*
209. “Simplified wording on the website so I don’t need a law degree to understand all the rules” *California school*
210. “There needs to be more communication/ improvement regarding Basic Maintenance requests. These often get approved via 471 but denied for reimbursement with no helpful communication/support from USAC. This is causing burden for schools expecting to receive the funding.” *E-rate applicant*
211. “Our 2026-2027 Category One application has been in Final Review status since February. Inquiries to Customer Service regarding what appears to be a stalled process provide no insight.” *California school district*
212. “more up-to-date and frequent training for new and advanced users to ensure everyone is on the same page” *E-rate applicant*
213. “USAC reps are not educated on their own rules. Too many times we have had to educate them on a phone call to get them to move our application through. I also do not understand why it is a problem to request more than I am eligible for. Why not just approve up to the amount I am eligible for? Trying to hack apart bids just to get the dollar amount the same is a mess for bookkeeping. If I ask for \$100 and I only qualify for \$50, then approve it for \$50. Why make it harder than it needs to be. If nothing else, tracking that I asked for even more should show the higher level of need for more funding in eRate.” *Texas school district*
214. “Improve timeliness of review of 471” *Virginia school district*
215. “If your staff were better trained the verifying of services would go smoother. We answer their question but they come back with the same question. We have had to copy and paste the item on the eligible list for them so they know what we are talking about.” *Kansas school district*
216. “A more specific eligible services list would be helpful, such as a searchable database or list that shows the eligibility of firewalls. Some are partially eligible and some are not eligible at all. We have no way to know until the PIA review. Faster turn around time for reviews and post commitment requests. Applications sit in limbo for months with no updates. When we email the reviewers or open a customer service inquiry the response just says that it’s currently in review and no actual answer or timeline is provided. Simplify PIA reviews, I get a lot of PIA questions asking for information that was either already uploaded or was stated specifically in the narrative such as a question about Duplicate services when the FRN narrative already states the service address and either ‘location 1, 2, annex, etc’. Or they will ask for SKU’s that were entered on the 471 in the FRN line item Model section or narrative.” *Pennsylvania school*
217. “The E-rate funding cycle delay is a significant concern this year. As we have reached June, the lack of certainty regarding funding decision letters (FDLs) has created operational challenges. It would be highly beneficial for

- USAC and the FCC to establish a firm, transparent deadline by which all initial FDLs are guaranteed to be issued. This year's processing timeline is unusually protracted compared to previous cycles, and implementing a clear cutoff date would greatly improve applicant planning and accountability." *Ohio school district*
218. "All of the steps are confusing and not always clear in what they are asking for approval. In short dumb it down so that a person walking in off the street and understand what is required." *Michigan library*
219. "USAC is extremely frustrating & difficult to use. The length of the process is ridiculous. Applications are due in March & nothing is heard for several months regarding follow up questions or if you're approved. Category 2 is a five year plan. Once that plan is approved in year 1, you should be able to go into the system for years 2-5 & simply request that year's funding. If you didn't spend all of last year's funding, it should still be available to use. Every year, the form should be a continuation of the year before. You shouldn't have to keep supplying the same information over & over and being asked questions again that you were asked the year before, and then being treated as if you are merely trying to cheat the system. Every workshop I have attended the presenter brags about the available money & moans that people don't claim it. Yes, we do....you just keep denying it, asking us to prove our worth every single time, even though the application was approved after jumping through multiple hoops. Eventually, if you're the person trying to make E-Rate happen, you give up & move on. In a district as small as mine, you don't have time to keep fighting for a few thousand dollars. You also can't afford to hire a company to do it for you. It's a little like being a rat in a circular maze with no exit. Communication is vague. If you do speak or email someone, it's always a customer service rep who is new to your case. You always get to start at step 1, no matter how many times you have tried to get answers or help." *Minnesota school district*
220. "Processing times seem to be getting slower and slower. This causes immense stress on a school district when budgeting and trying to maintain adequate services. E-Rate is critical to our school districts." *Texas school district*
221. "It is often difficult to plan and schedule due to the fact that it seems that applicants have strict timelines, while USAC staff do not seem to work under similar constraints." *Ohio school district*
222. "While easy to navigate, the application process for grants is still cumbersome. Without the help of a consultant, we would not be able to access these funds. I also think the program needs to evolve to include cybersecurity services beyond firewall." *Georgia school*
223. "PIA approves application incorrectly and the burden falls on applicant in reimbursement." *E-rate applicant*
224. "It would be very nice for the approval process to be more streamlined and a quicker process." *Illinois school district*
225. "We are a small, independent private school. We receive limited funding, but it is helpful. I believe the application process as-is suffices and am not looking forward to any additional administrative burden. I run a one-man Finance office. With our limited budget, we utilize basic internet services and, thus, only get a small credit offset. Requiring substantially more man-hours from me to utilize the system might just offset the benefit received, now that landline services are no longer eligible for coverage." *Pennsylvania school*
226. "It takes too long to escalate questions to USAC/PIA after customer support to resolve 'tardy' 471 applications waiting for FCDLs." *Wisconsin school district*
227. "This year's review process has been terrible. It is June and my Cat2 funding is still in review stage." *Ohio school district*
228. "E-rate is overly complicated. I wish this was more of a group buy system. Example: This firewall cost for everyone is x.xx. Last year I had single responses because I was already working with a vendor. A vendor that I regularly use would not even submit a bid. I purchased a firewall 2 years ago but the firewall percentage covered got knocked down so much that e-rate was almost not worth the time spent. Dual connections should be covered." *Illinois school district*
229. "If the C2 approval process could be faster and streamlined" *Georgia school district*
230. "I wish the entire thing could be done in one shot once a year. It's annoying having to file multiple forms at different times of the year. We were already approved for the funding, just put it in the bank after 6/30 instead of making us file the BEAR." *Pennsylvania library system*
231. "The review and approval process has been significantly slower this year compared to previous cycles. I would appreciate it if USAC could look into reducing these delays to ensure

- a more efficient experience for applicants.” *Ohio school district*
232. “There is no consistency from year to year in what gets reviewed in a PIA. A lot of the questions seemed to be from a lack of understanding about technology infrastructure and functions of a network.” *Idaho school district*
233. “E-Rate is not getting easier but more convoluted. The application review process needs vast improvement. Applicants shouldn’t receive emails that are ‘no response’ necessary. We’ve already responded. Just a ridiculous use of applicant resources. Why don’t Reviewers use the data/documents on file (e.g. contracts) before reaching out to applicants, most if not all of the ‘eligibility’ questions are right there. Again, waste of resources.” *Illinois school district*
234. “Applying for e-rate is exceedingly complicated, slow, and frustrating. We would not be able to do it without a third party (we use [our consultant]). Even with that assistance, it can be confusing the first few years.” *New Jersey library*
235. “Make forms simpler to understand what is being asked. Simplify the entire process.” *Oklahoma library*
236. “So much money wasted on needless gov’t oversight.” *Idaho school district*
237. “I find category 2 funding and request for reimbursement to be very difficult. I tried applying for Category 2 but was denied” *Pennsylvania library*
238. “The lack of understanding that districts have invested in self provisioned fiber and wish to maintain their investment is unreal. Two years in a row we applied for fiber upgrades and were denied both years for not posting a neutral solution and considering all options. The other options didn’t even comply with the original RFP but USAC didn’t care. Frustrating when dealing with USAC on appeals.” *Michigan school district*
239. “The application process is extremely complicated. We ended up needing to hire a consultant to navigate paperwork and bids, taking away from money we saved. Unless you have an IT degree it is very difficult to understand categories. There is only one possible internet providing the fiber to our rural school so the bidding process is unreasonable because we cannot afford \$20,000-200,000 rebuild of fiber line if it was even possible. Bidders are trying to scam government and [vendor] is scamming government but we need high speed internet for testing and curriculum. [vendor] has a monopoly on service in our area.” *Montana school*
240. “Program doesn’t get easier, it’s more convoluted today than ever before. There is nothing that has truly been simplified. And with the new procurement and consultant changes it’s bound to go from bad to worse.” *Illinois school*
241. “VOIP is an internet service, which should be covered. Content filtering and cyber security tools should be funded especially since content filtering is a CIPA requirement. We have pointed out in an FCC appeal that you can overwrite on the Form 471 when adding an FRN by giving exact example of what happened one filing year. It’s been 9 months with no update from FCC. FCC Appeal Status checks should be sent to appealing applicants so they know the issue is still being reviewed. The notification method is not useful. Corporations and Financial Institutions have Consumer Protection bureaus they can appeal to and that have standards for businesses. There should be one on the FCC not proactively updating the appealing applicants.” *Maryland school*
242. “The proposed rule will create an administrative burden for our agency and our third party consultants which should not occur.” *California school district*
243. “I’ve completed Erate applications since the early years of ERate. Over time, the process has become more cumbersome and takes more time to complete and document. Process needs to be simplified. EPC is clunky to navigate. For example, if you get into many of the sub areas, there is no ‘home’ button in the upper left corner of the screen. Instead, you have to navigate multiple screens to get back to the home screen. Also, some items are buried under other areas and they’re hard to find. Regarding interactions with USAC staff, it depends on who you talk to. Some are very nice and helpful while others are not. Some of the staff do not know the rules but are questioning districts about their application. Some staff make you feel like they just want to get you in trouble. The process and system are already scary because of all the legal language & the interactions with some of the staff. You’re afraid that 1 typo (not intentional fraud) is going to send you to jail.” *Texas school district*
244. “Processing speed has become an issue recently with E-Rate requests. If proposals take 6-months or more to approve (finally approving in the fall), it puts us into next year (summer) for install, and by then models may have

- changed. This was never an issue in years past, but we have missed the spring purchasing window and summer install windows the past two E-Rate cycles now.” *Michigan school district*
245. “Rules regarding what USAC will accept for entity verification should be in place and communicated to the applicant community prior to the opening of the Administrative window, not later after applications are submitted. The Administrative window doesn’t work. Applicants should be able to more seamlessly make adjustments to enrollments, free & reduced numbers, entity changes, up to the point of FCDLs for that funding year. Some states dates for submission and release of the most current data don’t happen until after the Administrative window has closed.” *E-rate applicant*
246. “The E-Rate program has provided necessary support to the services needed for broadband and security. However, some things required in E-Rate reviews are burdensome and unnecessary. For example, having to provide proof that a school is actually a state-recognized school when nothing has changed in that regard and it has never been an issue. Issues like this have slowed down the funding request process for several weeks.” *Texas school district*
247. “E-rate is very important to our organization. I wish the process and tools to manage it were easier to navigate so that we didn’t need to pay a consultant to help us.” *Michigan library*
248. “Large Consortium applications are taking way too long to go through PIA.” *New York consortium*
249. “The process is cumbersome as is everything connected with the government. We have a 3rd party help us with the process.” *Michigan school*
250. “Over the years, efforts by FCC to make the E-Rate program easier have generally made it harder (less familiar and predictable) - until it changes yet again.” *Oklahoma school district*
251. “It is not easy to file. It takes a lot of staff time and I believe it’s because our network isn’t simple. I still take that extra time because the funding is so valuable. We count on it as do our libraries.” *Massachusetts consortium*
252. “The entire program and process is ridiculous. The amount of paperwork we have to do is unreal. Also, all vendors raise prices around e-rate season so it’s just a scam.” *Illinois school district*
253. “It’s really difficult to manage the erate program for smaller schools that don’t have on site tech staff. Why can’t schools pick there own local vendors without all the red tape.” *Michigan school*
254. “Have not had favorable experiences with the approval process over the past few years. It has been a lengthy and arduous process the past couple of years. The auditors do not seem knowledgeable when they are asking questions regarding Category 2 equipment use and eligibility. It has cost us in both time and money and has set back project timelines and/or made projects difficult to complete in our summer break project window. Add to that recent manufacturing and shipping delays and it makes project schedules and just makes the e-Rate funding approval process one more challenging aspect of accomplishing the work we need to do to maintain our infrastructure to support education during the school year without disruption. We are hopeful this will improve in the future. Respectfully, [name]” *Michigan school district*
255. “I wish that e-rate would pressure internet providers to apply the discount to accounts ASAP. It is June 2026 and I am still waiting for [vendor] to apply e-rate to the July 2025-June 2026 cycle. In 2024-2025 they gave the discount starting in March. Please find a way to pressure them. It greatly hurts the Library’s cash flow.” *New York library*
256. “The program is complicated as it is, please don’t continue to add to the confusion.” *E-rate applicant*
257. “As a public library internet and phone availability is extremely important. Funding is never enough for the needs. And the time to find, and fill out the paperwork is burdensome to the administration of the library.” *Iowa library*
258. “I have had long delays where C1 fiber service that is a continuation of a previous year’s FRN not get approved and stays stuck in review state for most of the funding year. This is 2nd funding year that I still don’t have an approved FRN for a continuation of service. USAC shouldn’t have to spend much time reviewing the extension as we have a 15 year contract term that the cost stays flat with no annual increases. It would be great if those continuations for server in C1 could move quicker through PIA if no changes are detected or it would be great we didn’t have to file a 471 each year for the services we have a multiple year term with.” *Michigan consortium*
259. “Service Certifications and SPI review audits have been increased to the point of disservice to applicants. Please provide the amount of

- fraud it captures yearly to justify the increase over the last 5 years.” *Alabama consortium*
260. “I feel like the whole process is overly complicated and it’s not easy to figure out the resources that we are eligible for” *Idaho library system*
261. “The E-rate program is one of the most documentation-heavy and time-consuming programs that we are a part of. It needs to be streamlined and a better, more user friendly interface is needed!” *Ohio school district*
262. “I feel the program is too complicated and would largely point to the need for so many applicants to use a consultant as evidence. We do absolutely need the program to help fund our internet connection and internal connections, plus network equipment and wifi. I would like the possibility of being able to have a redundant or load balanced internet connection due to the importance for it for phone service and students/staff to access necessary educational sites.” *Florida school district*
263. “Current Cat2 in review for months - need experienced reviewers that understand technology terms. I also feel that in certain areas/states, there are so few options for internet/fiber access they mark up their cost, especially if they know you have ERate money (which they do because of the bidding process for Cat1). In NC, [vendor] provides the internet and School/Library actually just LEASE the fiber connections, which have inflated prices, in my opinion. Last opinion is that with the Cyber threats, knowing we can upgrade equipment every x years is important - without Erate we would eventually be an easy target using old and outdated (unsecured) network equipment.” *North Carolina school district*
264. “It’s a large program, so I understand the difficulties in USAC and applicants. I wish it could be easier somehow. Dates are confusing.” *Arizona school district*
265. “The current process takes too long. I have to know what I’ll be buying up to or sometimes over a year from when I’ll need it, which creates issues when administration does not discuss building plans and timelines with IT. This can create issues with needing structured network cabling (E-Rate Eligible) in a timely manner, or when ordering network equipment that ends up being delayed, out-of-stock, or not available the following year.” *Oklahoma school district*
266. “It took over 4 months for our school community to reconcile the fact that there had been multiple registrations for a unique ID # in the past (with 2 different locations & entering the name of the school in various different ways). It was a nightmare navigating with USAC and Sam.gov getting this situation sorted out & delayed out ability to update Form 498, which is required to process our funding/payment. It was finally accomplished at the end of the school year, but would have been beneficial throughout... still awaiting reimbursement through BEAR.” *Nevada school*
267. “The E-Rate process is already tedious and slow. The proposed changes will only make it slower and more difficult to navigate. I also expect the costs to rise as specialized consultants will need to raise costs to school districts because of the increased workloads.” *Michigan school district*
268. “simplified processes” *Louisiana school district*
269. “The program reviews are very strict and don’t understand how difficult it is for small schools to participate in the program because of the strict interpretation of the rules.” *E-rate applicant*
270. “Vendors charge an inflated amount. They hate the over the top requirements, but are in it for profit. The portal is a NIGHTMARE. Toddlers on a juice high made the site, and they have thrown their sippee cup in the bushes and went off to whine. It is not intuitive to click on the logo. There aren’t enough icons for navigation. When you click on the form, it should give you a list of things you will need, and an outline of progression on the side. You should be able to attach the bid when it is time, instead of remembering to do it BEFORE you get there. We do this ONCE a year. Why can’t you make the vendors use a fill in the blank form and fill in the blanks for the bid? If done correctly, this could be a vital starting point for a rubric. We get a 30 page bid with their biography, all the companies they supply internet to, whether or not they have male pattern baldness and if their significant other has cheated. I AM NOT JOKING ABOUT RECEIVING 30 PAGE BIDS. We would ask for bids in something like 100Mb increments and we get in anything but that from many vendors. Or they submit late. Or they submit something saying ‘contact me for a bid.’ Holy smokes, that is what I did when I filled out the e-rate form. Why, oh why is the the federal e-rate program paying the majority of the funds, and the rest going to to the state to distribute? And the state has higher standards than the federal government. I found out after doing this more than 5 years, that if the commission in Oklahoma doesn’t approve the vendor, they won’t pay the vendor. Fortunately, I stayed with [vendor] for Cat1 since they are a

quality provider. Now, onto Cat2. A couple of years ago I received Cat2 funding. I got the privilege of a random audit. Because I clicked on the link, my two week countdown started. [A personal family medical event.] I had to weeks to reply. Compare that with how long it took them to respond. It probably took them 20 or 30 times longer than 2 weeks. [expletive omitted] I found out through this, that if I was audited on cabling, we would needed to have submitted a 3d rendering of where all the cables went; I do not have the skill set to complete a 3D rendering. (I think it would be fair to warn applicants about this before they apply for cabling.) I warned the librarians about this in Oklahoma. After saying all that E-rate is vital. Many small libraries can't pay for fast internet or items covered in Cat2. I AM HIGHLY APPRECIATIVE THAT WE ARE ALLOWED TO SELECT VENDORS WHO ARE IN STATE OR REASONABLE CLOSE FOR GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE. I AM ALSO HAPPY THAT CUSTOMER SERVICE IS PART OF THE CRITERIA. It would stink to have a vendor with bad customer service if customer service wasn't a criteria. Make the site intuitive. Make it fill in the blank for vendors. Weed out all that aren't eligible, so we don't have to. Have librarians provide input into the site. And the questions at the end before you turn in the submission....make them easy. 'I promise not to share internet with other businesses or homes. 'I promise that my relatives are not in anyway affiliated with the company being awarded the bid.' 'I promise that I am not being given compensation for selecting the vendor that I chose.' Why does everything have to be so difficult? Yes, I am angry and bitter. Something done to help libraries and their patrons has turned into a government boondoggle. Librarians hate e-rate, but need it. 1. Make the website intuitive with icons that reflect their functions. 2. Show the progress when filling out the form. 3. If we need to attach documents, we should attach them when we get there in the form. 4. Make a LIST of all eligible items. Make a LIST of all ineligible items. Use bullet points for clarifying information. 5. Make bidders fill in a blank form for submission. (No extra crap.) 6. Audits should be given more than two weeks to respond. 7. If the Oklahoma Corporate Commission has higher standards than E-Rate, we should be told this at the BEGINNING of the form, so we can check with OCC to see if our selected vendor is a viable candidate. 8. Just have us get ALL OUR FUNDING FROM ONE SOURCE. Who had the brilliant idea to add the extra hoop?" *E-rate applicant*

