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## Schools and Libraries News Brief

September 24, 2010

**TIP OF THE WEEK:** If you are filing a program form on paper, print a copy of the form from the [Required Forms page](#) of the USAC website so you don't use an outdated version. Specifically, look for the date of April 2007 in the lower right-hand corner of ALL pages for Forms 472, 474, 479, 486, and 500.

### FCC Enables High-speed, Affordable Broadband for Schools and Libraries

The Federal Communications Commission today upgraded and modernized the E-rate program to bring fast, affordable Internet access to schools and libraries across the country. These changes will help ensure that America's students can learn and develop the high-tech skills necessary to compete in the 21st Century economy.

The National Broadband Plan laid out a series of recommendations to promote broadband-enabled, cutting-edge learning inside and outside the classroom. One of the key recommendations is modernizing the FCC's E-rate program, established by Congress to bring connectivity to all schools and libraries across America. The program has achieved remarkable success – 97 percent of American schools and nearly all public libraries now have basic Internet access.

But the Plan found that basic broadband connectivity is too slow to keep up with the innovative high-tech tools that are now essential for a world-class education. According to a recent FCC survey, 78 percent of E-rate recipients say they need faster connections to meet the speed and capacity demands of their students, teachers, and library patrons.

The FCC's E-rate Order makes it easier for schools and libraries to get the highest speeds for the lowest prices by increasing their options for broadband providers and streamlining the application process. The Order is another advance in the Commission's ongoing transformation of the Universal Service Fund, of which the E-rate program is part, to deploy broadband throughout America.

The FCC's upgrades to E-rate include:

**Super-Fast Fiber:** The FCC's E-rate Order will help bring affordable, super-fast fiber connections to America's schools and libraries. It allows participants to use E-rate funds to connect to the Internet in the most cost-effective way possible, including via unused fiber optic lines already in place across the country and through existing state, regional and local networks. With these fiber networks, schools and libraries can provide students and communities with cutting-edge connectivity, while at the same time saving millions of dollars by bypassing more expensive options.

**School Spots:** The FCC is also opening the door to "School Spots" – where schools have the option to provide Internet access to the local community after students go home. With affordable fiber, these School Spots are a major step toward the National Broadband Plan's goal of connecting an anchor institution in every community to affordable 1 gigabit per second broadband. School Spots will help ensure that people who otherwise lack access can use broadband.

**Learning On-the-Go:** The FCC is launching a pilot program that supports off-campus wireless Internet connectivity for mobile learning devices. Education doesn't stop at the schoolyard gate or the library door. Digital textbooks and other innovative wireless devices allow students to learn in a real-world context, inside the classroom and beyond. Because of their low cost and accessibility, these mobile devices can also help advance digital equality, particularly for children from economically disadvantaged communities.

The Order brings E-rate into the 21st Century by making the program more effective and efficient. These improvements include:

- Indexing the cap on E-rate funding to inflation in a fiscally responsible manner, so that the program can more fully meet the needs of students and communities. Since 1997 when the E-rate program started, inflation has raised costs 30 percent but the program has remained capped, significantly decreasing its effective purchasing power. Earlier this month, the Commission reserved hundreds of millions of dollars annually from another program of the Universal Service Fund to cover the incremental E-rate support (less than \$25 million next year) it is providing, without growing the overall size of the Universal Service Fund.
- Supporting connections to the dormitories of schools that serve students facing unique challenges, such as Tribal schools or schools for children with physical, cognitive, or behavioral disabilities.
- Bolstering protections against waste, fraud, and abuse by codifying competitive bidding requirements and clarifying ethics obligations.
- Streamlining the E-rate application process for educators and librarians.

### Commitments for Funding Years 2010 and 2009

**Funding Year 2010.** Note that the FCC and the USAC Board have approved funding of approved Priority 2 requests at 85% and above for waves issued after next week.

USAC will release FY2010 Wave 19 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) September 28. This wave will include commitments for approved Priority 2 (Internal Connections and Basic Maintenance) requests at 90%. As of September 24, FY2010 commitments total over \$1.25 billion.

**Funding Year 2009.** USAC will release FY2009 Wave 68 FCDLs September 29. This wave will include commitments for approved Priority 2 requests at 77% and above and denials at 76% and below. As of September 24, FY2009 commitments total over \$2.77 billion.

On the day the FCDLs are mailed, you can check to see if you have a commitment by using USAC's [Automated Search of Commitments](#) tool.

### Fall Training Update

As of now, all sessions for the fall 2010 applicant training are full and all registrations are closed. If you have registered for more than one city, please choose which city you plan to attend so that you are not taking up two spaces and others may attend. Unfortunately, unless we receive cancellations, we will not be accepting any more people from the waiting lists.

As a reminder, all of the presentation materials will be posted on the website early next week so that you can download them. If you are attending a training session, please remember to bring copies of the presentations with you. We will have a limited number of copies of the presentations at each training session.

If you still have questions about a training session or wish to cancel your registration, you can [email USAC](#).

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