

E-RATE eNEWS

April 2026

Program Integrity Reviews

Springtime is Review Season for E-Rate applicants. USAC's Program Integrity Reviews (PIA) ensure that the E-Rate program rules are followed, and that applications are filed correctly. While your E-RATE ONLINE Account Manager can answer most reviews, there are times when we must reach out to you for additional information. If you receive a request from your Account Manager for information, please respond promptly! Missing a USAC review deadline can result in a funding reduction or denial.

2026 Reimbursement Method Requests

Please let your E-RATE ONLINE Account Manager know your preferred method of reimbursement for the upcoming E-Rate funding year. 2026 marks the first time applicants were required to include their reimbursement preference on the applications, but USAC has indicated we can change the preference if necessary.

The choices are SPI (discounted bills) or BEAR (paying in full and receiving your reimbursement as a direct deposit). If you receive correspondence from your service provider regarding your choice of discount method, please forward the email to your E-Rate ONLINE Account Manager. We will complete the documentation on your behalf, track it, and send it back to the service provider.

2025 BEAR Reimbursements

If your school or library uses the "BEAR" method for E-Rate reimbursements, you will receive a spreadsheet in June from your Account Manager to collect paid bill information for your 2025-26 services. Please complete and return the spreadsheet with a sample one-month bill to us by July 30th so we can review and submit for your reimbursements.

As a reminder, these funds will be directly deposited into the bank account set up via the direct deposit information provided to us. If your banking information has changed, please let us know and we will take the

appropriate actions to ensure you receive your funding. USAC has also added a UEI (unique entity identifier) field to the form, which means we'll need you to provide that as well for any new forms or existing form changes. The UEI can be found in your school or district's SAM.gov account.

If you were supposed to receive SPI discounted bills but did not, please let us know and we will contact your service providers.

Form 498 Updates

This August, USAC will begin using the SAM.gov banking information to remit payments for all USF invoices. All E-Rate applicants who use the BEAR invoicing method to receive disbursements must add their current SAM.gov Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) on their FCC Form 498 and must have a bank account associated with their UEI.

If you need to register with SAM.gov, please ensure that you use the same Taxpayer ID Number (TIN) that you used when registering for your FCC Registration Number (FRN). If these TINs do not match, USAC's system will show an error when you add the UEI to your FCC Form 498 in EPC. Contact your E-RATE ONLINE Account Manager if you have any questions.

Please note, SAM.gov requires users to **renew their registration annually** through the SAM.gov website. You must complete the renewal process one year from when you register with SAM.gov, and each subsequent year.

Personnel & School Changes

If you have any personnel changes in your district (or expect to), please let us know. This especially applies to contacts who are listed as Account Administrators and users in the E-Rate EPC Portal. If you need your Account Manager to let you know who that person is, please contact us.

Also, if there are any school openings, relocations, closings, or mergers planned, please advise us as soon as possible.

2026 Funding Commitments

USAC will begin releasing funding commitments in April or May, and we expect them to continue on a weekly basis. Once your funding is approved, your E-RATE ONLINE Account Manager will notify you, send you a copy of your Funding Report and file the Form 486. Please review your funding report and contact us immediately with any questions or concerns.

2025 Category Two Projects

If you chose the BEAR method of reimbursement for your approved FY 2025 category two project(s),

completed your projects (purchased/installed), and vendor invoices have been paid in full, please send copies of the paid invoices to your Account Manager so we can file for your reimbursements. The installation deadline for most FY 2025 Category Two projects is September 30, 2026.

We are only able to file service substitutions through 6/30/26. If you expect any changes to your project, particularly makes/models, quantities, etc., please advise us before that date so that we can file the appropriate forms.

If you are concerned about completing a project before the 9/30/26 service delivery deadline, we can file a one-year extension if we do so before the deadline. Please contact your E-RATE ONLINE Account Manager if you are interested in filing for an extension.

If you are not moving forward with funding requests originally made in your application, please let us know.

Advanced Cybersecurity Pilot Update

The FCC continues to send out reviews and funding waves for the Cybersecurity Pilot Program. For those participating, your E-RATE ONLINE Account Manager will be in touch with next steps once we receive your entity's Funding Commitment Decision Letter. The FCC continues to review applications, so we must continue responding to review questions until we receive the funding commitment. Please contact your ERO Account Manager if you have any questions.

Get a Referral Bonus!

We're growing — and we want your help! Do you know someone who could benefit from our services? When you refer a new client to E-RATE ONLINE, you'll receive a \$500 referral bonus off your Service Level Agreement as a thank-you once they sign on.

[Have someone in mind? Contact us!](#)

Freedom of Information Act Requests

Now that the E-Rate deadline is behind us, applicants may receive Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests seeking access to this year's E-Rate documentation. If you receive one of these requests, it is important to respond promptly. Before doing so, however, please be sure to share all documentation you intend to submit with your E-RATE ONLINE Account Manager. We will conduct a thorough review for potential redactions, confirm that no protected data is inadvertently released, and ensure consistency with program rules. Taking this extra step can prevent unintended disclosures and protect your funding requests!



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