271. "Applications should be processed year round instead of having the gap of time for approvals during the summer." *Texas school district*
272. "I just wish there was more training on how to do E-rate, closer to our area." *California library system*
273. "Better customer service response to questions." *Oklahoma school district*
274. "Rural Library director weighing in here.... we do not have the staff that the large libraries have so I need to rely on [our state library agency] to assist with EPC, USAC, FCC etc.... as the portals are over our heads.... with that said, we are truly reliant upon the funding we are provided each year, Thank you for considering our input, very appreciated." *Idaho library*
275. "The first year I filled out Form 471 I didn't understand a lot of terms used and the tutorials didn't explain them very well. I think some better explanation of what some of the technical terms mean would be helpful." *Idaho library*
276. "As a school technology director, I appreciate the value that the E-rate program provides in helping schools maintain reliable internet connectivity and network infrastructure. My biggest suggestion is to continue simplifying the EPC application process and reducing unnecessary administrative complexity, especially for smaller districts with limited staff. Clearer guidance, more consistent communication from USAC and the FCC, and faster application reviews would help districts spend less time on paperwork and more time supporting students and teachers. It would also be beneficial for the Eligible Services List to continue evolving so schools can take advantage of modern networking and cybersecurity technologies as their needs change." *Arkansas school district*
277. "Please tell us in plain English what we can apply for! Many of us are not tech savvy!" *Illinois library*
278. "USAC appears to be focusing on a catch-up effort by scrutinizing applications for minor technicalities and using them as grounds for audits or to deny funding, rather than remaining focused on the program's core mission of providing essential services to underserved students. Ultimately, the students are the ones who bear the consequences of these practices. Then FCC stays silent !!!" *New York school*
279. "The USAC application is extremely confusing and requires outside assistance every time anything needs to be submitted. I am unable to

do any of the required submissions on my own. It is also hard to know if companies are legitimate or even capable of providing the services required in our area. When an application is submitted some companies just automatically reply. The functionality of USAC is very confusing and difficult. The service/product received is vital.” *Idaho library*

280. “As a small public library, I appreciate the support that the E-rate program provides, but the process can be very difficult to navigate without prior experience. EPC, USAC guidance, FCC rules, and the Eligible Services List contain a lot of important information, but it is often spread across multiple places and written in a way that assumes the applicant already understands the program. [our state library] has been very helpful and supportive throughout this process, and I am grateful for that guidance. However, even with that support, the overall E-rate process can still be difficult for a small library to understand and manage. It would be helpful to have clearer plain-language guidance specifically for small libraries, new directors, and applicants with limited administrative support. This could include step-by-step checklists, examples of common eligible services, explanations of what documentation should be kept, and clearer reminders about important deadlines and appeal requirements. EPC itself could also be more user-friendly. Some forms and status messages are difficult to interpret, and it is not always clear what action is required next or what the consequences are if a deadline or filing step is missed. More direct alerts, clearer confirmation messages, and simplified navigation would help reduce mistakes, especially during staff transitions. I would also encourage FCC and USAC to consider more flexibility for good-faith applicants, particularly small libraries and schools that miss a deadline due to leadership changes, staffing limitations, or confusion about the filing process. The funding is extremely important to small communities, and a minor procedural error can have a major impact. Overall, I value the E-rate program and believe it is essential for digital access in rural and small communities. My main suggestion is to make the program easier for small applicants to understand, complete, and maintain compliance with, without needing specialized E-rate knowledge.” *E-rate applicant*
281. “USAC review for Cat2 submittals is absolutely horrible and slow. This should be done by May so projects can be completed over the summer break. Doing most projects switch or wifi

related are normally no feasible during the school year.” *Ohio school district*

282. “I find category 2 funding to be quite the process. I would hope that this could be easier (for example, I missed the deadline for the form because I purchased the equipment either too earlier or too late, for forget how it was). Librarians who are not tech people need to be on top of category 2 and which items qualify and if the library is small and rural and can’t afford a consultant, category 2 can be beyond reach.” *Pennsylvania library*
283. “It’s all too complicated. We had to hire an outside E-rate Consultant. Great program otherwise! We couldn’t provide high-speed Internet to our Patrons without it.” *Louisiana library system*
284. “It seems like once you get audited then you are flagged to be checked every month. The approval process to get FCDL seems to have gotten slower every year.” *Ohio school district*
285. “The process is a little cumbersome for small districts like us, we have to outsource someone to file the paperwork for us as we do not have the time or expertise.” *Arizona school district*
286. “Sometimes the phrasing of the documents is a little confusing. A video explaining what to choose would be helpful, because sometimes I feel that I may be choosing the wrong items or are getting cheated out of something because of how the documents are worded.” *California school*
287. “E-rate is a great service, and while streamlining is important, ensuring simplicity and ease of use is of the utmost importance.” *Idaho library*
288. “We have been very discouraged and disappointed with both the review process and the manner in which USAC communicates with applicants. While we value and appreciate the opportunity to participate in the E-Rate program, we believe there are significant opportunities for USAC to improve its review procedures and communication practices. We are also concerned about the length of time required for application approvals. Applicants and service providers are held to strict response deadlines when addressing inquiries, yet responses and funding decisions from USAC are often substantially delayed, with wait times sometimes extending for several months. These prolonged timelines create challenges for districts in planning and budgeting, and they also complicate billing and financial management processes. More timely communication and application processing

- would greatly improve the overall experience for program participants.” *Georgia school district*
289. “Process is slow. From the time of filing to acceptance, to ordering and installation, we are out 9 months.” *Montana school district*
290. “Would like to see front end review of 470 applications to allow for corrections before window closes.” *Texas school district*
291. “Applications should be reviewed first in first out, period. Reviews take way too long to review: we wait months for questions then USAC wants answers in weeks or days; use the same standard for both sides. Category two budgets are still WAY too low per student. Incorporate cybersecurity immediately, the three year test program is becoming kind of a joke, plus schools need this tech now. Aren’t the Republicans all about safety and security? Well schools need that too.” *E-rate applicant*
292. “EPC is not user friendly. There are too many hoops to jump through. I missed the form 471 filing this year. Tried to apply for an appeal, emailed questions and really received nothing that helped me. I gave up and we will go a year without e-rate funding.” *Illinois library*
293. “The process for third party audits need to be streamlined and reviewed. These firms have little to no knowledge of the program. It is an inefficient use of resources and time. I believe and support the audit process. Changes are needed.” *Florida school district*
294. “We have yet to have our 471 reviewed. Last year the review was also late and based on the questions, they were not familiar with our type of schools. Some of the questions were not necessary. The information was in our profile. Reviews need to be done by people very familiar with what E-rate is about and also be done in a more timely manner.” *North Carolina school district*
295. “E-rate has been an important resource for helping us maintain and improve technology infrastructure. As technology becomes more central to library services, continued support for networking, wireless, and security projects remains essential. My primary suggestion would be to continue simplifying the application and compliance process. Clearer guidance and a less burdensome administrative process would help libraries spend more time implementing projects and less time managing paperwork. Thank you to the FCC and USAC for continuing to support the program.” *Arizona library system*
296. “The paperwork on this is really a lot. For that reason, we contract out for that work (which is a net ‘win’ for us), but should we have to do that?” *Wisconsin school district*
297. “eRate is amazing, however, the approval process is not. Sometimes we get quick approval yet this year we have been waiting for over four months for a simple firewall maintenance renewal, year 2 of it. It’s not even a new app.” *South Carolina school district*
298. “I think you have a good website, but for some reason the ERATE process is very hard for me to understand and I have been doing it over a decade. i think it is just me” *Nebraska library*
299. “very difficult to navigate application process and invoicing, the state library has to assist many libraries due to the difficulty.” *Iowa library*
300. “The only complaint I have is the time it takes to get a decision letter. I filed in January, it’s almost August and I’m still waiting.” *Louisiana school district*
301. “The extra reviews of invoices and denials based on incorrect grounds have been extremely burdensome and inefficient this year. They are denying invoices for LESS than the maximum bandwidth connected but within the range on Form 470. This is across multiple schools in our area.” *Texas consortium*
302. “The review process is cumbersome; it can take months which often leads to late purchases. Interaction with the review representative is difficult, it is very difficult to just ask questions as to what is being reviewed. They almost never answer the phone; their answers are generic and unhelpful. There is no room for general discussion about the product or service. The review process is the most painful part, so far it always works out in the end but not without much back and forth and waiting for long periods for a reply.” *Montana school district*

Program scope (91 comments)

303. “I think the chromebooks we use for our student population, should be covered by e-rate. Considering that the average in every single police department shooting range spends about \$10,000 is ammunition alone, money for dedicated computers (students and teachers) in the education field could be easily covered. Think about it please and thank you.” *Georgia school*

304. "It is difficult with firewall services that are only available annually now to get category 2 funding only two of the five years. We should be able to file annually for firewall services as long as we stay within our overall 5 year budget." *Iowa school district*
305. "The FCC and USAC need to consider opening E-Rate funding to Internet Telephony services because many orgs. will soon be losing their traditional POTS line connections between 2027 to 2029. My org is in this situation currently, and it seems as though we may not be able to afford to have the same level of phone line availability on VOIP/PBX managed systems as we did on a hybrid POTS environment. This would be incredibly detrimental to the services we provide our community (our pop. is [amount])." *Georgia library system*
306. "Technology, while often considered the black hole of education budgets, is a part of life. Schools struggle to find the correct balance between screen time and learning. E-rate should cover what schools need to proceed. Electricity for technology needs should be covered. Not power bills, but power build outs. Charging lockers, clean power to network racks, etc." *Virginia school district*
307. "One area where I have great concern is in the area of Managed Internal Broadband Services. The bids I have reviewed and information that is shared by providers of this service spell fraudulent activity. Many of the applicants for this service have little to no understanding of what is eligible and not eligible, and are heavily reliant on the service provider aiding in the process of developing their RFP or establishing a contract and then going through the E-Rate process. MIB's eligibility should be re-evaluated and very clearly defined by the FCC and USAC. I have the same fears that Cybersecurity will end up in this same type of gray area if it moves beyond the pilot program." *Minnesota school district*
308. "One thing that would really help smaller districts like ours is the ability to purchase server hardware for use other than just caching. Example, Active Directory Domain Controllers, etc." *Arkansas school district*
309. "We should be allowed to purchase Servers without the servers the rest of the network is pointless." *Arkansas school district*
310. "Even if Cat 2 budgets are not significantly increased, I think the list of eligible products and services should be widened so that schools and libraries could maximize spending their C2 budgets. It should include all of the cybersecurity pilot services plus end user cybersecurity awareness training." *Michigan library system*
311. "I think that VoIP should once again be eligible." *New Mexico school district*
312. "Chromebooks, laptops and desktops are the primary point of content access and delivery of internet services. Computers (Chromebooks, laptops and desktops) are incredibly expensive nowadays. Some schools are diminishing the number of these devices due to high costs. If E-rate could fund at least 50% the purchase and repairs it would be of great help." *Arkansas school district*
313. "If the goal is to connect students to the Internet then student devices should also be included in E-rate funding" *New Hampshire school district*
314. "Living and working in FL puts us in harms way from June 1st till Nov 30th every year. I believe supporting network redundancies and data egress services would be fantastic, so that we have the ability to maintain employees functioning even during a hurricane, for example." *Florida school*
315. "-More flexibility in category allocations: Allow applicants to shift unused Category Two funds more easily into Category One or vice versa to better reflect evolving infrastructure needs. -Training mode / sandbox: A non-production training environment would help new users practice without risk." *Pennsylvania school district*
316. "The E-rate program is a great resource for schools and libraries which allows advanced instruction to our children. The EPC portal is a good tool for the use of the program; however, it lacks... The eligible services list is due for an upgrade to include evolving technology equipment such as advanced firewalls, cybersecurity, voip, and network servers just to mention a few." *Texas school district*
317. "It would be nice if the E-rate program can add Servers, and backup storage to the list." *New Jersey library*
318. "There is an error in the survey, in that school bus internet access is not currently covered. School safety hardware and software should be covered as a part of this program. They are interconnected and dependent on the school LAN, WAN and internet access and serve to protect our students and schools. It would seem more cost effective to manage all such items within a single program." *Illinois school district*

319. "The dual internet connection would be my #1 additional item that would make the biggest difference for our district." *Texas school district*
320. "Security cameras" *Pennsylvania school district*
321. "I think that E-rate should cover security cameras." *North Carolina school district*
322. "Having more category 2 options will be best addition to our erate program for long term planning and purchasing." *Connecticut school district*
323. "Add Servers to the list" *Illinois school*
324. "The eligible services list: If we could work on getting the ability to receive services for security equipment; i.e. cameras, security servers or web services, security door equipment, Eli's law, this would be helpful. Something that would also be helpful would be to have the ability to utilize erate for cellular hotspots. I know not all organizations use these but they are helpful for us to allow students and teachers do extra teaching outside the classroom in areas we do not have wifi service available. Just a couple thoughts that I have for our district needs. Thank you" *Arkansas school district*
325. "I think funding should not be capped with the increased demand on schools having to stay uptodate with software and hardware. \$10000 a year doesn't go very far when you have to keep everything updated and running." *Illinois school district*
326. "It would be nice to see funding for servers replacements and more infrastructure options. As a 50/50 funding site, we would benefit from an expanded catalog of network upgradable options as we have upgraded our WiFi network to a point where it would be wateful for us to try and use the funds for WiFi improvements. Thank you! [name] - [our district]" *Massachusetts school district*
327. "Ideally, E-rate would assist with funding for 'IT Services'. Our library currently contracts IT help from a private company at considerable cost. As a small, rural library system we have no choice. There is no other IT help available and connectivity is vital for daily library operations as well as a service we provide for the public." *Montana library system*
328. "It would save a lot of money if erate just went to every Library and school at a pro rated rate. Having a third party do the paperwork is costly." *Michigan library*
329. "Replacement Chromebooks. We are in need of replacements. We currently do not have the funds to keep up with the one-to-one initiative." *Arkansas school district*
330. "I'm not really sure why telephone was ever removed, but the transition to VOIP has made the connectivity indistinguishable from regular network traffic. It should all be covered as 'Communication'" *Oklahoma library system*
331. "I would like to be able to have erate funds for buildings that are across the road for our campus." *Arkansas school*
332. "The E-rate program has been the only reason our small district has been able to do as many things as we have. Our biggest challenge is that we have low F&R numbers, so we are only funded at 70%, but have very little financial support within our district (75% of students come from outside of our district and hurt our F&R rates). I wish there was a little more flexibility for small districts like ours (tk-8 with [amount] enrolled)." *California school district*
333. "I think USAC should providing funding for chromebook devices for students and for Interactive projectors for improved classroom learning. Chromebooks and projectors have a useful life of approx 3 to 5 years which makes them a big impact on our budget" *Michigan school*
334. "Money for staffing critical technology positions. Redundacy for some integral parts." *North Carolina school district*
335. "Renewed software licensing for firewalls, switches, access points and other networking equipment should be eligible for erate. It is usually covered with the initial installation, but once that expires the cost is very expensive annually for renewal." *Texas library*
336. "We are in great need of funding to improve reliability (dual lines/failover) and upgrade security. Both of these are great needs but we do not have the funding available to do what we really need to do." *West Virginia school district*
337. "More Category 2 Funding." *California school district*
338. "Might be time to sunset the program" *Michigan school district*
339. "Also cover monitoring and management software tools for systems." *E-rate applicant*
340. "I also feel that security needs to keep our students safe should also be considered under this funding. Like paging, cameras, and door access" *Maine school*
341. "Increase the funding for category 2 services. Where we do continue to see improvements in this funding, the increase in cost of these

