

# E-RATE eNEWS

January 2026

## The 2026 E-Rate Application Process is in Full Swing

By now, you should be preparing your 2026 E-Rate bid requirements with your E-RATE ONLINE Account Manager. If you have not begun the process, **please reach out to your Account Manager ASAP**. All E-Rate bids must be posted to the USAC website for a minimum of 28 days before bids can be awarded. The later this form is posted, the less time you have to review bids, award contracts, and file the E-Rate application before the filing deadline.



### FY 2026 E-Rate Filing Window

The FY 2026 E-Rate filing window will open on January 21, 2026; Form 471 applications can be submitted as of that date. If you are still waiting on bid responses to your posted Form 470, please continue to follow E-Rate bidding rules.

After you close your minimum 28-day competitive bidding window, be sure to follow any local procurement rules. All signed contracts and other necessary documentation should be forwarded to your E-RATE ONLINE Account Manager as soon as they are available. You must continue to receive bids until a vendor selection is made.

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## FCC Releases 2026 Eligible Services List

The FCC has released this year's [E-Rate Eligible Services List](#). Here are the changes from last year:

**School Bus & Hotspot Ineligibility:** Wi-Fi on school buses and off-premises hotspots, deemed ineligible starting during FY2025, remain ineligible for FY2026.

**Software Services:** All eligible software now falls under the Internal Connections (IC) category. This change should reduce confusion for vendors and applicants during the bidding process.

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## Multi-Year Contract Benefits

If you award a multi-year contract based on your Form 470 posting, you do not have to post another Form 470 or open a new competitive bidding process again for the life of that contract (so long as the specifications of that contract do not change).

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## E-Rate State Master Contracts

State master contracts are agreements that are competitively bid and put in place by state governments for use in E-Rate filings. If you elect to use a State Master Contract (available in select states), you do not need to file a Form 470. However, there are State Master mini-bid requirements to which you must adhere, including soliciting bids from all participating vendors on the state contract. Please contact your E-RATE ONLINE account manager with any questions.

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## E-Rate Document Retention

E-Rate rules require that you keep all E-Rate related documentation for at least ten years after the last date of service. Documentation can be stored electronically: you are not required to keep paper copies. This documentation includes bids received, (both winning and losing), bid evaluation worksheets, contracts, bills, and vendor correspondence.

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## USAC Notifications

If you receive any email or written notifications from USAC, please forward that to your E-RATE ONLINE Account Manager.

## E-Rate Bidding Rules

Competitive bidding is a requirement of the E-Rate program. This means that you must treat all bidders the same, and the bidding process must be open and fair. Remember that all bids received must be evaluated, even if they are for a manufacturer that you weren't looking for.

Please be sure to respond to any bidders that contact you – they can file a complaint with USAC if you don't! Complaints can result in funding delays, selective reviews, and even application denials.

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## Cybersecurity Pilot Program Funding Decision Letters

The FCC has begun sending out 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.

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## CIPA Compliance

As a reminder, all E-Rate applicants must be in compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) to be eligible for E-Rate funding. This includes an internet safety policy with measures to block or filter internet access for both minors and adults to certain visual depictions. To learn more about CIPA and the necessary requirements, [visit USAC's website](#) or contact your Account Manager.

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## SPAM Bids

Spam bids are vendor responses for E-rate services that do not meet minimum bid requirements or are not responsive to the applicant's specific request. Applicants can disqualify spam bids and other non-responsive bids from consideration.

How to identify spam bids:

**Generic responses:** Marketing responses that don't address the applicant's request, or provide a catalog of all equipment offered by that vendor

**Incomplete bids:** Bids that don't include a specific cost proposal or site-specific details

**Late bids:** Bids that are received after the deadline

How to handle spam bids:

**Review bids:** Don't automatically reject bids, but review them for compliance with minimum bid requirements

**Document non-responsive bids:** Keep records of bids that are incomplete or non-responsive





200 Boston Post Road, Orange, CT 06477

866.671.9274 | [erateportal.com](http://erateportal.com)



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