

# E-RATE eNEWS

February 2026

## FY 2026 E-Rate Filing Window

The FY 2026 E-Rate filing window opened in January, and Form 471 applications can now be submitted. 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.



**TIME TO ACT**

### 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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## Meet the Newest Team Member!

We are pleased to introduce our newest team member, **Gia Lumpkin!** Gia joins us as Assistant Account Coordinator and will play a pivotal role in assisting our operations and enhancing client satisfaction.

Gia and Operations Manager Karen Pavon will remain the direct contacts for all service agreements and invoice inquiries. They can be reached at [accounting@erateportal.com](mailto:accounting@erateportal.com).

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## Program Integrity Assurance (PIA Reviews)

PIA reviews are typically conducted immediately after applications are submitted. If you receive a request from your Account Manager for additional information, please respond promptly so that we can meet USAC's mandatory deadline. With earlier reviews this year, we are hoping for earlier funding decisions.

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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 participating vendors on the state contract. Please contact your E-RATE ONLINE account manager with any questions.

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## 2025 Reimbursements

If you have completed your FY 2025 E-Rate Category Two project(s) and paid the invoice in full, please send your Account Manager a copy of the paid invoice so we can process your reimbursement.

Please let your Account Manager know if you applied for services but do not intend to move forward with your purchase. Once we have written confirmation, we will complete the necessary forms to return your unused funds to your Category Two budget budget.

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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.

## 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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## Contracts and Letters of Intent

All signed contracts and Letters of Intent must be submitted to vendors as part of the E-Rate process. In the last few years, we have seen an uptick in the number of PIA's and Selective Reviews that are requesting copies of this documentation in order to approve applications. Please be sure you do this for all services and equipment projects, and CC your E-RATE ONLINE Account Manager on the e-mails to ensure you are in compliance with program rules.

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## E-RATE ONLINE Funding Reports

After your Form 471 application is submitted to USAC, you will receive a summary funding report from your Account Manager. Please review this 2026 E-Rate funding report which details the services applied for, including service provider, service description and cost information. If you have any questions, corrections or variations, please notify your account manager immediately!

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## Freedom of Information Act Requests

It is possible that a non-winning bidder may submit a Freedom of Information Act request (FOIA) to gather information about the bid process, and to understand why they were not chosen. This is a legal request that promotes transparency in federal agency bid processes, and it must be answered in a timely manner.

If you receive this type of request, please contact your Account Manager and work with them on creating and reviewing the required information packet before you submit!

It is not necessary to respond to non-winning bidders unless they have formally submitted a FOIA request.

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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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## USAC Notifications

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



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