- devices is creating a larger shortfall. There needs to be a mechanism for products that are currently being used for cyber security by a district to be able to be brought in to coverage. The current system penalizes those who were proactive and chose to put systems in place prior to the cyber security additions to e-rate.” *Indiana school district*
342. “Please expand what we can purchase to include more hardware and cybersecurity needs as they relate to hardware, training, and insurance.” *New York school district*
343. “In regards to self-provisioned networks, I answered ‘No’. However, I wanted to expound upon that a bit. I believe that Entities should have the right to a SP network and that E-rate should provide support for these networks. However, it should likely stop at the network and 3rd party management of the network should not be eligible as this becomes simply - in essence - a lit circuit where a 3rd party is providing and managing the connection. This said a bit tongue in cheek as the spirit of the program is to find the most cost effective solution. However, it seems the vast majority of entities seeking SP networks aren’t truly prepared to manage the network nor understand the true cost of these networks (locates, maintenance, testing equipment, etc).” *Oklahoma school district*
344. “Servers should be returned to Eligible Devices.” *E-rate applicant*
345. “Get rid of the NIF rules and make it easier to have erate cover gear in school district data centers.” *Utah school district*
346. “I believe the currently eligible services are pretty dialed in. Would not want to add additional services if it would mean cutting any currently eligible items.” *Virginia school district*
347. “Our highest cost for our small rural district is LAN maintenance. Since E-Rate discontinued this service it has drastically hurt our district.” *Texas school district*
348. “It would be extremely helpful to be able to use the e-rate funding towards purchasing upgraded computers.” *Arizona school*
349. “I saw notes about studnet screen time being addressed through eRate. I dont think that is the right place to address it. It seems an administrative and curriculum issue to resolve. I hope eRate doesn’t get involved. thanks” *Arizona school*
350. “Need more funds especially with cybersecurity, vendors are no longer giving discounts to K12. K12 budgets are shrinking and cost to provide technology keep increasing.” *Texas school district*
351. “Security cameras should be included as an eligible service.” *North Carolina school district*
352. “As our institution continues to expand its physical footprint and diversify its digital learning initiatives, we anticipate a significantly growing requirement for our technological infrastructure to scale accordingly. To support this growth, it is essential that the E-rate program evolves to provide more flexible funding structures that can accommodate rapidly increasing bandwidth demands and the integration of emerging technologies. Furthermore, we encourage USAC and the FCC to streamline the EPC portal processes, as current administrative burdens often divert critical staff time away from educational goals. We would appreciate more proactive guidance and clearer communication regarding the eligible services list to ensure we can strategically plan our long-term investments in high-quality, reliable, and equitable connectivity for all students and staff.” *North Carolina school*
353. “It’s great to get funding to purchase hardware, but the costs needed to manage and secure it really need to be included.” *Pennsylvania school district*
354. “Maintaining the installed networks and equipment is an ongoing cost. I agree that it should be subject to some ‘reasonable cost limitations’ - but Alaska is its own world and there really isn’t competition for fiber speed networks so the costs are exponentially higher than everywhere else in the nation.” *Alaska consortium*
355. “I am very concerned about the thought of ending eRate due to ‘screen time.’ This shows an extreme lack of understanding of responsibility and needs of school districts. Source: [contact]” *Pennsylvania school district*
356. “The rapid fire reviews/changes by the current FCC administration is alarming. I believe they are acting too quickly and not taking the time to evaluate all the information thoroughly. I understand the current political movement to eliminate wasteful spending, but here, as in many other areas, waste is already minimal. It is hard to avoid in large scale operations such as this. I do agree with the mission to eliminate wasteful spending, but take the time to understand the information and do it carefully. That said, as a taxpayer, I would rather err on the side of caution and spend a bit too much on this than to risk students not having their

- educational needs met. If you suspect a district/library of fraudulently applying and receiving funds, investigate them and recover the funds if needed. Don't harm all districts/libraries in the quest to reduce fraud/waste." *Michigan school district*
357. "The E-rate program is brilliant and supports our district with goods and services that keep us connected, secure, and resilient at a cost that is manageable. Public education is part of the backbone of our democracy. I recommend giving it more funding and flexibility the help us keep up with the high demand in the rapidly changing digital world. We need E-rate to function even more efficiently and cover a wide range of technology and support. Changes and error correction should be made easier. The current bidding process is great and should only be tweaked, not ever hauled, if you think there is some problem." *Georgia school district*
358. "Stop the application process. Provide funds bases on student enrollment and geographic location." *Minnesota school district*
359. "I also think 1 to 1 devices should be covered because they are required for testing and they are very expensive to maintain." *Texas school district*
360. "Restrictions currently in place that determine certain tech cannot be connected to purchased switches needs to be reevaluated. Phones (VOIP), security cameras, access controls crucial to communicating, and ensuring SAFETY on campuses and libraries." *Texas school district*
361. "It is amazingly stupid to pay for internet and not for phone service when we have to have a landline phone service to be able to receive internet. I remember when it was covered and cannot understand why the choice was made to stop covering those cost. [name] [our library] director since January 1999." *E-rate applicant*
362. "There is more than enough money in the EPC accts to last into next century - there is no need to continue charging individual citizens for this service that is shoring up a bureaucratic bloat of non-governmental agency. DOGE current entity and give money directly to schools." *E-rate applicant*
363. "Our erate savings is less and less each year..." *California school*
364. "It would be nice if network security software and servers for web-hosted phones were part of eRate." *North Carolina school district*
365. "I would love to see server hardware be included in Cat 2 - particularly with the huge increase in this cost." *South Carolina school district*
366. "I'd like E-rate to support VOIP equipment." *Kansas school district*
367. "E-rate has been very helpful but the cost of the other things asked in this surgery are burdening on schools/libraries. It would be beneficial for e-rate to at least help with some contribution." *Kansas consortium*
368. "I would like telephone service to be covered under the E-rate program again. This would be great for rural areas. Most people in rural areas have cell phones with internet access and this service covered by the E-rate program would be wonderful." *Arizona library*
369. "The E-rate program, especially funding, needs to continue to be expanded to accommodate the greater connectivity needs of school districts and libraries, not reduced." *Tennessee school district*
370. "With curriculum moving into the next generation of technology, districts need more help supplying and protecting their network infrastructure." *Illinois school district*
371. "Our discount % as a rural district needs to be increased." *Pennsylvania school district*
372. "The cost for equipment is still relatively high for small libraries, although the benefits of having a lower yearly internet services price and administrative support is great." *Washington library*
373. "Dual internet connections should be allowed at a single BEN location." *Colorado school district*
374. "Not enough E-Rate money is available to replace all network infrastructure equipment before it becomes obsolete. Need to make ECF an annually recurring program to subsidize the replacement of obsolete student end-point equipment such as Chromebooks and iPads. End-point equipment for teachers and other staff also requires regular replacement, but state and local funding is drying up." *Oregon school district*
375. "Cover Pre-K access in Tennessee" *Tennessee school district*
376. "We are a head start 0-5 program. you only cover 3-5 not 0 -3." *Minnesota school district*
377. "Expand the eligibility to include all of the tangential parts of an eligible item (e.g. include full NGFW features for firewalls, or redundant power supplies for switches), and simplify the paperwork significantly so I don't feel like I need an accountant and lawyer to make sure I get things documented properly." *Wisconsin school district*

378. "Category Two funding for special education facilities should not be based solely on student enrollment. The current per-pupil funding formula does not adequately address the unique technology infrastructure needs of special education schools. Our facility is [amount] square feet and serves approximately [amount] special education students. Because our classrooms typically serve only 8 to 10 students, compared to 20 to 30 students in general education classrooms, we have more classrooms relative to our student population. Each classroom still requires the same wireless access points, network connectivity, and supporting infrastructure regardless of the number of students it serves. The amount of network equipment needed is driven by the size of the building and the number of instructional spaces, not simply by student enrollment. As a result, the current funding model does not provide enough Category Two funding to support reliable Wi-Fi and network coverage throughout our entire facility. To ensure equitable access to technology, Category Two funding should include building square footage as part of the funding calculation, especially for special education facilities where smaller class sizes require more classrooms and additional network infrastructure. This approach would better reflect the actual cost of providing secure and reliable connectivity for all students and staff." *Illinois school district*
379. "Our school is in a rural environment with very limited options for high speed sustained speed internet. [our school] is a 90% school. However, the fiber/copper lines go down. It would be very beneficial to be allowed to have both fiber/copper and satellite internet to sustain the wi-fi and other communications for the educational benefit and overall safety of our students. The internet service and/or phone service has gone down at least 8 times in the past year. Sometimes for hours and sometimes for several days and most if not all were unexpected outages. The local cellular carrier towers have also gone down unexpectedly 8-10 times in the past year, leaving many families and employees with very limited safety communication." *California school*
380. "The majority of E-rate funds can and should be distributed automatically based on student population and poverty formula." *Idaho school district*
381. "I need an intercom in my building. I wish we could also get help to install dependable, emergency communication systems." *Kansas school*
382. "Since we are a school for the Deaf, we communicate with the use of devices and it would be helpful if those were covered along with maintenance for network and cybersecurity features" *New York school*
383. "Increase in Cat 2 budget is needed. With the higher cost of eligible network equipment increasing every year, the budgets are not sufficient to purchase core equipment such as switches, APs and cabling upgrades." *California school district*
384. "I think our main internet connection should be eligible, along with firewalls (which currently are NOT completely covered), wifi access points and controllers (including online controllers), and basic networking equipment including switches. It makes it possible for us to have robust networks (wired and wireless) in our school for our students!!" *Illinois school*
385. "I disagree with holding E-Rate hostage in response to limiting screen time for students." *Alabama consortium*
386. "Policy makers need to realize the difference between the mindful screentime that occurs in educational settings and the mindless screentime that sometime occurs at home." *Florida school district*
387. "I believe phone service should be eliminated as nearly all schools can improve with just using VOIP systems and consolidate those services. Local telecom providers would adjust. True telephone service-outside of VOIP- is out dated." *Oklahoma school district*
388. "Please do not decrease funding." *Idaho school district*
389. "In the news, there are reports of the FCC considering abolishing e-rate, claiming that its mission has been accomplished. Connectivity may be installed in many schools, but it needs to be maintained. If the FCC ever wanted to abolish this program, I would fully expect that the tax on phone bills would disappear with the program. There is no need to tax if there is no program." *Utah school district*
390. "The costs of devices, licenses, and subscriptions are going up across the Board. We schools are not just for our students; we are for our whole communities. We owe them ALL a safe place with strong infrastructure so we can realize so many growth goals!" *Illinois school district*
391. "Need erate funding for servers and other network equipment as well." *Texas school district*
392. "I feel that IP security cameras should be covered by E-rate" *North Carolina school district*

393. "Option to reinstitute some allocation of funds toward VOIP hardware and services would be a welcome entitlement." *New Jersey school district*

Cybersecurity (73 comments)

394. "Cyber security is a local, state and national concern. It would be helpful if E-Rate covered EDR or backup." *Ohio school district*
395. "Making the Cybersecurity Pilot a permanent funding source would significantly help our district and others offset the costs associated with securing existing infrastructure." *Texas school district*
396. "Older buildings and older equipment make it difficult to secure the system while ensuring that students receive the necessary connections." *Arkansas school district*
397. "Content Filtering should be E-Rate eligible. As it is a requirement to be CIPPA Compliant there should be assistance in making that happen. Many Rural school districts either don't have the budget or don't realize how important this is for our children's online safety. Thank you." *Tennessee school district*
398. "It is imperative that you include layer 7 firewall/email protection services for Category 2. Give us the flexibility to meet our needs." *Oklahoma school district*
399. "Allow cybersecurity to be part of erate. I understand there is a pilot program for this but this has become a necessity for schools. also since wifi, switches, cabling, etc are allowable, I believe that servers for DHCP, active directory, etc should be allowed also." *Arkansas school district*
400. "Cybersecurity has become a big problem for schools, more funding should be available to combat threat actors." *Pennsylvania school district*
401. "Cyber attacks have become so frequent and so complex that it's impossible for K12 school systems across the country to defend ourselves. We can't purchase effective tools due to inflation and the chip crisis eating into our budgets, and budget cuts. We are in dire need of stable, long term cybersecurity funding from the federal government. I believe E-Rate is the right vehicle for the federal government to deliver that funding." *E-rate applicant*
402. "Additional funding for cybersecurity needs for districts would be greatly appreciated." *Texas school district*
403. "Cybersecurity spending continues to increase while federal funding is decreasing. As threat actors increasingly target K12 and Libraries we need resources from equipment and services to provide safe learning environments." *E-rate applicant*
404. "We are currently having to pay for cybersecurity. We monitor it ourselves, which brings the cost down significantly. It should be covered under E-Rate." *Oklahoma school district*
405. "We need more support around cyber security. Our small district currently pays around \$100K/year solely on cyber related services. We applied for the cyber pilot 1-2 years ago and we're not selected. K-12 schools continue to face the same threats as large corporations, yet, we must work with the limited financial resources and technical expertise. Recouping some of these funds spent on cyber would allow us to invest in strengthening our cyber defenses." *New Hampshire school district*
406. "Cybersecurity trial should be escalated to become the norm for all users faster than planned. The criminals aren't waiting. Schools are dealing with it with limited funds, tools, personnel, knowledge." *Maryland school*
407. "I would like to see internet filtering eligible for the E-Rate program. Not just the appliance, the services as well." *Oklahoma school district*
408. "Providing E-rate for network security equipment but not for the services associated with them (such as phishing protection, anti-spam/virus, etc..) makes the cost prohibitive in some cases to have these devices. That software needs to be covered alongside the hardware for this to be an effective solution." *Oregon school district*
409. "Cyber Security funding is a must!!" *Minnesota school district*
410. "As a small public school with a 2A rating, our technology resources and hardware have grown significantly. Given the current high level of cybersecurity, it would be beneficial to enhance our firewall configuration by incorporating additional resources beyond the basic ones currently in place, given what's covered via E-Rate." *Texas school district*
411. "When is the e-rate program going to help fund cybersecurity services?" *E-rate applicant*
412. "Simplify the new portal. Network security devices/software/labor/consulting needs to be included." *Ohio school district*

413. "Cybersecurity infrastructure and advanced firewall solutions are critical components of a modern school district's technology ecosystem. As cyber threats continue to increase in frequency and sophistication, districts must invest in robust security platforms that protect student data, staff information, instructional systems, and network resources from unauthorized access and cyberattacks. Expanding eligibility to include cybersecurity services, managed security solutions, next-generation firewalls, intrusion detection and prevention systems, and related network security platforms would help districts strengthen their overall security posture while ensuring a safe and reliable learning environment. Given the growing importance of protecting educational technology systems, these services should be considered eligible expenditures alongside other essential technology infrastructure investments." *Tennessee school district*
414. "Allow all or partial subscriptions discounts for software required to make NGFW effective." *Virginia school district*
415. "DDOS services should also be covered for Category 1 from ISP's." *Pennsylvania school district*
416. "Comment on security: The E-rate program has been great for schools, libraries and hospitals to build their networks, but the lack of including some form of firewall and cybersecurity services and components is a huge gap all are concerned about. Especially with the numerous recent high-incident attacks hitting all three categories. These services and components should be immediately eligible for the data security of each institution. Thank you." *California consortium*
417. "The weakest link to cybersecurity and keeping the district network equipment safe is the end user. Making cyber awareness training (with the ability to quickly remove suspicious/true phishing emails) and [product] as E-Rate eligible would greatly help districts afford the needed training and student account protections. The speed of approving applications and issuing FCDLs has been very slow the last 2 years where the equipment in the 471 is no longer available once it is funded over a year later. E-Rate is a wonderful program that provides resources and equipment for districts that otherwise could not afford it. The work put in to make it happen is well worth the award (being a 90% discount district). My fear of a bidding portal is the potential for many more Open Records Requests taking time away from personnel's regular jobs and a non-awarded vendor arguing over a few points on the evaluation because they can see it." *Texas school district*
418. "Nothing about cyber?? we have decent internet and decent networking internally but no cover of DDoS attacks or cyber attacks or discounts for those services (self managed or externally managed)? Something to think about folks." *Maine school district*
419. "Firewall and Firewall services should be added. CyberSecurity protection should be added. CyberSecurity consists of Firewall, EndPoint, Phishing, scanning/monitoring of network, Logs etc..." *Colorado school district*
420. "E-rate funding should be able to be used to cover the costs associated with cybersecurity products. Schools are a large target of ransomware and other attacks and most cannot afford the necessary protection." *Indiana school*
421. "Increasing protections of our Internet, firewall, network and internal connections via more eligible services should be a big priority of the program." *Indiana school district*
422. "With cyber security becoming more important, it would be nice to see more funding for those things. EDR, logging, etc.. Higher percentage of firewall funding would also be helpful. Currently, it's 60% of 44%, which is about 25% of the total price." *Missouri school district*
423. "We were hoping that the Cybersecurity Pilot program would open up again this year for new applicants. That is where we have the most need for additional funding. Would also like that the warranty would be eligible for 5yrs and not have us resubmit each year for the 5yrs. Would like to see the servers that are on-prem be eligible for E-Rate as they are used for the student learning and State wide testing and assessments. Why is a CIPA compliant filter a requirement for the E-rate program, when it isn't allowed to be funded through the E-rate program?" *Indiana school district*
424. "I think managed services end up costing way more than they should when most of the time, they aren't necessary, although subscriptions for filtering and protection are a service that has to be managed and paid for regularly and that I would hope USAC pays for." *Arizona school*
425. "With the rise of cybercrimes, the addition of security devices, software and IT services is needed to protect infrastructure." *Louisiana library system*
426. "Need erate support for cybersecurity monitoring." *Georgia school district*

