



**KATIE HOBBS**  
SECRETARY OF STATE

PROVIDING  
*Preserving*  
*Arizona* ACCESS  
Arizona State Library,  
Archives, & Public Records

# Emergency Connectivity Fund Program How can Libraries apply?

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# What is ECF?

- ❑ Millions of patrons and students depend on public libraries and schools for their internet access. But when libraries and schools closed their buildings to the public because of COVID-19 pandemic health and safety guidance, many patrons and students lost internet access because they lacked access at home. From the school perspective this lack of home connectivity is often called the “homework gap,” and from the library perspective it is the “connectivity gap.” The primary purpose of the ECF is to help bridge these gaps.
- ❑ The Emergency Connectivity Fund is a \$7.1 billion program created by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 – a \$ 1.9Trillion pandemic relief package. The program is governed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company.
- ❑ See the Final ECF program rules adopted 5/10/21 at <https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-launch-717-billion-connectivity-fund-program-0>
- ❑ There were many clarifying questions raised by stakeholders like the American Libraries Association, State E-rate Coordinators Alliance, Schools Health, Libraries Broadband Coalition.

# Who is Eligible for ECF - 1

- ❑ **Schools, libraries, and consortia of eligible schools and libraries** that are eligible for support under the [FCC's E-Rate program](#), are eligible to request and receive support through the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program.
- ❑ In addition, the Order clarifies that **Tribal libraries**, which are eligible for support under the Library Services and Technology Act, are also eligible for the Emergency Connectivity Fund.
- ❑ Schools and libraries eligible for the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program **do not need to be current E-Rate participants**. Eligible entities that have not applied for E-Rate support should be prepared to demonstrate eligibility as a school or library under the Program rules during USAC's application review.

# Who is Eligible for ECF -2

## **Eligible Public Libraries**

- Funded at least 50% from public sources OR be organized as a non-profit.
- Be open with regular posted hours, with trained staff to provide service.
- Provide access to an organized print or e-collection free to all residents within the library's service area.
- Submit to the State Library all reports in a complete, accurate and timely manner

## **Eligible Tribal Libraries**

- Be recognized and supported by a tribal government in Arizona.

## **Eligible Schools**

- In general, elementary, secondary, private, and religious schools are all eligible to receive ECF as long as they have an endowment less than \$50 million and are not-for-profit.

# Eligible Service Locations

- ❑ Emergency Connectivity Fund will provide support for broadband Internet connectivity to off-campus locations, such as student or library patron homes.
- ❑ Schools and libraries can also receive funding for commercially available broadband service that provides a fixed or mobile broadband connection for off-campus use by students, school staff or library patrons.
- ❑ In limited instances where a school or library can demonstrate that there are no available service options sufficient to support remote learning for its students, school staff, or library patrons, the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program may support the construction of new networks or the equipment needed for the services. Note: If commercial service is not available, applicants can partner with a commercial provider to extend its services to unconnected students and library patrons.

# Eligible Services

- ❑ The following types of equipment purchased for off-campus use by students, school staff, and library patrons who would otherwise lack sufficient connectivity to engage in remote learning are eligible for support:
  - ❑ Laptop and tablet computers
  - ❑ Wi-Fi hotspots
  - ❑ Modems (including air cards)
  - ❑ Routers
  - ❑ Devices that combine a modem and router.
  
- ❑ To maximize limited funds, a library or school cannot receive ECF support for more than one fixed (i.e., wired) internet connection per location. A library or school also cannot receive support for more than one Wi-Fi hotspot or device per patron or student who lacks adequate internet connectivity. However, there is no per-location limit on hotspots. For example, a household with an adult library patron and a school student can get two hotspots

# Ineligible Services

- ) Administrative costs, including personnel
- ) Charges for termination liability, penalties, etc.
- ) Software, user licenses, filtering, or firewall services not included in the base price for equipment
- ) Back-up power equipment – back-up batteries, redundant power cords, UPS, generators, surge protectors
- ) Cybersecurity tools such as VPN licenses, firewall software, network monitoring, and filtering
- ) Dark fiber
- ) Equipment purchased prior to July 1, 2020
- ) Filtering for CIPA compliance
- ) Headsets
- ) Learning Management Systems
- ) Separate costs for accessories such as cases, laptop bags, stands, wall mounts, etc.
- ) Mobile phones, including smartphones
- ) Standalone microphones or cameras
- ) Technical support, maintenance, unbundled warranties and protection plans
- ) Video conferencing equipment and software (ex: Zoom)
- ) Voice Services

# Application Windows

- ❑ The first application filing window will be open for 45 days, during which applicants will be able to submit requests for funding for purchases made between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022 to meet the needs of students, school staff, and library patrons who would otherwise lack access to basic educational opportunities and library services.
- ❑ If demand during this first application filing window does not exceed available funds, the Commission will open a second application filing window to allow schools and libraries to seek funding for eligible equipment and services they previously purchased.
- ❑ If, however, demand for prospective support in the first window appears to be far short of meeting current needs, the Commission may consider opening a second prospective application filing window before opening an application filing window to fund previously purchased eligible equipment and services.