427. "Firewalls should be fully covered along with internet filtering as Category 2. Filtering is required by organizations to have E-rate but is not paid for by USAC/E-rate. Also having funding be only partially available for firewalls makes it difficult for district to know their reimbursement rate for firewalls. The current E-rate process as well is not easy, and many district retain an E-rate specific vendor to help manage it causing more costs upon the district. Adding extra layers to that process through the portal will only exasperate the process." *Illinois school district*
428. "First, I strongly agree with the expansion of the eligible services list to include network security such as next gen firewalls or similar type services/ products to protect the applicants' networks and ensure basic functionality. A basic firewall is simply insufficient in today's cybersecurity environment. Secondly, if the FCC approves an eligible service, it should not change the service to ineligible partway through the application/ review process. It is not a good use of tax payer dollars where contracts are required for services that may be eligible and applicants would not apply if they weren't eligible so would not have allocated the resources. Some Service Providers mandate applicants honor the contracts and then the FCC cancels the eligible services after the fact; not a responsible or accountable process!" *Montana school district*
429. "Expand the program to cover security expenditures, such as network monitoring tools, penetration testing, DNS protection, and edge firewalls." *Pennsylvania library system*
430. "We were one of the 700 school districts to get the cybersecurity pilot project. I think this should be part of the E-Rate allowable services." *Oklahoma school district*
431. "Need the cybersecurity pilot to move into standard funding for NGFW services such as threat management along with content filtering services, MDR services, EDR, email security among other cyber-related protections." *Texas school district*
432. "As we move into 2027, my technology budget needs are escalating. We are finding it challenging to manage our current IT portfolio AND continue to add Security products. Currently, we have been able to manage both, but I am anticipating a moment that will come in the next 1-3 years where I will have to decide between service to my community and security. And I think security will win, meaning I will have to reduce services that contribute to equitable access for my users." *Missouri library system*
433. "Schools are a huge target for hackers. It is devastating when a school is hit with a ransomware attack. We need help with funding for security systems / software to help us avoid this." *Wisconsin school district*
434. "Security software/services and hardware servers are essential to providing internet to patrons and should be covered. Also against the changing of the percentage discounts. Our library in Indiana is already under attack in our budget and tax levy (as well as changes to Local Income Taxes) from our local government so having to deal with potential increase in tech costs is not good for our patrons." *Indiana library*
435. "Please help us fund Cybersecurity. Would be great to also include management of cybersecurity systems. Right now, in rural schools it is hard for many of us to keep up because we do not have the staffing." *Minnesota school*
436. "As a former technology director and now organizational leader, I have seen firsthand the significant impact the E-Rate program has had in ensuring schools have reliable and affordable access to critical technology infrastructure. For organizations like ours, E-Rate support has been essential in maintaining the connectivity required for daily instruction, student services, and operations. My concern moving forward is that the definition of essential technology infrastructure must continue to evolve. Connectivity alone is no longer sufficient. Schools are facing a rapidly changing cybersecurity environment where threats to student information, operational systems, and instructional continuity continue to increase. The security layers required to protect networks, student data, and educational systems are becoming more complex and significantly more expensive. We were fortunate to qualify for the E-Rate cybersecurity/firewall pilot program, and I believe this represents the direction the program must continue to move. Cybersecurity should not be viewed as an optional enhancement; it has become a fundamental component of providing safe and reliable educational technology services. Firewalls, advanced threat protection, monitoring tools, and related security infrastructure are now as critical as the internet connections themselves. Without continued modernization of eligible services, schools — especially smaller organizations and those serving higher-need

- student populations — risk falling behind. Technology environments can become outdated quickly, creating greater vulnerability and widening the gap between schools that can independently fund protections and those that cannot. I encourage USAC and the FCC to continue evaluating the Eligible Services List through the lens of today's technology realities. The E-Rate program has successfully helped schools build connectivity; the next challenge is ensuring that connectivity remains secure, resilient, and protected." *Ohio school district*
437. "I think cybersecurity software and hardware should be eligible under erate." *South Carolina school district*
438. "We need to add cyber security as Erate Eligible" *Ohio school district*
439. "USAC requires schools to have a firewall, but then don't pay for the subscription side of the firewall to maintain the hardware's capabilities. They want schools to have cybersecurity, but don't pay for it. Just doesn't make any sense." *Missouri school*
440. "Cybersecurity is as essential as Internet and WIFI for operating a school. Firewalls and content filters should be fully eligible under category 2 (similar to access points and wireless controllers)." *Michigan school district*
441. "Managed network security would be great" *Texas library*
442. "Providing internet access to schools inherently exposes staff and students to cybersecurity risks, including phishing and other threats. As connectivity becomes essential, so should funding for cybersecurity protections. Next-generation firewalls have been available since 2011, yet E-Rate has not kept pace in supporting funding for these critical features. Despite requiring content filtering, E-Rate does not fully fund the broader protections needed to keep users safe. it is time to expand funding to include modern cybersecurity features. Additional support for these protections is essential to ensure a safer online environment for both staff and students." *Idaho school district*
443. "I also believe that Filtering Services required in compliance for CIPA should be funded. This is a yearly expense that can cost \$1000.00 annually and for many small libraries this can be a costly burden. Please consider making this an option for public libraries." *Arkansas library*
444. "Please permanently make cybersecurity an available option to spend money towards. It is frustrating when purchasing APC units or network switches and it is not fully funded because it is 100% meeting the defined requirements. No offense, APC units and network switches now are going to have a variety of devices plugged into them which are all critical towards a robust school infrastructure." *Illinois school district*
445. "Cat2 should be expanded to include hardware, subscriptions and software needed for cybersecurity." *Tennessee school district*
446. "Network security is extremely important to us and there definitely needs to be coverage for this under E-rate." *Tennessee school district*
447. "Security spending is consuming an ever-larger share of a shrinking dollar pool. Help in keeping our networks (and data) safe and secure in the face of exponential risk increases would be most welcome, and frankly only dollars can do that." *Illinois school district*
448. "Network security measures would be very helpful. Internet alone is not enough, we need to be able to secure our networks and student data that is being collected and shared through the internet." *Texas school district*
449. "Cybersecurity is a major need that we would like to see available. Services including EDR, XDR, MDR and Penetration Testing. Now that CISA services have been drastically reduced, it would be great to allow for CIS or MSISAC memberships to be included as well to support these and extend the benefits further. Thank you for considering and asking for feedback." *Wisconsin school district*
450. "Please consider adding Cybersecurity services to the eligible approved list." *E-rate applicant*
451. "The mandated CIPA compliant content filtering and security should be included as part of funding and firewalls should be shifted to CAT I since they support external connections." *Pennsylvania school district*
452. "Cybersecurity should be added as a functional areas eligible for reimbursement. Cost for MDR/EDR/SOC services as well as Email Security subscriptions." *E-rate applicant*
453. "The ERate program is wonderful and should include more services for cybersecurity services to prevent cyber attacks to schools. Firewalls are not enough anymore." *Montana school district*
454. "Funding to assist with network security and patron safety has become a huge concern. Cybersecurity funding is an ongoing issue that E-Rate could assist with to keep schools and libraries safe for their users." *Mississippi library system*

455. "The current Eligible Services List for the FCC K-12 Cyber Pilot Program should be made eligible within the e-rate program." *California school district*
456. "Since content filtering is required, it should be an allowed/funded service." *Maryland school*
457. "We need erate to be consider fully funding security services via firewalls and not just the hardware itself without the packages. These restrictions have severely cut into what is covered on firewalls. Erate should also apply to subscriptions of items like VOIP for phone services" *Michigan school district*
458. "Firewall security services, content filters, and student use management should all also be covered." *Missouri school district*
459. "Content filtering for Firewalls should be an eligible service, isn't that exactly what CIPA represents?" *Michigan school district*
460. "Robust cybersecurity is essential. The Commission should be asking about increasing, not decreasing, the funding for the program." *E-rate applicant*
461. "Would love more cyber security items on the ESL." *North Carolina school district*
462. "Managed Detection and Response (MDR) and Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR) are essential cybersecurity tools for K-12 schools, but they come at a significant cost. With limited resources, districts are often forced to make difficult funding decisions. Every dollar invested in cybersecurity is a dollar that cannot be spent directly on curriculum, instructional resources, or other initiatives that support student learning. Balancing the need to protect our systems from increasingly sophisticated cyber threats while maximizing investments in the classroom remains an ongoing challenge. Reliable communication is essential to maintaining a safe school environment. Many of the District's older buildings have areas with limited or no cellular and two-way radio coverage, creating communication dead zones that can delay emergency response and coordination. Even newer buildings can experience connectivity challenges, as energy-efficient Low-E (low-emissivity) windows and modern construction materials often reduce the strength of cellular and radio signals inside the building. Cellular and radio signal boosters help ensure that first responders, staff, and emergency personnel can communicate quickly and reliably during emergencies. While these systems represent a significant financial investment, they are a critical component of the District's safety infrastructure and play an important role in protecting students, staff, and visitors. The equipment and cabling should be covered under eRate. Thank you." *Michigan school district*
463. "Network and physical site security are such important topics in this time of unprecedented scams, phishing, etc, as well as external, physical threats. It would be critical for this funding to cover all of these items." *New Jersey school*
464. "In order to use the E-Rate, we have to have child protection software that costs more than we would save using E-Rate. That doesn't make sense. If E-Rate is mandating we have the child protection thing, they need to fund it. We aren't applying for E-Rate because our organization has funds, we need help to pay our bills offer services to the community." *Iowa library*
465. "We would like to see more funding for cybersecurity devices services and software." *E-rate applicant*
466. "Bundled Integrated Security Appliances including software suites have become the industry norm, but USAC rules often only support certain routing/firewall functions that cannot practically be unbundled from the functionality." *Arizona library system*

Bidding portal (68 comments)

467. "The online bidding will be horrible in my opinion. Let us score with a rubric otherwise, we will have internet providers from New York (who might be cheaper) but will not be able to troubleshoot our problems in Texas. Having a live person available to come and fix our problems is ESSENTIAL! When it becomes online, it becomes political and, therefore, not fair. This removes local control. Please don't do that!" *Texas school district*
468. "I cannot, in any universe, imagine that the bidding portal will be helpful in any way. This is already a year-long process. Adding any steps to it makes the whole thing a boondoggle. Please, for all that is holy, stop." *Illinois library*
469. "we need information on who to contact about that bidding portal. That is extra burden" *South Carolina school district*
470. "The process is a year round process and adding this bidding portal will add to the work

load. Please reconsider this decision.” *Illinois library*

471. “While competitive bidding is essential, the process should emphasize quality and enable accurate, apples-to-apples comparisons. Providers can easily submit low bids by reducing the level or scope of service, which ultimately undermines the intent of the program. Evaluation criteria should ensure that cost is considered alongside service quality, reliability, and the provider’s ability to fully meet the organization’s needs. Additionally, there should be stronger accountability around vendor representations. Some providers misrepresent their capabilities—for example, claiming to have a “local presence” when they do not maintain an actual office or operational base in the area, but instead rely on a single remote employee. Others may respond “yes” to quality-related requirements in proposals despite having no realistic means or intent to meet those expectations. Clearer definitions, verification mechanisms, and consequences for inaccurate or misleading responses would help ensure a fairer and more effective bidding process.” *Arizona school district*
472. “Virtual schools be made eligible to apply for Category 2 funding to support the educational work of staff and teachers, and to assist students when they come onsite to our offices. EPC is a clear improvement over paper forms, and continuing to refine the system will help users. PIA Reviews and invoicing audit request emails can be confusing: it’s often unclear how important the message is and who exactly it’s from, and I struggle to locate the correct submission site within EPC to respond. I understand that USF fees are important for funding the program, however the current 37% rate amounts to over a third of the charges on our school telecommunications invoices! Because voice services are no longer eligible for E-rate discounts, these fees are additional costs our school must absorb. Cybersecurity is vital to the safety of school and student data and the reliable delivery of instruction. Please consider funding cybersecurity services for schools and libraries to help protect student information and support uninterrupted learning. I’m concerned that a federal bidding portal will increase the volume of spam or generic proposals we receive from brokers located far from our district, rather than reduce our workload. Reviewing many more irrelevant submissions will take additional staff time and make it harder to identify high-quality, local vendors who understand our needs. How will the portal address these issues? Will we be able to filter by locality and vendor? Will there be ways to limit low-quality submissions? Thank you.” *Pennsylvania school*
473. “The portal will make E-rate more difficult for small schools like us. I worry it will limit bids from small vendors and only be used to penalize small applicants.” *E-rate applicant*
474. “By implementing an E-Rate bidding portal you will be increasing the workload of the schools as many of them already have board/state mandated bidding processing place. This is going to create double the work for those individuals. Since the fraud percentage is already so low, I do not understand the need for a separate bidding portal.” *Colorado school district*
475. “The proposed competitive bidding portal is a solution in search of a problem. The GAO recently issued a report that the program improper payments level has dropped below other similar Federal programs—indicating that the rules in place are working and there is no justification for massively increasing the workload of applicants with complex, cumbersome, and contrary to many state and local procurement rules. The applicant, consultant and vendor community are uniformly opposed to this change.” *California school district*
476. “Regarding a) Making the E-rate application process and other E-rate processes fast, simple, and efficient and b) A USAC-managed bidding portal is necessary to ensure the integrity of the E-rate competitive bidding process... The current process is sufficiently complex that most applicants rely on consulting firms to get them through it. Adding the bidding portal will just make it even harder for the program beneficiaries to successfully apply for discounts.” *E-rate applicant*
477. “Schools who rely on a third party tech company to maintain and install their network are also going to rely on them to help determine what needs they have for the future. It is archaic that schools have to pretend that this isn’t happening just because most schools didn’t have networks with the program started.” *Illinois school*
478. “Basically E-rate for equipment/hardware purchases is a joke. I should have the ability to purchase the equipment I need, such as a switch, access points without going through a bidding process.” *New York school*
479. “The implementation of the competitive bidding portal is unnecessary. Program procedures already protect from waste, fraud, and abuse,

- and ensure fair and open competitive bidding. This new portal will be burdensome and discourage applicants and small service providers from participating in the program. The portal is attempting to fix something that is not broken and will end up having a detrimental effect.” *Maine consortium*
480. “I believe the new bidding portal will have a negative impact on schools by placing an additional burden on them.” *Alabama consortium*
481. “Having a bidding portal seems like a perfect example of Fraud, Waste and Abuse given the development costs of the system compared to the integrity of the existing system.” *Colorado school district*
482. “The federal e-rate bidding portal is a terrible idea and absolutely conflicts with local requirements.” *Texas library system*
483. “Having more requirements of vendors to ensure they don’t mislead districts. Especially equipment vendors.” *Pennsylvania school district*
484. “I hope cost will not be the only factor in the competitive bidding process when it goes through the portal. Service and reliability are very important to our school.” *Nebraska school*
485. “I’m unsure if putting bids through the portal is good or not. In some cases (service contracts such as purchasing physical equipment) might be good and in others it may be detrimental (on-site work contracts such as pulling wire).” *California school district*
486. “The bidding portal can only mean more time and headache in an already year round process. Please do not continue down this path. I do not support this.” *Illinois library*
487. “I disagree that the USAC is meeting its goals making broadband Internet affordable to ALL libraries. There are many small, extremely rural, both schools and libraries that do not have the budget for staff to apply for E-Rate funding due to the absorbent amount of time and required steps that a new entity must do in order to apply. The forms still feel like they are meant for large libraries or schools. This has gotten better with EPC over the past couple years, but are still too cumbersome. The bidding process would be a complicated nightmare if the entire process must be done one line! Having vendors submit a bid online and then we somehow do the evaluation online when there are many criteria options. We often get inquiries and robot generated documents that are similar to bids that are weeded out before we get to the evaluation and vendor selection. It would be easier to scan copies of the documentation after it has been evaluated for each legitimate bid and submit that as an attached file in an online portal. You are making this more complicated than it should be. We are a medium size, rural library, that has the luxury of one staff person who can dedicate the time to keep up with the filing requirements, multiple times a year. I do like EPC and find it fairly easy to use. Having been filing for E-Rate funding for 15+ years, EPC has improved the process of opening the bid window, selecting vendors and requesting funding manageable. I like having it in one place. Please do not add additional burden on the applicants with online bidding.” *Oregon library system*
488. “An online USAC managed bidding process would create a cumbersome process. I am able to manage my bidding matrix just fine.” *Wisconsin school district*
489. “In rural southeast Ohio, Bidding isn’t really a factor when we have 1 option for Fiber.” *Ohio school district*
490. “The requiring all bidders to utilize a specific portal will make it complicated for both schools/libraries and bidders as each state also has their own laws about how things are posted. Some bidders are going to choose not to do this which is going to remove certain products/services from the market for schools/libraries. This will equate to not getting the best product/service for the funds available.” *Washington library system*
491. “The subsidy provided by E-rate is critically important to our infrastructure. I do not, however, like the bidding process at all. It places our services in constant jeopardy of being scooped by low bidders with no understanding of our networking needs, and then it feels like it places a ‘gotcha’ hanging over districts to make sure we make the low bid the most important factor in considering vendors.” *Massachusetts school district*
492. “In our rural area we often do not get bids for service. We have had to go with who was available at whatever cost, but erate has always approved it. Our school has been a 90% school forever with 94-98% FRPM historically. I am imagining that the USAC bidding portal will just add another layer to the application process, without any real benefit for our school or USAC due to rural area. Our current internet service goes down several times during the year. We would like to apply for a secondary satellite internet provider to ensure dedicated internet service to our school, business office, and expected new VOIP phone system, since the

- current copper lines are prone to outages and parents with cellular phones often have a difficult time calling the school's landline, which could be a dangerous situation, due to the lack of cellular towers and over-subscription of cellular customers in our rural area." *California school*
493. "Administrative burdens are going to greatly increase with the addition of the bidding portal in 2028. Currently, numerous small, rural, and poor school districts and libraries across the country struggle to participate in the E-rate program because of the administrative tasks required. These are the very entities that need E-rate support the most. They don't have staff dedicated to E-rate. They use secretaries, band directors, assistant principals, librarians, etc. The complexity of using the bidding portal will only negatively impact these entities. Fraud is high-value topic for some but in reality is minimal based on publicized data. Additionally, new processes require more staff and funds to implement correctly and provide the support needed. Or, will this be another complex task for the existing USAC team, thus increasing application review time, etc. Rarely, does a one-size fit all approach fit anyone." *E-rate applicant*
494. "I have concerns that the bidding portal being deployed across the entire country in a single year could be problematic. I would much rather prefer to see a trial year where either schools could use both the portal and the traditional method, or that the portal only be used with a small percentage of the USAC applicants. This would be to test and ensure that the portal will be capable of supporting the demand without slowing down and the issues that would come up with vendor bidding. It's also another concern that vendors have a difficult time bidding now, and that the portal may make that process so difficult that vendors may not bid on products." *Iowa school*
495. "The newly required competitive bidding portal will put significant burden on local school districts that already complete very comprehensive, fair, and transparent competitive bidding process. Removing local control for this process because confusion and create dual process at the local level. Many of the processes regarding selective review, service certification, specifically, are very resource intensive and tend to create a lot of churn that doesn't really amount too much. Please simplify some of these to make them reasonable and accountable without creating a lot of extra unnecessary work. PIA review for 2026 as so far been much more smooth. We appreciate improvements to this process." *Kentucky school district*
496. "My main concerns is procurement and how the lowest price factor is being pushed as the 'only' factor, basically, if you don't select the lowest price you get audited. This is just pushing vendor to quote bad service and forcing school in making a difficult decision: is e-rate money even an option? I cannot select an ISP that has the lowest price because its intention is to not honor the requested SLA. I have vendors that blently lie on their response. I cannot select an ISP when I know very well that the internet from that provider will not be proper and will yield to days of no service and months of poor service." *Arizona school district*
497. "I believe state applications that require providers provide bids into the required portal should be exempt form having to use the USAC bidding portal as this will increase the workload on the applicant and bidding complications" *North Dakota consortium*
498. "Districts are not opposed to fair bidding or transparency. The concern is that the new E-Rate bidding portal adds another layer to an already complicated process. Schools already follow strict purchasing rules, and this change may create more paperwork, more training, and more chances for mistakes. Small and rural districts may struggle the most because they have limited staff. There is also concern that vendors may be less likely to bid if the process becomes too difficult, which could reduce competition and increase costs." *Mississippi school district*
499. "I would use the E-Rate program if I could find someone that offered it is our county. It has been offered in past years and after spending hours and hours trying to figure out the paperwork. When I did get the paperwork figured out, the company that offered the E-Rate was more expensive than the company we are using now. It is a great program, but it just does not work in our county." *E-rate applicant*
500. "The request to use the portal for bidding is cumbersome because state law requires us to use our state's portal this creates a big issue for us." *E-rate applicant*
501. "The new portal will make it more difficult for rural Internet Service Providers, as they do not have the same resources as larger providers. Small school districts will have even more work to do for eRate than they currently do, without any more support or money to accomplish the same tasks." *Idaho school district*

502. "Instead of having everything in a portal, have it a part of the regular audit package that we have every year." *Arizona school district*
503. "Customer should be able to use their local state providers and vendors before an outside source." *E-rate applicant*
504. "We do believe the planned bidding portal will cause unnecessary administrative burden. This is especially true if AI is utilized to scan all bid responses likely tagging everything for PIA review due to minute details (consider how even vendors can typo a small section in a bid response which is otherwise understood by a human). Furthermore the USF system was reported to largely be within the low threshold percentage for abuse. The bidding and filing for USF is already a bureaucratic beast requiring 1000's a year for most schools to pay for consultants to navigate the system (the process has literally created a new private market (erate consulting) for draining part of the erate discount from schools). The portal will increase administrative burden while maybe/possibly roping back an unsubstantial amount of accidental waste (while likely costing much much more in development and support time to maintain and operate but costing applicants even more in time and consultant fees). Knowing the facts that we do as applicants or vendors, the decision is baffling at best. Thank you for seeking opinions." *Michigan consortium*
505. "Our competitive bidding for internet only allows for one bid due to that company's control of internet access in our rural area. Until fiber comes our way, this will continue to be an issue to finding competitive options for this service." *Kansas school district*
506. "Our district is highly reliant on the eRate program for critical functions on our network. One of the deciding factors in selecting a vendor is their availability to assist/troubleshoot after the purchase or install. My fear is that this new bidding process will force us to take the absolute lowest dollar bid, thus forcing us to spend the full amount to work with vendors who are at least in our state. I often receive low-ball bids from vendors who are on the other side of the country and do not provide any amount of service with the hardware being bid. This would be detrimental to our district. My other concern is that the time required to manage all communication on the bidding process through the new dashboard will require more time than we have available. There is already a considerable amount of time required to properly submit bids and vendor selection - increasing that work load will limit my ability to issue purchases through eRate." *Michigan school district*
507. "The managed portal for bidding will reduce the number of vendors bidding in our very rural area. Mom and pop shops are pretty much the only folks who do infrastructure projects in our area due to rural nature. They do not have the staff to get into the portal, but are able to do our own competitive bidding process that is approved by E-Rate, the state of PA and our local school board." *Pennsylvania school district*
508. "Portal based bidding will create a struggle for smaller vendors without full time bidding staff and double the work for schools that use traditional RFP's" *Kansas school district*
509. "I strongly oppose the proposed bid portal requirement and appreciate the continued efforts of stakeholders to refine or limit its implementation. Requiring districts to retroactively upload bid documentation for existing multi-year contracts dating back to pre-2028 would create a significant administrative burden and strain already limited resources." *Oregon school district*
510. "Whether the bidding portal will create an administrative burden is entirely on the features/functionality of the portal itself. The concept is extremely valuable, but we will need communications with vendors built in, and we will need a consideration that there may be state bidding requirements that are also playing a factor into our procurements. My questions are: would e-rate consultants have access to perform a bidding process on our behalf, or would that be incurred by the district? Would there be the ability to flag submitted vendor proposals as spam (we have seen vendors using the e-rate process to submit 'proposals' that are in fact just sales and marketing materials). Will there be a process to flat vendor proposals as not meeting bidding requirements, while giving them an option to re-submit? What about procurements that state rules require to be 'sealed bids'? What if state rules require public notice at certain \$ thresholds? Will there be a process for pre-proposal conferences with vendors to answer bid related questions? Will the bid evaluation piece be documented or performed within the bidding portal? Will intent-to-awards, and then the final contract award, be made via the bidding portal?" *Oregon consortium*
511. "We already use an e-procurement bidding software ([vendor]). We advertise, vendor respond, all communication (vendor & agency)

- and scoring is done in this platform. Everything is transparent to our vendors and patrons through the software. I would like you to create a platform for those who do not currently have one, but allow a list of 'approved' platforms, such as the one we use that is all inclusive for every aspect of e-rate solicitations (cradle to grave)." *Idaho school district*
512. "I am the admin that applies for and manages the ERate support for our library district. Requiring the bidding process to go through your portal will make this much more complicated. The USAC is making this impossible for small rural libraries and schools to benefit from the ERate program. This new requirement makes me discouraged. We already struggle to keep up and we are a medium sized district. There should be an option." *Oregon library system*
513. "The process is cumbersome and difficult for the average person. The bid process doesn't work because nothing is apples to apples. Vendors don't read our RFP they through our numbers. We should be able to select what's best for our school not lowest bidder the bid system through erate could be good if we aren't forced to work with entities that are not effective. There is more to money it should also be about service quality, reliability, consistency and relationships. We have tried other vendors and found the experience awful. The PIA process is ridiculous. The same questions year after year rid representatives who don't answer questions unless they are given a script. The requests are monotonous. Just tell us ahead of time what you want and have it sent for everyone. The incessant emails with demands for that same thing over and over is silly." *Ohio school*
514. "In rural Alaska competitive bids using [vendor] as a backhaul were restricted to [vendor], and as such were much much higher than what other companies had initially bid intending [vendor] as backhaul. We look forward to competition from [vendor] or other LEO systems." *Alaska library*
515. "The new bidding portal requirement is going to be very burdensome and is unnecessary. Many districts have their own online bidding portals and this will require bid admins at each district to learn, manage, and maintain bids in 2 different online portals. Our bidding portal is integrated with contract management. This will cause Erate bids to be in a different program than our contract which will not allow for easy reporting, contract execution, etc. I foresee a lot of challenges, delays, and learning curve issues with this new requirement and may result in failure to meet Erate deadlines." *California school district*
516. "Please reconsider mandating competitive bidding through a Federally mandated portal. It would be more efficient to permit school districts and libraries to upload their competitively bid contracts and the supporting documentation instead of conducting two RFPs one in EPC and one in the agency's system. This action could narrow the pool of responsive and responsible bidders by excluding local/regional vendors. A better option would be for USAC to mandate certain contract clauses be included in the procurement and contracts. This could decrease the workload required to audit each contract for compliance." *Oregon school district*
517. "I am very concerned about a bidder portal. We sometimes get no bids, so I wouldn't know that until too late to ask providers to bid on my projects. It just adds unnecessary red tape to what is working very well now." *Iowa school district*
518. "I would like to see better communication on dark fiber vs leased lit fiber on how to successfully complete RFPs." *Kansas school district*
519. "I'd like to buy a certain amount of access points, with the make and model numbers of my choosing. Instead I get vendors giving me outdated AP's or some random AP's. I also feel that labor and materials to install access point should be part of erate." *New York school*
520. "The online bidding process going through EPC, sounds like it will streamline things. That is a good idea, if so, and will keep the bidding process fair." *Oklahoma school district*
521. "An E-Rate managed Competitive Bidding Portal is completely redundant. Schools and Libraries are already required by E-Rate Rules to hold fair and open bidding. Additionally, public schools and libraries are required to follow each state's procurement rules. In most cases the state rules are stronger than E-Rate's rules. If there are service providers and applicants that will violate the rules, they will so with or without an official E-Rate bidding portal. However, those that follow the rules will just be burdened with the extra bureaucratic processes. At this point the FCC might as well make E-Rate consultants eligible because all schools and libraries will need one to get through the process." *Arizona school district*
522. "Been with E-rate program since Year 2. I have seen a lot of changes, some good, some not.

Most of the changes I would give a high mark. However, I am very sceptical about the bidding procedures now being considered. It is fine the way it is for us" *E-rate applicant*

523. "The proposal to require all bidding to go through a USAC portal is unnecessary and will cause multiple issues. School districts will almost certainly encounter problems trying to meet local and/or state bidding requirements. EPC needs to be updated to be more intuitive and if this new process goes thru this portal, it will only add to this need. Please DO NOT implement this policy!" *Tennessee school district*
524. "The competitive bidding process/portal is extremely redundant and not necessary because every state's bidding laws and requirements already apply." *Illinois library*
525. "The E-Rate competitive bidding process is redundant and not necessary because every state's bidding laws and requirements already apply." *Illinois library*
526. "The current e-rate system serves us well! Many of the services which public libraries provide to connect the public to needed resources; such as online access so the economically disadvantaged might apply for work or improve their job skills, is under threat by the proposed changes. Further, my public library contracts with a local telecom not only for Internet access to our main location, but also Internet access to our six branch locations. Through past bidding cycles I have witnessed that large, national or regional telecoms only bid on the Internet connection to the main location and not the connections to our smaller, more rural outlying branches. A mandatory bidding portal would potentially keep my library from contracting for Internet service to the entire system from a single, local provider, making our Internet access not less expensive, but ultimately more expensive because it may then require a multitude of vendors, which would then need to be managed. The negative ramifications of what the FCC is proposing won't become apparent until the new regime is

in place, and then it would be too late to unwind the negative consequences." *Michigan library system*

527. "I think vendors should have to complete bids following a template so it is easier to evaluate bids, much like we fill out the 470. I always worry about hidden costs with services. It would also be helpful with Cat 2 because unfamiliar vendors often have difficult to follow terms and conditions. Making bids equal, e.g. one has shipping, another sticks it on invoice later, some don't charge it. I want to be able to compare apples to apples. Any changes should help applicants!" *Pennsylvania school district*
528. "The E-Rate program is great, I just wish that all the vendors didn't have access to how much money districts had. This would allow for better bidding competition." *Tennessee school district*
529. "The USAC managed portal will be terrible for districts. USAC managed products are difficult to use, and we already have strong processes in-place to ensure low-costs and competitive bidding." *Tennessee school district*
530. "Would be helpful if more local vendors knew about USAC for more competitive bids. Could USAC promote more tech vendors to register to bid? Perhaps [our metro area] could be a pilot community to blitz tech vendors to register." *Minnesota school*
531. "The E-Rate competitive bidding process is redundant and not necessary because every state's bidding laws and requirements already apply." *Illinois library*
532. "The bidding process is important to keep the providers competitive and cost down for libraries and schools." *Nevada library*
533. "When the lowest cost is the primary factor in awarding bids, it often results in selecting a poor-performing vendor and products." *E-rate applicant*
534. "The E-Rate bidding portal will result in less competition, and larger vendors driving out smaller, local IT competitors." *Michigan school district*

Kudos (61 comments)

535. "We appreciate that our internet and phone is so cost effective for small rural libraries." *Iowa library*
536. "Really appreciate the work that USAC puts into managing the program." *Iowa school district*
537. "USAC is outstanding and the portal is excellent. My only suggestion is that the FCC consider a special 'Network Migration

Application' Here's why: A 90% district with a 1G circuit that costs \$2K per month wants to upgrade to a new 10G circuit that costs \$800 per month. But because the installation date for the new service is outside of the applicant's control, they know that even a single month at \$2K without discounts would cost more than two years of the slower network with discounts.

- And installations are often delayed by six month or more. Allowing applicants to apply for both networks for the entire year under a special Network Migration Application that requires a post-migration alignment without overlapping costs before invoicing would encourage applicants to take advantage of more cost-effective high-bandwidth solutions and reduce costs for USAC." *E-rate applicant*
538. "The employees like [name] are the most important tool. I fill out forms once or twice a year without them I would not know what to do and when to do it. Their knowledge and support relieves the biggest burden of the erate process. Those employees like [name] are the key to successful access to erate services." *Texas library*
539. "Filing for Erate C1 and C2 are much easier these days than in past years." *New Jersey school district*
540. "Great support on our technology program" *California school*
541. "I am grateful for the E-Rate program" *California school district*
542. "Our bid for category 1 leased fiber saves tax payers [amount] over 20 years. Without the E-Rate 2nd Modernization Order, we would still be getting old, slow, and expensive leased fiber." *California school district*
543. "E-Rate has been very good for us." *Texas school district*
544. "We love that this program exists! This has to be one of the most impactful programs ever. Everyone needs access to the internet: food, water, shelter, and internet." *Georgia library system*
545. "Thank you all! Simplicity is always appreciated!" *E-rate applicant*
546. "We are a simple public Library system and use E-Rate mainly for internet service and every 5 years or so, category 2 infrastructure depending on availability of other grants. E-Rate has greatly increased the bandwidth we can afford and are grateful for it." *Georgia library system*
547. "[name] is the best she is on top of always looking to help me and make sure everything is good. Drops everything when I need help. She is amazing!" *Washington school district*
548. "Overall, I think the service and program are excellent. It is just very difficult for new employees to learn. It would be nice if there were more consistently available or recommended courses." *E-rate applicant*
549. "Thank you for providing this to the small libraries with very little in budgets." *Iowa library*
550. "THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DO." *California consortium*
551. "I think it is a complete and very well developed programme in all respects." *E-rate applicant*
552. "This is a good program for the State that helps students get a better education. This is one of the many programs that I agree with for the state of CA and goes to a good cause." *California school district*
553. "I'm thankful for USAC helping with E-rate." *West Virginia school district*
554. "We appreciate the support for our school" *Illinois school*
555. "Excellent service for education and support to the most underserved communities." *Puerto Rico library*
556. "[our school] is grateful for the continued support and guidance provided through the E-Rate program. Thank you for the resources and assistance that help us serve our students effectively." *California school*
557. "We are grateful for the E-rate program!" *Idaho library*
558. "Phone service is always super and helpful" *Florida library*
559. "I have someone who helps us apply for this every year and we are very thankful." *Arkansas library system*
560. "I have grown accustomed to the E-rate Process and don't believe it benefits anyone to change it. It is a great program." *Illinois school district*
561. "Thank You for all the support" *Oklahoma library*
562. "The E-RATE program has been an amazing partner for our schools. I am looking many more years of e-rate making a difference." *Missouri school district*
563. "I believe E-Rate is a valuable resource that supports school districts and promotes student success by helping provide affordable and reliable internet services for students" *Texas school district*
564. "We are so grateful for this program!" *Montana school district*
565. "Very grateful for the services that are offered." *South Dakota school*
566. "EPC is easy to use and the USAC staff is always extremely helpful when asked questions, either on the portal or by phone. We are grateful for the E-rate funding for both Cat 1 and 2 as we have better connectivity because of it." *New Jersey consortium*