# What Are the Reasonable Support Amounts for Eligible Equipment

- ❑ The program will reimburse applicants 100 % for all eligible products and services with 2 exceptions a maximum of \$400 for each laptop or tablet, and a maximum of \$250 for Wi-Fi hotspots ( not for the services).
- ❑ Schools and libraries may buy more expensive laptops, tablets, or Wi-Fi-hotspots, but they can only be reimbursed up to \$400/\$250.
- ❑ For other eligible equipment and services, the FCC and USAC will review costs to ensure they are reasonable.
- ❑ Smartphones will not be approved. One connected device per student is allowed.

No Extra FCC Bidding. There will be no FCC-specific competitive bidding mandates (e.g., the FCC Form 470); however, applicants will certify compliance with applicable local, state, and Tribal procurement requirements.

# How can one apply for ECF?

- ❑ The Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) is the administrator of the Program and will be responsible for receiving and reviewing Emergency Connectivity Fund Program funding applications. Tens of thousands of schools and libraries across the country already work with USAC to meet their on-campus broadband connectivity needs through the [E-Rate Program](#).
- ❑ Eligible Applicants will login to the EPC portal for the Application forms and apply online.
- ❑ USAC has not announced the dates for the first application filing window, the FCC and USAC will provide advance notice of the opening so that eligible schools, libraries and consortia can be ready to file their applications.

# EBB and ECF support

## Can a Student Receive Emergency Connectivity Fund Program Support and Receive the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program Support at the Same Time?

- No, the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program will not reimburse for equipment and/or services that are paid for by another federal pandemic relief program.
- A student could receive broadband access service through the [Emergency Broadband Benefit Program](#) and a connected device through the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program.

# How will the payment be made?

- ❑ “Reimbursement” or “Pre-reimbursement”.
  - ❑ 100% of the cost of eligible equipment (e.g., Wi-Fi hotspots, laptops) and services (e.g., internet access) will be reimbursed to library and school applicants
  - ❑ Applicants will be allowed to submit reimbursement requests for invoices already paid.
  - ❑ Applicants will also have the option to request reimbursement prior to paying for services, in which case the applicant must pay their vendors within 30-days of receiving their ECF reimbursement.
  - ❑ The existing E-rate payment system will be used to submit payment requests, following a 60-day invoice submission timeframe. Detailed line-item vendor invoices will be required. Applicants must be registered in the Sam.gov system (System for Award Management) to receive ECF reimbursements. This process takes at least 20 days.

# How will the funding commitment decision be made?

- ❑ Decisions Tied to Close of Filing Window. USAC will wait until the filing window is closed and all applications are tallied to begin issuing funding commitments. Goal is for USAC to process 50% of applications within 60 days after close of filing window.
- ❑ Discount Rate Determines Who Receives Funding.
  - ❑ Should demand exceed available funds, applications will be prioritized and processed based on the Category 1 E-rate discount rate associated with a school or library.
  - ❑ Rural applicants will receive a 5% “bump” to the discount rate used to calculate the priority of their applications. For example, rural schools and libraries who qualify for a 90% discount rate in the E-rate program will use a 95% discount and will receive top priority over their urban counterparts who also qualify for a 90% E-rate discount.
  - ❑ If there are insufficient funds available to fund an entire discount band, priority will be given to applicants with the highest percentage of low-income students.

# FAQs -1

- ❑ **Filtering Required in Certain Cases.** CIPA requirements only will be in effect for ECF-supported services that use ECF-supported devices. CIPA does *not apply* to:
  - Computers purchased with the ECF if the school or library does *not* also receive ECF for internet access or E-Rate for internet access or internal connections
  - Student or patron-owned computers used to access the internet (§1113).
- ❑ **10-year Documentation Requirement.** Applicants will be required to keep documentation similar to the scope of the E-rate program.
- ❑ Schools have to certify that they are only seeking support for eligible equipment and that are being provided to students and staff who would otherwise lack **adequate** access to connected devices **sufficient** to engage in remote learning. Libraries have to get patrons to sign a document to say they do not have any other access.

Footnote 229 goes on to clarify:

We recognize that many school districts operate 1:1 device initiatives and may provide devices to all students regardless of need. In light of the admittedly substantial, but still limited funding...we do not think it is appropriate to support the purchase of devices or services for students that already have access to an adequate device.

# Clarification sought from FCC

- ❑ **10-year retention** It has been pointed out to FCC that libraries do not retain personally identifiable information record of the borrowing habits of patrons and to expect them to keep records every single patron who checked out a device or hotspot for 10 years.
- ❑ How does the Library estimate which patron has inadequate/ insufficient/unaffordable broadband access in advance and how will USAC determine if this is indeed accurate?
- ❑ Schools buy equipment for students/ staff on a replacement cycle plan and usually replace them presumably with ones purchased in advance based on a projected replacement schedule. But the rules say that the school cannot claim ECF for giving devices to those who have adequate access at home. How will the schools estimate how many students have adequate broadband access?
- ❑ Schools and libraries with higher discounts will receive funding before those with lower discounts. This means that *applicants in the lower discount bands may receive no funding*. Many parties, including ALA, requested that if funds are not sufficient the FCC should provide a prorated amount of funding to all applicants, but it declined to do so

# Questions?

- Please feel free to contact
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