567. "E-Rate represents the single, greatest value for taxpayers. Because of E-rate our vendors extend the e-rate pricing all year long to us instead of just the 470 bids. This reduces a district overall IT spending by 70 to 80 %. The ONLY source of funding for a school district is TEXES. E-Rate is a powerful tool for negotiations, and contract compliance. E-rate lowers TCO by reducing the 'actual' cost paid to the manufacturers via the discounted rate bid on the 470's. Our discounted savings are in the 62% to 69% off list pricing, no shipping and no taxes because we are nonprofit. That is value to the US Taxpayer !" *New York consortium*
568. "they are always helpful when I have an question" *Oklahoma library*
569. "This is our first year, so far so good." *Oklahoma library*
570. "We are so thankful for the E-Rate program in our rural county." *Tennessee school district*
571. "The USAC representatives have always been helpful and supportive, rather than difficult and obstructive. They are knowledgeable and easy to work with." *Tennessee library*
572. "The program as a whole is a significant part in our daily technology needs. Thank you so much for keeping our school efficient and effective." *California school*
573. "E-Rate makes the schools safer by not having out of date and out of support equipment. E-Rate makes schools connectivity faster, increasing learning potential." *Ohio school district*
574. "E-Rate has been good to us. Seems a bit slow this year for funding requests compared to last year. Overall, a quality program, but it needs to include more services." *Texas school district*
575. "We are very grateful for E-Rate, our district always tries to use the funds in a responsible manner of investment for our students and community" *Ohio school district*
576. "The people that I worked with throughout the process were helpful in explaining things since I am new to e-rate process." *Iowa school*
577. "Thanks a lot for service" *Puerto Rico school*
578. "We love the E-Rate program!" *Colorado school*
579. "E-rate has been the single best, consistent program libraries have had in the 20+ years I have been here. While I think EPC could make the application more understandable, it has been exceptionally consistent for a very long time which removes a huge burden for library directors." *Oklahoma library*
580. "We appreciate the FCC allowing funding for the growth of broadband access to our public schools. This funding has changed education in a way that students are eager to learn, prepares them for the future, and keeps their minds moving forward to become stronger and more productive in the digital workforce. All this is made possible by the E-rate Program helping us build the digital literacy skills students need for the future." *Texas school district*
581. "I really love the support that you give schools and libraries giving them discount rate for internet. I really think it is beneficial for everyone to have access to the internet." *Idaho library*
582. "Very grateful for E-Rate program. It is a big help to our organization and it improves the technology base for our school." *California school*
583. "E-rate is a great program and really helps us with staying current for our students with the pressures of not enough revenue from the state." *Pennsylvania school district*
584. "Thank you, USAC!" *E-rate applicant*
585. "We are very happy with the E-rate program for our public library." *Connecticut library system*
586. "USAC has lowered our costs and increased our speeds. We've gone from 10mbps to 100mbps and our cost has gone from over [amount] per month (undiscounted) to under [amount] per month (undiscounted) for the same speed connection." *Georgia library system*
587. "Great program, we appreciate the support we get to make it through every school year" *Florida school*
588. "The E-rate Program is awesome!! Please continue to offer it and enhance it" *Alabama school district*
589. "Our organization eRate services are assisted by USAC. They are extremely helpful and offer functional technical support for our applications." *New Mexico school*
590. "Thank you for helping our school with internet and infrastructure. We are so grateful for the funding." *Kansas school district*
591. "We are a very small community and E-rate has been very helpful to our library We offer many after school programs that this service supports." *Arizona library*
592. "E-rate is a great help for our school." *California school*
593. "The E-rate program is definitely a program that definitely benefits our school - especially being a rural area." *Mississippi school district*

594. "Our rural community is thankful for the services." *Kansas library*

EPC usability (48 comments)

596. "EPC is only easy to use if you know what you are doing; if you don't it is a nightmare." *Illinois library system*

597. "The 60 day password change is unnecessary when MFA is a requirement. It would be nice if getting a copy of forms (470, 471, 486, etc.) was consistent. Some cable modems go to 1.25Gb now but the application doesn't allow us to put 1.25Gb. PIA reviewers need to be trained better." *Michigan school district*

598. "The EPC is hard to navigate." *Montana school*

599. "Applicants should be able to edit contracts" *E-rate applicant*

600. "The EPC is awful to navigate. It could be so much better." *South Carolina school district*

601. "I think the program could be a little bit more user friendly. I have to call for help each time I start the process. And when I get a email that says I need to do something it doesn't take me to where I need to it I have to guess as to where I need to go. I was wrote for someone that has the knowledge of erate not form someone that works in the accounting department." *Arkansas school district*

602. "Automated emails for deadlines on 470 / 471 / 486 forms. When a contract is needed in EPC provide a link to upload the contract right on the page instead of having to hunt to find where to upload contracts." *Illinois library*

603. "Some of the E-Rate forms (RAL and Form 500) are not 'user friendly' and are sometimes not easily navigated." *Indiana school district*

604. "The USAC user interface presents significant navigational challenges, particularly regarding the convoluted workflow required to upload requested documentation. Navigating these pathways often creates administrative friction. Furthermore, we urge the reconsideration of E-rate eligibility for voice/telephone services, as modern telephony is entirely dependent on robust internet connectivity. This operational dependency underscores the critical need for a secondary internet line. Incorporating redundant connections into the E-rate program ensures that essential communication infrastructure remains functional, maintaining vital phone access even during a primary internet outage." *Kansas school district*

595. "We are very appreciative of the opportunity to participate in the e-rate program." *Ohio school district*

605. "I find the EPC website hard to navigate. It seems very complex and not intuitive and I only access it a couple times a year, so I feel like I'm constantly having to relearn how to use it." *Alaska library*

606. "To be honest, the sign-in process to USAC is the hardest part of using the Portal. When we are only required to file forms every 3-4 months, a password change each time is ridiculous." *Idaho library*

607. "The EPC interface does not have a logical flow. All the components needed for completing our information are there, but not intuitive to find. It could also auto-fill most of the fields based on past information to speed up the process." *Wisconsin school*

608. "The website is difficult to use and the application and approval process is laborious." *Illinois school*

609. "Your log in page has given me issues for about two years, I need an additional contact person to be able to speak to a real person for this issue." *Texas library*

610. "The EPC is still cumbersome at best to traverse. Spend time working on making it simpler to find forms, update information (think WYSIWYG Wizard process to update information). Add the bidding matrixes to the EPC. Allow for multi-organization agreements to pricing to *truly* reduce costs. Allow internet filters (or service), backup internet lines (failover/redundancy) and VOIP/telephony equipment/service to be eligible. These are critical things for organizations that would be beneficial to have (and in some cases required). Cybersecurity service/training should also be included/eligible now that the pilot was requested way over the amount allotted." *E-rate applicant*

611. "The EPC portal is poorly organized" *Pennsylvania consortium*

612. "Because of the complexity of the EPC Portal, we've developed our own E-Rate Dashboard to assist districts in our region to applications and awards. I wish more cybersecurity services were eligible. I wish educational service agencies were eligible for Category 2 services." *E-rate applicant*

613. "The EPC management is terrible and sometimes hard to navigate. They need to

- update the menu system where everything is easier to find and not a struggle." *Oklahoma school district*
614. "Need a user friendly system" *Texas school district*
615. "Website needs to be easier to navigate." *E-rate applicant*
616. "The portal is not very user-friendly. The E-rate program is critical to our school's educational mission." *Hawaii school*
617. "When you make changes to the USAC forms (470, 471, etc.), PLEASE update the USAC and EPC Help example and video sections. Some of them are several years outdated, which is not helpful when trying to file a newer formatted form." *Iowa library*
618. "EPC form submission is still quite difficult for non-tech people like library staff." *Pennsylvania library*
619. "EPC forms could be more efficient. Form 486 example: Default funding year to the current year or at least have the most current year first instead of last in the dropdown." *Wisconsin school district*
620. "Having to reset the password to log-on to USAC is very tedious and time consuming - can we use two factor authentication instead?" *California school*
621. "I have used the portal for years, so I am kind of used to it, but the portal is not intuitive. The training videos are extremely helpful. It is essential that those are kept up-to-date. As long as training is available the transition to the new bidding procedures will go smoothly. I truly feel that erate support ultimately really wants the users to complete the application correctly and receive the erate grant." *Wisconsin school*
622. "EPC is not user friendly." *Nebraska school district*
623. "The main difficulty with the portal is that certain sections of it are hard to find. I use it about once a year for most processes and it is easy to forget which menu things are buried in. Being able to search the website would be a game changer. Also there are times when the expectations are unclear. I had to update my surveys for student count information multiple times because the info I sent didn't meet criteria I was unaware of. Also I was sent back the same form and it took me quite some time to realize that additional instructions had been appended to the bottom. Thanks for your work on this!" *Arkansas school*
624. "EPC is ridiculously complicated for some aspects of the application. It doesn't need to have a separate line item for each & every C2 component. In recent years, USAC representatives & processes have become increasingly difficult to work with and to get assistance from. The USAC help resources are completely unhelpful. I call it the 'NO HELP' desk. The USAC website search function is very weak. In today's day & age, it's astonishing how unhelpful USAC website search function is." *California school district*
625. "EPC is clunky and confusing to use. Many people need help or consultants with their filing. If now is the time to switch to a new portal it should be user friendly, easy to use, and fast." *Illinois school district*
626. "The site is extremely hard to use, cant find anything, and lack of help is very frustrating." *New York school*
627. "The EPC is not intuitive. As we only use it once a year, I have to pull up directions on where to find things. Many of the questions asked as part of the application process are worded in a way that I find difficult to understand, even though I have been handling our e-rate needs for over 10 years." *Iowa school*
628. "The current E-rate application process is unnecessarily complex and poses a significant barrier to entry for applicants. To improve the user experience, I recommend the following enhancements: ### Suggested Process and Interface Improvements: * **Simplified Step-by-Step Navigation:** Replace technical form identifiers (470, 471, 486, etc.) with a intuitive, linear workflow labeled clearly as 'Step 1,' 'Step 2,' and so on. This will help applicants understand their current progress and what remains to be done. * **Plain English Communication:** Reduce the reliance on dense legalese within the portal. Replacing complex regulatory language with clear, concise, and plain English instructions would greatly increase applicant comprehension and reduce errors. * **Performance Optimization:** Address the latency and lack of responsiveness experienced after form submission. High-performance, responsive systems are essential to maintain user confidence and ensure that the filing process is efficient rather than frustrating. Implementing these changes would significantly lower the administrative burden on applicants and create a more accessible, user-friendly interface for everyone involved in the E-rate program." *Illinois school*
629. "While I don't hate EPC, it hampers more than helps applicants throughout the process. For me, the steps are simple and orderly, but EPC seems to hide certain basic functions with no

clear organization to the navigation. Just getting back to the main dashboard feels hidden for some reason. While I'm indifferent to moving bidding to an online portal, I am concerned of the complexity it'll add and (if you don't mind me putting the tinfoil hat on for a second) I feel like changes are being made to complicate the process, in the hopes that people will use it less." *New Jersey school district*

630. "The EPC is burdensome. Adding a bidding portal will just increase the burden and slow down the process of Erate filing" *New Jersey school district*
631. "The USAC portal is clunky with redundant screens. I can say that it is faster now than it was a few years ago. Basic Maintenance should be combined with MIBS. As far as the Competitive Bidding requirement to be through a USAC portal; cannot respond without knowing the scope and overreach by USAC." *E-rate applicant*
632. "EPC is not user friendly. Also, when you submit a question the answers are not helpful." *Illinois library*
633. "website app is clunky. Difficult to track down agents, especially when appealing. Need to use a consultant for entire process" *Pennsylvania school district*
634. "The EPC is better than the previous system, but it is still somewhat cumbersome. It's not really intuitive, you have to go to strange menus to find what you are looking for. That being said, it's definitely an improvement!" *New Jersey school district*
635. "E-Rate is a vital program, but one which is Byzantine, difficult to deal with, and fraught with organizations that take a middle-man cut because of it. True reductions in cost and increases in efficiency are to be found in making those vulture-like services unnecessary because the process is *simple*. EPC is full of *bad web design*. It's full of things that can and should be fixed because just finding what you need is absurdly more complicated than needed. There is no explanation of any terms for web services on the portal to guide users to accurately describe the goods and services being purchased through the program, and I've had vendors flat up tell me they can't help me answer those questions due to program rules

even though they bid the services. It's silly and it gets in the way of streamlining the process for legitimate users for no reason. There is no productive purpose to having a web portal for the program that is willfully confusing."

Minnesota school

636. "Having more transparency in viewing or tracking item usage retention compliance within USAC itself would be nice to have. USAC in general feels clunky to use and it makes the filing process more difficult then it needs to be." *Missouri school district*
637. "Some items are a challenge to find on the USAC website and you end up clicking around until you find what you need. Example finding the right place to start a reimbursement request." *North Carolina library system*
638. "The EPC is a little clunky to use, especially when there's an error, but the support is great at fixing/walking me through issues. The E-Rate program has allowed our library to keep pace with current internet connectivity demands... which would otherwise be out of our financial reach as a mid-size community library." *Florida library system*
639. "EPC could be more user friendly." *Idaho library system*
640. "My only complaint is that I have to change my password every single time I am required to file a form on the EPC. So, basically, every few months I have to change my password." *E-rate applicant*
641. "Due dates need to be clearly visible in EOC" *Oregon school district*
642. "Please update your tutorials to match the current format of each form. It's frustrating to find that the form has changed (again), but the tutorial is still using forms from 2023." *Iowa library*
643. "I would prefer that the portal included both the technical, necessary language, but also broke down these elements in a more user friendly fashion for users who are attempting to complete the process as part of their yearly filing process. I think that the whole portal is very bare bones and could include more 'helpful hints' so that the staff completing the process could have more virtual assistance along the way." *Iowa library*

Equity and access (26 comments)

644. "As a school, any additional funding is a benefit. In reference to better bandwidth and equipment, that is important in rural areas as

we do not have access to technology that is in bigger cities. As for the process, it is a cumbersome when going out for bids. We are

thankful that there are multi-year contracts to reduce the need to go out for bids every year.”
Texas school district

645. “Our library patrons rely on hotspots for use. This is a costly program for libraries and schools. It would be helpful if this would become E-Rate eligible again. Also, cybersecurity and phone service is costly and is greatly needed as a reduced rate through E-rate discounts.” *North Carolina library system*

646. “Rural Alaska, and even the divergences of available services within specific regions of Alaska present significant logistical challenges and exponentially higher costs than anywhere else in the US. Providing fiber reliability comes at a cost that is 10x higher than other markets.”
Alaska consortium

647. “In rural America, access to the internet is very limited, yet more things can only be done online. This means citizens suffer from not being able to access programs like Social Security and Medicare, which are their rights. Without the library’s internet, many will suffer from a lack of access to services and social connections.” *Kansas library*

648. “Losing hotspots for off-premise use was very disappointing for libraries; the change in policy after the funding windows closed has added to mistrust of USAC-related programs, as many libraries had bad experiences with ECF as well”
Ohio consortium

649. “Funding for hotspots would be great, but otherwise EXCELLENT!” *California school district*

650. “Hot spots for circulation should be covered.”
Michigan library

651. “I think E-rate is absolutely important to ensure communities have internet provided to them. With E-rate, we can give people without home internet free internet and it’s at an affordable cost to the library. They make it super easy by handling all the paperwork, which I appreciate.”
Kansas library

652. “Wi-Fi hotspots for libraries to check out to patrons NEEDS to be an eligible e-Rate service, particularly in a broadband poor area like rural West Virginia where broadband adoption rates are under 70%. E-Rate needs to prevent ISPs from just being about making money and more about providing equal internet service to ALL Americans, particularly when more governmental services are requiring things to be done online (taxes, Social Security, health care, etc.). Also recognizing that geography (i.e. mountains and trees that block satellite and line of sight connectivity) are not the best

answer for rural places like West Virginia.” *West Virginia library*

653. “The E-Rate program has been one of the most effective equalizers in public education. It enables smaller districts and rural communities to secure the Internet access and inter-building connectivity that would otherwise be financially out of reach. Larger but less affluent districts and libraries benefit in the same way. Without this support, many schools would be pushed back into a technological “dark age,” widening gaps in opportunity and creating an educational vacuum. Districts and libraries should be able to obtain the equipment necessary to deliver reliable connectivity to every student and every classroom without cost becoming a barrier. While each of us may hold personal views about what should or should not be eligible for support, the broader reality is clear: education, technology, and curriculum are inseparable. The program should be evolving toward greater clarity and usability, not increased complexity. Every additional layer of administrative difficulty increases the risk of errors, delays, and — most concerning — fraud. When the process becomes harder to navigate, it creates openings for individuals who may seek personal gain at the expense of students. E-Rate has historically done an admirable job of regulating and minimizing fraud, and the entire program should not be constrained or jeopardized because of isolated concerns. Students, families, and entire communities rely on equitable access to the Internet and to modern learning opportunities. Pulling back support would not simply slow progress — it would reverse it.” *Pennsylvania school district*

654. “It would be nice to have mobile hotspots covered by E-rate for my library patrons”
Michigan library

655. “The E-rate program is beneficial to rural areas because it provides internet access to community resources for the underserved population, especially those seeking employment and attending online classes. In today’s business and education practices the internet is essential. E-rate permits internet access for all purposes; it is an invaluable service.” *Arizona library*

656. “We are a rural school in a low-income community. Students have limited access to the internet at home. The E-rate program has been invaluable to our isolated educational system.”
Hawaii school

657. “E-rate has been essential in our ability, and the ability for all libraries in our state, to provide

internet in areas that experience large digital divides. As more and more part of everyday life require accessing online information and portals in some cases the library is the only place the public can perform these actions.”

West Virginia library system

658. “FCC/E-rate should support cellular data services for student ‘managed devices’.” *E-rate applicant*

659. “The E-rate program allows our library to have the best internet choice and price for our town. It allows our patrons, that do not have internet access, to utilize the internet as they need. We appreciate this program greatly.” *Oklahoma library*

660. “We live in a very rural town with a population of [amount]. There are no businesses that provide free internet. There isn’t even a coffee shop here. We are also very low income based and more than half of our students qualify for free and reduced lunch. Access to wifi provides students and patrons with services they cant get anywhere else.” *Idaho library*

661. “E-rate would help rural communities more if it supported Mobile Hotspots.” *Idaho library*

662. “For the most part, Vermont is a rural state with a high degree of physical separation between communities. The more rural the community, the greater the need for high speed Internet access to provide equitable educational experiences for students. I previously served as [a state E-rate coordinator] and have personally seen the increase in educational opportunities for students. Even wealthier communities have been able to provide more access to rich resources that have ultimately served to increase student engagement.” *Vermont school district*

663. “These services provide opportunities for rural areas to better provide for their communities and should still remain available.” *Idaho library*

664. “School bus Wifi should only be eligible for very long bus runs. Short suburban routes do not need it, but if students will be on the bus for over an hour, then service should be supported.” *Pennsylvania consortium*

665. “WiFi hotspots for patron use/checkout” *Oklahoma library*

666. “The eRate program is an incredibly important and necessary program for our modern day and age. Making sure we are able to supply high speed access to the internet, while also providing safety in the form of up to date network equipment is crucial to help bridge the digital divide between the haves and the have nots. The eRate program allows libraries to achieve this by taking on some of the financial burden these institutions run into while trying to provide the best and most secure services to their patrons.” *Idaho library*

667. “In a small rural library, where the internet throughout the county is spotty, in many places non-existent or still hard wired with no plans by big companies to improve this situation, high speed internet is essential. So many daily processes (banking, document sharing, taxes, medical appointments, insurance etc. etc.) absolutely do not happen without internet access in our modern world. In my area without high speed internet access at the library MANY people would have to travel 45 min or more to find a spot to do these tasks. Many more would not be able to do these tasks at all without the local library and the high speed internet. It is absolutely essential. The way this program runs currently is so very beneficial to all of our patrons.” *Idaho library*

668. “I think that for rural communities and smaller organizations, having an internet connection is a lifeline for many people, and with the growth of AI and telemedicine, it creates needed access to critical and life-saving services. Additionally, I believe that the funding should be able to help cover the cost of some equipment, though it should be highly limited to computers and similar items, as well as limited in the number of each an organization can purchase to avoid issues.” *Arizona library*

669. “Libraries have very limited budgets, and E-Rate is extremely helpful in ensuring equitable access to our communities. Even basic life activities - applying for a job, viewing medical records, applying for assistance, all of these and much more require internet access. It’s not a nice-to-have; it’s as essential as electricity.” *Virginia library system*

Consultant rules (9 comments)

670. “We utilize an e-rate consultant for our reporting and filing needs which makes this process much easier to navigate. E-Rate should include more technology services and equipment not less.” *New Jersey school*

671. “We are a consortium and have to use an erate consultant to make sure we file correctly and to handle individual situations. The E-Rate program is essential to libraries and we rely on those

funds to serve their communities.”

Massachusetts library system

672. “We have to pay a contractor just to ensure that we fill out all the paperwork accurately that is requested during the approval process. This should be easier to do that it is. Names of forms should replace numbers, so that it is understandable what is the next step. It should be easier to help yourself in the portal, but the layout requires knowledge of how the government entity works and how they name the numbered forms and what they all mean. This is the reason we have to pay \$10,000 a year to a consultant. Otherwise that money would be spent on our school system.”
Massachusetts school district

673. “We could not take part in this program without the assistance of a third party company helping us with our applications and form preparation/submission. We simply do not have the staff available to keep track of the rules and procedures.” *Montana school district*

674. “We still use e-rate consultants. Would like the process to be simple enough to do this on our own.” *Connecticut school district*

675. “The program is very difficult to use but provides critical funding. Use of a consultant is all but mandatory in order to navigate the labyrinthine complexity. I’d encourage any school or library to retain a consultant and use the E-rate program, but you need a consultant, you’ll never figure it out yourself. The program should be expanded to include firewalls and other security, because it’s unthinkable to operate an enterprise network connected to the Internet without security; therefore, security is an essential need for Internet connectivity and should be included in the program.” *California school*

676. “E-rate is a complex, but essential, program. Without our E-rate consultant, we would struggle to stay on top of things.” *Wyoming school district*

677. “This is my first year going through e-rate and it has been about 6 years since the school has used e-rate. We use a consultant for it. Some questions I felt like either is just from a lack of experience or because we have a consultant that does part of it for us.” *Texas school district*

678. “[consultant] helps us with our eRate paperwork & filings. I do not know if I could manage this without their help” *Texas library*

Other (17 comments)

679. “We try our best to meet all of the requirements to utilize this program.” *Florida school district*

680. “Q5 is difficult to answer as posed. It states ‘Our organization can depend on E-rate funding every year’ We do depend on E-rate funding each year but we don’t know if/when the funding will end.” *New York consortium*

681. “We don’t get to apply for e-rate at the Coop’s so that’s reflected in some of my answers.”
Arkansas consortium

682. “Don’t make the questions double negatives.”
New Mexico school

683. “I think there should be a certification for organizational E-Rate managers.” *New York library system*

684. “I disagree with the new rule proposed.” *Illinois school district*

685. “I will be taking over our district’s e-rate responsibilities next fiscal year. I look forward to learning more about the process and efficiently utilizing these funds to address our staff and student needs!” *Minnesota school district*

686. “Subscription services are taking advantage of the program, wasting funds that should be

utilized for equipment. Prices are higher through erate because they keep getting away with it. Especially internet rates. In the end, the school pays less than direct, but the total cost is more. I’ve been fighting this for over 20 years. Erate is a great idea, but it is disconnected from the reality of what is needed.” *Missouri school district*

687. “I’m still new to the E-Rate and the portal. As I get used to it, perhaps my answers will change.” *Idaho school*

688. “The erate program is a necessary evil. Unfortunately the cost of internet is high but we believe this is because of the erate program. The vendors know the funding and the discount rate and are able to charge more because they know the government will fund it. I believe the costs would come down significantly if the erate program was scrapped. That said, it cannot be at this point because we rely on it for our internet access as everything else goes up. We are 80% reimbursable and we wouldn’t have the access we do without it. The free market without erate would take years to come back to cost effective levels.” *Massachusetts school district*

689. "I primarily interface with the eRate program through my regional service center as I am a consortium member for internet access. I only have need to use EPC when filing for other equipment and services." *Texas school district*
690. "I am recently appointed to handle the submission of E-Rate applications for our school. As I am new to this process, I would appreciate any resources or guidance available that could assist me in understanding the E-Rate application procedures. Thank you very much for your support. Sincerely, [name]" *Texas school district*
691. "Tribal Libraries" *Oklahoma library*
692. "Thank you for the opportunity. Installation of measures to ensure USAC eliminate practices of political discrimination. Hold accountable and employ sanctions upon USAC Administration for negligence and participation in biases impeding access of qualified institution to E-Rate Services." *E-rate applicant*
693. "A tribal liaison would be helpful!" *California library*
694. "My only complaint is that companies know that Districts get Category One discounts, and they inflate their prices because they know all school will use e-rate. This is more of a complaint on capitalism than it is e-rate. We are dependent on e-rate for our budgets. If e-rate were to go away, our budgets would crater." *Texas school district*
695. "Our local telecom also plays a part in all of this making sure the schools have the best connectivity they can." *Oklahoma school district*

10. Data tables

The tables behind the charts in chapters 4 to 7; each title names the chapter it supports. Survey figures are the share of respondents; the number of responses is given with each table. Request figures are as filed, with the data date.

Table A1. Five statements about the program, 2016 to 2026 (share who strongly agree or agree) (chapter 4)

Statement	2016	2020	2025	2026	Change	n 2016	n 2026
E-rate funding is vital to our organization's Internet connectivity goals	84.6%	95.5%	96.8%	95.9%	+11.3	948	2,435
Our organization can depend on E-rate funding every year	64.9%	89.4%	90.3%	90.8%	+25.9	942	2,435
We have faster internet connections to our site(s) because of the E-rate program	73.9%	90.1%	92.1%	90.8%	+16.9	948	2,435
We connect more students and/or library patrons to the Internet because of the E-rate program	75.0%	88.9%	90.7%	90.2%	+15.2	948	2,435
The E-rate competitive bidding process lowers our prices	44.7%	71.6%	78.3%	78.6%	+33.9	948	2,435

Responses: 2,138 in 2020 for all five statements; 1,329 in 2025 for all five. Source: 2026 E-rate applicant survey.

Table A2. The FCC’s three goals for the program, 2016 to 2026 (share who agree the program is achieving each) (chapter 4)

Goal	2016	2020	2025	2026	Change	n 2016	n 2026
Goal 1: affordable access to high-speed broadband	74.3%	91.1%	95.4%	94.9%	+20.6	845	2,289
Goal 2: cost-effectiveness of E-rate supported purchases	60.6%	83.8%	89.5%	89.2%	+28.6	845	2,289
Goal 3: fast, simple, and efficient processes	34.7%	55.4%	63.4%	60.5%	+25.8	845	2,289

Responses: 2,037 in 2020 for all three goals; 1,271 in 2025 for all three. Source: 2026 E-rate applicant survey.

Table A3. USAC and EPC measures, first year to 2026 (chapter 4)

Measure	First year	2020	2025	2026	Change	n, first year	n 2026
Satisfied with USAC (very or somewhat), since 2019	80.5% (2019)	83.4%	86.6%	82.8%	+2.3	1,721	2,408
USAC cares about our individual situation (a great deal or a lot), since 2019	46.3% (2019)	51.5%	60.0%	55.4%	+9.1	1,721	2,408
EPC meets our needs (extremely or very well), since 2019	53.9% (2019)	65.8%	72.1%	68.4%	+14.5	1,257	1,837
EPC ease of use (very easy or easy), since 2016	23.4% (2016)	46.9%	52.4%	50.2%	+26.8	860	1,837

Responses: 2,123 in 2020 for the two USAC items and 1,464 for the two EPC items; 1,314 in 2025 and 1,074. Source: 2026 E-rate applicant survey.

Table A4. Category One requests as filed, FY2016 to FY2026 (chapter 5)

Funding year	Data as of	All applicants	Pre-discount cost	Discount requested	E-rate share
FY2016	August 17, 2016	24,025	\$3,494,268,143	\$2,278,621,413	65.2%
FY2017	June 28, 2017	22,973	\$3,160,166,867	\$2,091,123,763	66.2%
FY2018	July 2, 2018	21,459	\$2,940,158,380	\$2,074,371,007	70.6%
FY2019	May 1, 2019	21,573	\$2,513,178,486	\$1,953,064,194	77.7%
FY2020	June 3, 2020	21,611	\$2,275,735,163	\$1,772,909,319	77.9%
FY2021	May 14, 2021	21,362	\$2,224,380,215	\$1,740,217,785	78.2%
FY2022	April 11, 2022	21,205	\$2,146,310,910	\$1,672,472,217	77.9%
FY2023	April 21, 2023	21,185	\$2,185,342,337	\$1,706,260,323	78.1%
FY2024	April 25, 2024	21,348	\$2,489,168,016	\$1,977,882,950	79.5%
FY2025	April 14, 2025	21,524	\$2,296,503,324	\$1,834,718,500	79.9%
FY2026	April 15, 2026	21,237	\$2,144,057,324	\$1,730,315,248	80.7%

Category One requests as filed, FY2016 to FY2026. Applicants are all applicants filing in the year, in either category. Source: E-rate Manager®, data as of the date shown.

Table A5. Category Two requests as filed, FY2016 to FY2026 (chapter 5)

Funding year	Data as of	Pre-discount cost	Discount requested	E-rate share
FY2016	August 17, 2016	\$1,662,756,923	\$1,165,802,114	70.1%
FY2017	June 28, 2017	\$1,323,255,446	\$906,743,021	68.5%
FY2018	July 2, 2018	\$1,107,537,153	\$759,839,660	68.6%
FY2019	May 1, 2019	\$1,440,407,963	\$1,002,148,431	69.6%
FY2020	June 3, 2020	\$1,654,060,795	\$1,207,222,190	73.0%
FY2021	May 14, 2021	\$1,873,038,979	\$1,364,265,173	72.8%
FY2022	April 11, 2022	\$2,115,309,649	\$1,541,234,652	72.9%
FY2023	April 21, 2023	\$1,919,413,951	\$1,366,674,769	71.2%
FY2024	April 25, 2024	\$1,894,030,715	\$1,387,716,854	73.3%
FY2025	April 14, 2025	\$1,987,042,318	\$1,472,785,384	74.1%
FY2026	April 15, 2026	\$2,535,670,890	\$1,889,096,742	74.5%

Category Two requests as filed, FY2016 to FY2026. Pre-discount cost is the total cost of the services and equipment requested; the E-rate discount requested is the funding request itself. Source: E-rate Manager®, data as of the date shown.

Table A6. Sites listed on applications by category, FY2016 to FY2026 (chapter 5)

Funding year	Category One sites	Category Two sites
FY2016	132,174	55,033
FY2017	131,139	46,630
FY2018	129,729	45,071
FY2019	129,324	54,129
FY2020	130,625	60,435
FY2021	131,317	60,671
FY2022	131,355	60,829
FY2023	130,913	59,966
FY2024	130,645	61,166
FY2025	131,724	69,662
FY2026	130,929	70,971

Distinct entities listed as recipients of service on the year's funding requests as filed, by category. The recipient lists are those current in E-rate Manager® on August 11, 2026 (FY2023 and FY2024 from USAC Open Data recipient-of-service extracts, current form version), so a site added to or removed from a request during review is counted as of that date. A site that receives both Category One and Category Two service counts in each category. Values for prior years are computed on this method and differ slightly from those printed in earlier editions; chapter 11 explains why. Source: E-rate Manager®, data as of August 11, 2026.

**Table A7. Allocation of requested services and products, FY2025 and FY2026
(chapter 5)**

Requested services and products, pre-discount cost	FY2025	Share	FY2026	Share
Lit fiber	\$1,709,471,993	39.9%	\$1,658,715,712	35.4%
Other broadband service	\$587,031,331	13.7%	\$485,341,611	10.4%
Wi-Fi equipment and network switches	\$1,404,203,686	32.8%	\$1,802,656,635	38.5%
Network cabling, accessories, and installation	\$582,838,632	13.6%	\$733,014,256	15.7%

The four groups are those of the 2025 edition. Lit fiber is every Category One line typed as lit fiber or classed as fiber without a fiber type; other broadband service is every other Category One line. Wi-Fi equipment and network switches is every Category Two line whose function is data distribution, wireless data distribution, licenses, modules, transceivers, caching, or firewall; network cabling, accessories, and installation is every other Category Two line, including cabling and connectors, installation and training, fees and taxes, UPS and battery backup, racks, software, basic maintenance, and managed internal broadband services. Source: E-rate Manager®, requests as filed, data as of April 15, 2026 and April 14, 2025.

Table A8. Five statements about the program, 2026 with 2025 (chapter 6)

Statement	2026 agree	2025	Change	Neither	Disagree	n 2026
E-rate funding is vital to our organization's Internet connectivity goals.	95.9%	96.8%	-0.9	2.9%	1.2%	2,435
Our organization can depend on E-rate funding every year.	90.8%	90.3%	+0.5	6.4%	2.8%	2,435
We have faster internet connections to our site(s) because of the E-rate program.	90.8%	92.1%	-1.3	7.3%	1.9%	2,435
We connect more students and/or library patrons to the Internet because of the E-rate program.	90.2%	90.7%	-0.5	7.9%	1.9%	2,435
The E-rate competitive bidding process lowers our prices.	78.6%	78.3%	+0.3	16.2%	5.3%	2,435

1,329 responses in 2025 for all five statements. Source: 2026 E-rate applicant survey.

Table A9. USAC: satisfied, and USAC cares, 2019 to 2026 (chapter 6)

Year	Satisfied with USAC (very or somewhat)	USAC cares (a great deal or a lot)	n
2019	80.5%	46.3%	1,721
2020	83.4%	51.5%	2,123
2021	83.5%	50.1%	2,145
2022	82.0%	50.7%	2,064
2023	83.6%	52.6%	2,092
2024	82.9%	54.6%	2,333
2025	86.6%	60.0%	1,314
2026	82.8%	55.4%	2,408

Source: 2026 E-rate applicant survey.

**Table A10. EPC among users: meets needs, and ease of use, 2016 to 2026
(chapter 6)**

Year	Meets needs (extremely or very well)	Ease of use (very easy or easy)	n
2016	—	23.4%	860
2017	—	23.1%	897
2018	—	29.2%	1,035
2019	53.9%	38.3%	1,257
2020	65.8%	46.9%	1,464
2021	64.5%	47.1%	1,527
2022	58.7%	44.6%	1,505
2023	67.1%	49.2%	1,509
2024	65.6%	47.7%	1,652
2025	72.1%	52.4%	1,074
2026	68.4%	50.2%	1,837

Source: 2026 E-rate applicant survey.

Table A11. Insufficient home Internet access is a significant issue in our community, 2017 to 2026 (chapter 6)

Year	Agree (strongly agree or agree)	n
2017	73.4%	939
2018	81.6%	935
2019	81.8%	1,624
2020	90.1%	2,073
2021	85.7%	2,073
2022	77.6%	2,026
2023	73.5%	2,045
2024	70.2%	2,313
2025	67.5%	1,304
2026	67.6%	2,403

Source: 2026 E-rate applicant survey.

Table A12. The USAC-managed competitive bidding portal, 2026 (chapter 6)

Item	Agree	Neither	Disagree	n
Requiring E-rate competitive bidding to go through this portal will increase the administrative burden on my organization.	57.5%	37.5%	5.0%	2,289
A USAC-managed bidding portal is necessary to ensure the integrity of the E-rate competitive bidding process.	30.7%	38.7%	30.6%	2,289

Source: 2026 E-rate applicant survey.

Table A13. Who is responsible for the E-rate applications, 2026 (chapter 6)

Role (as listed on the instrument)	Share (n 2,165)
Chief technology official	47.5%
Technology support staff	22.4%
Library director or administrator	19.3%
Other (typed text)	12.4%
Chief business official	9.1%
Dedicated E-rate staff	8.9%
Superintendent	6.6%
Business office support staff	5.9%
Principal	4.2%
Technology teacher	2.5%
Volunteer	0.9%

Source: 2026 E-rate applicant survey.

Table A14. How respondents stay up to date on E-rate, 2026 (chapter 6)

Source (as listed on the instrument)	Share (n 2,114)
Read/subscribe to USAC News Brief	68.5%
Read/subscribe to 3rd party newsletters/listservs	45.8%
Attend 3rd party training sessions	30.9%
Other (typed text)	22.1%
Attend in-person USAC training sessions	20.9%

Source: 2026 E-rate applicant survey.

Table A15. Expect an increase in bandwidth need over the next three years, 2016 to 2026 (chapter 7)

Year	Expect an increase	n
2016	90.1%	883
2017	89.9%	936
2018	87.2%	940
2019	88.0%	1,644
2020	89.2%	2,011
2021	87.5%	2,027
2022	83.7%	1,909
2023	83.3%	1,941
2024	81.1%	2,187
2025	76.8%	1,256
2026	76.1%	2,268

Source: 2026 E-rate applicant survey.

Table A16. Expected change in bandwidth need over the next three years, 2026 (chapter 7)

Expected change over three years	Share (n 2,268)
No change	23.9%
25% increase	41.9%
50% increase	24.8%
75% increase	4.5%
100% increase	3.7%
More than 100% increase	1.1%

Source: 2026 E-rate applicant survey.

Table A17. Dual Internet connections, 2018 to 2026 (chapter 7)

Year	Have dual Internet connections	n
2018	13.4%	940
2019	14.4%	1,644
2020	14.0%	2,011
2021	15.4%	2,027
2022	16.6%	1,909
2023	17.1%	1,941
2024	15.9%	2,187
2025	15.5%	1,256
2026	18.0%	2,268

Source: 2026 E-rate applicant survey.

Table A18. Wi-Fi importance, Wi-Fi upgrade timing, and Category Two intent, 2016 to 2026 (chapter 7)

Year	Wi-Fi extremely or very important	Upgrade within three years	Intend to apply for Category Two
2016	93.8% (n 865)	—	—
2017	93.1% (n 925)	—	—
2018	95.7% (n 940)	65.7% (n 940)	—
2019	97.9% (n 1,636)	75.2% (n 1,636)	—
2020	99.0% (n 2,005)	79.2% (n 2,005)	74.9% (n 1,999)
2021	99.0% (n 2,015)	78.7% (n 2,015)	73.6% (n 2,012)
2022	98.7% (n 1,899)	73.3% (n 1,899)	67.0% (n 1,895)
2023	98.9% (n 1,932)	75.8% (n 1,932)	69.1% (n 1,920)
2024	98.7% (n 2,169)	69.6% (n 2,169)	67.5% (n 2,157)
2025	98.6% (n 1,253)	69.7% (n 1,253)	72.5% (n 1,249)
2026	99.0% (n 2,255)	71.2% (n 2,255)	70.1% (n 2,249)

Responses are the number answering each item. The Wi-Fi upgrade item has carried an “N/A, we do not have a Wi-Fi network” option in every year since 2018; the within-three-years share is computed over those with a Wi-Fi network, which excludes 17 respondents in 2026, and the N/A share is reported beside the chart. The 2025 edition also charted an item on whether a self-provisioned network had lowered the price per megabit; it was not asked in 2026 (33.8% agreed in 2025, 1,256 responses). Source: 2026 E-rate applicant survey.

Table A19. Which services should qualify for E-rate support, 2026 with 2025 (chapter 7)

Service, as listed on the instrument	2026 yes	n 2026	2025 yes (n)	Change	Series since
Category One					
Primary Internet access (currently eligible)	99.9%	2,224	99.7% (1,228)	+0.2	2018
Dual/spare/failover Internet	86.6%	2,147	86.1% (1,196)	+0.5	2017
Telephone service	71.0%	2,162	70.7% (1,203)	+0.3	2018
School bus Internet connectivity (currently eligible)	63.8%	2,117	69.6% (1,181)	-5.8	2018
Self-provisioned network (currently eligible)	89.7%	2,155	90.4% (1,192)	-0.7	2018
Category Two					
Wi-Fi, switches and other data networking equipment (currently eligible)	99.3%	2,215	99.7% (1,225)	-0.4	2018
Maintenance support of eligible goods and services (currently eligible)	97.0%	2,206	98.3% (1,215)	-1.3	2018
Managed Wi-Fi by a third party (currently eligible)	91.3%	2,195	90.8% (1,205)	+0.5	2018
Network security and network management goods and services	97.5%	2,198	98.2% (1,227)	-0.7	2018
Voice over IP networking equipment	80.4%	2,143	82.6% (1,199)	-2.2	2018

School bus Internet connectivity carried the label “(currently eligible)” in error; the Commission ended that support on September 30, 2025 (chapter 11). The network security option added “network management” in 2025.

Source: 2026 E-rate applicant survey.

11. Method and demographics

This chapter explains where the figures in this report come from and how to read them.

The survey

The 2026 National Survey of E-rate Applicants was open online from May 5 to July 29, 2026. Invitations went out through Funds For Learning's outreach and through partner organizations. Respondents answered as individuals: the people who handle E-rate for a school, a library, or a consortium. More than one person from the same applicant may respond, and each answer counts.

The survey received 2,460 responses. Twenty-five were not real answers (gibberish, straight-lining, or profanity) and were set aside; the remaining 2,435 are the basis of this report. A respondent who stopped partway through is counted on the questions answered, so the number of responses varies from item to item and is stated with every figure. Responses to a question about the respondent's organization, or the applicant's Billed Entity Number in its place, were used only to describe who answered; no respondent or applicant is identified anywhere in this report.

The 2026 count is the largest since comparable counts begin in 2015. The prior high was 2,348 in 2024; 2025 closed at 1,329. As earlier editions have done, the report also states the count as a share of the applicant population: 2,435 responses correspond to 11.5% of the 21,237 applicants that filed FY2026 funding requests.

Reading the percentages

For a statement respondents were asked to agree or disagree with, the figure reported is the share who strongly agree or agree. Other scales are read the same way, by their top two answers: very or somewhat satisfied; a great deal or a lot; extremely or very well; very easy or easy; extremely or very important. Yes-or-no questions report the share answering yes. Where a top-two figure is near 100%, the share who strongly agree is also given: 95.9% agree that E-rate funding is vital to their organization's connectivity goals, and 83.4% strongly agree (2,435 responses).

Three items are read on a stated base. The bandwidth item reports the share expecting any increase over three years. The Wi-Fi upgrade item reports the share expecting to upgrade within three years, among respondents with a Wi-Fi network. The staff item reports the share with one trained person or none.

Earlier years

Every prior-year figure in this report is computed from the survey data for that year in the same way as the 2026 figure, so a comparison across years compares like with like. A few values

therefore differ slightly from figures printed in earlier editions. The 2025 edition's text gave 97.6% for "E-rate funding is vital," 93.3% for "we can depend on E-rate every year," 96.4% for faster connections, and 95.5% for more students and patrons connected; on the common basis used here the 2025 values are 96.8%, 90.3%, 92.1%, and 90.7% (1,329 responses), which agree with the 2025 edition's own charts, and every 2026 comparison is to these values. A reader citing a 2025 figure should say which edition it comes from.

The series in chapter 4 begin in 2016, the first year the core statements were asked in their current words. USAC satisfaction and "USAC cares" begin in 2019. Dual Internet connections is charted from 2018, when the question took its three-answer form. Years of experience is shown from 2016. "Review form instructions before filing" has not been offered as an answer since 2017 and is left off the staying-current chart.

What changed in the 2026 survey

Two questions are new: whether requiring competitive bidding to go through the USAC-managed portal adopted for FY2028 "will increase the administrative burden on my organization," and whether such a portal "is necessary to ensure the integrity of the E-rate competitive bidding process." Neither has a prior-year value.

Four items appear in the report for the first time although they were on earlier questionnaires: whether the respondent used EPC during the FY2026 filing window (77.6% yes; 2,385 responses), the explicit "we do not use a consultant" answer in the consultant block, which earlier years did not record, the number of staff trained in E-rate rules, and the organization questions asked in place of a Billed Entity Number. Because that answer is recorded for the first time, consultant use in 2026 can be read two ways: 63.0% of the 2,180 who answered the block use a consultant for at least one reason, and 56.4% of all 2,435 respondents do; only the second figure is comparable with earlier years, when a non-user left the block blank.

Two questions from 2025 were not asked in 2026: sharing Internet access off campus (59.1% yes in 2025) and whether a self-provisioned network lowers the price per megabit (33.8% agree in 2025). Neither appears as a 2026 finding.

Every recurring question keeps its wording and scale, with three notes. The Category Two intent question names the coming funding year, "funding year 2027" in 2026. Five eligible-services options have carried the note "(currently eligible)" since 2025, and the network security option added "network management" in 2025. In 2026 the school bus option also carried "(currently eligible)," which was wrong: the Commission's Declaratory Ruling of September 30, 2025 (WC Docket No. 13-184) ended E-rate support for Wi-Fi on school buses. The 2026 figure, 63.8% saying school bus connectivity should qualify (2,117 responses; 2025: 69.6%), is presented as respondents saw the option, and the report does not describe the change as a shift in opinion.

Funding request data

The funding figures in chapters 3, 5, and 8 come from E-rate Manager®, Funds For Learning's E-rate data platform. They describe funding requests as filed on FCC Form 471, before any

change made during USAC's review, for each funding year from FY2016 to FY2026. The FY2026 figures are as of April 15, 2026, two weeks after the filing window closed on April 1; each table and chart states its date. No figure in this report is a commitment or a disbursement.

Pre-discount cost is the total cost of the services and equipment requested. The E-rate discount requested is the funding request itself, the eligible cost multiplied by the applicant's discount rate; the applicant's share is the difference. Applicants are counted by Billed Entity Number. Sites are the distinct locations listed to receive service on the year's requests as filed, counted in each category they receive, using the recipient records current in E-rate Manager on August 11, 2026; for FY2023 and FY2024 the recipient lists come from USAC's open data. The four allocation groups in chapter 5 are the 2025 edition's: lit fiber; other broadband service; Wi-Fi equipment and network switches (including licenses, modules, transceivers, caching, and firewalls); and network cabling, accessories, and installation.

Prior-year request figures are computed the same way from the same source. The FY2025 site counts here, 131,724 for Category One and 69,662 for Category Two, differ by less than 1.5% from those printed in the 2025 edition, which were taken from a September 1, 2025 snapshot.

Comments

754 respondents left a written comment. Each comment was read and grouped by its main topic, using the topics of the 2025 edition plus three that arose this year: the bidding portal, consultant rules, and what the program should fund. Fifty-nine entries such as "n/a" are left out, and the remaining 695 are printed in chapter 9 as written, edited only to remove names, places, vendors, and other details that would identify the respondent.

What the survey does not measure

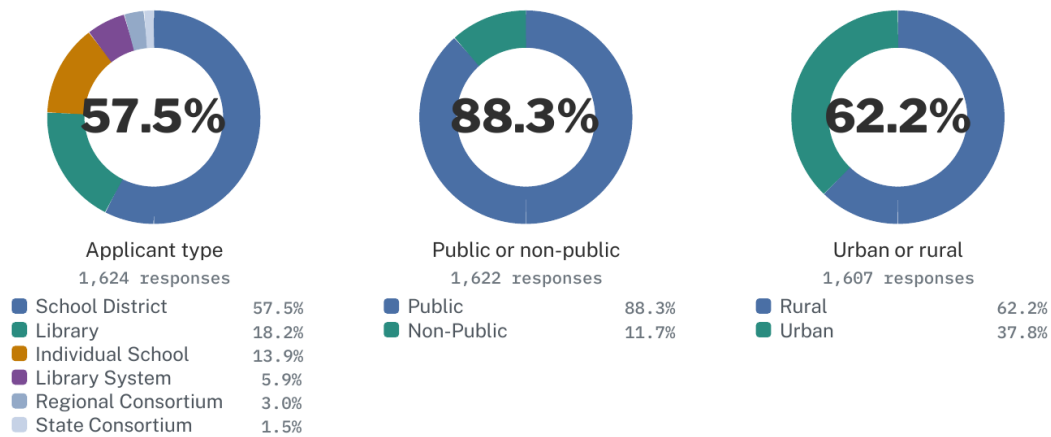
The 2026 questionnaire was written before the Commission released FCC 26-41 and FCC 26-52. It has no questions on screen time, device ownership, or content filtering; none on CIPA compliance or third-party devices; none on educational outcomes; none on whether an applicant could absorb a recovery of past funding or how a pay-and-dispute process would change participation; and none on whether schools and libraries would keep their filtering and Internet safety policies if E-rate obligations ended. Where the Commission asks these questions, the report says so rather than stretching a nearby item to answer them. They go on the list for the 2027 survey.

Who answered

Respondents were offered a choice: give their applicant's Billed Entity Number, or answer a few questions about their organization. Of the 1,783 who made the choice, 29.6% gave a BEN and 70.4% chose the questions. The organization questions were then shown to everyone who had not given a BEN, including the 652 respondents who skipped the choice, which is why they have more answers (1,624 for applicant type) than the 70.4% alone would give. The figures below describe the respondents who answered them.

Applicant type (1,624 responses): school district 57.5%; library 18.2%; individual school 13.9%; library system 5.9%; regional consortium 3.0%; state consortium 1.5%. Public or non-public (1,622 responses): public 88.3%; non-public 11.7%. Urban or rural (1,607 responses): rural 62.2%; urban 37.8%. Experience: 72.2% of respondents have worked with E-rate for five or more years (2,180 responses; 2025: 68.9%). Staffing: 70.6% report one staff member trained in E-rate rules, or none (2,180 responses).

Who answered: applicant type, public or non-public, urban or rural (2026)



Respondents who answered the organization questions instead of giving a BEN.

SOURCE: 2026 E-RATE APPLICANT SURVEY

What this report is

This report is not an encyclopedic review of the program, and while we strive to be fair and impartial, it is not a scientific analysis conducted by an independent third party. We hope it catalyzes discussion, generates new ideas, and leads to further improvements in this vital program.

12. Professional standard of conduct

Funds For Learning® has established and implemented several self-imposed professional consulting standards for our employees. FFL complies with the following Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics and adheres to a strict Code of Client Confidentiality.

Code of Conduct

FFL understands that conflicts of interest or the appearance of impropriety can negatively impact customer trust and the success of E-rate applications. Therefore, FFL has a comprehensive Code of Conduct with which its staff complies. Below are several key elements of this code:

- FFL does not sell or offer any E-rate eligible services.
- FFL does not have a SPIN (Service Provider Identification Number).
- FFL does not prepare technology plans.
- FFL does not advise clients on what technology to procure or from whom to purchase it.
FFL does not receive payment from service providers based on their sales to applicants.

FFL began with a formal, internal code of conduct. In 2004, FFL became the first E-rate consultancy to publish a code of conduct and to submit itself to public accountability in this matter.

Code of Ethics

FFL is a founding member of the E-Rate Management Professionals Association (E-mpa®). This association has developed a comprehensive Code of Ethics for E-rate consulting firms. This Code of Ethics is based on similar codes established for Certified Public Accountants. As a member of E-mpa®, FFL agrees to comply with the E-mpa® Code of Ethics.

Independence

Funds For Learning sells no E-rate eligible services, holds no SPIN, and accepts no payments from service providers tied to their sales to applicants.