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Universal Service  
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## Schools and Libraries Program News Brief

November 3, 2017

**TIP OF THE WEEK:** On Sunday, November 5, 2017, the E-rate Productivity Center (EPC) will be down for scheduled maintenance. After this update is complete, EPC will not be accessible with certain web browsers. Please refer to the [list of supported browsers](#).

### Commitments for Funding Year 2017

**Funding Year 2017.** USAC is scheduled to release Funding Year (FY) 2017 Wave 24 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) on November 10. As of November 3, FY2017 commitments total over \$1.67 billion.

On the date that FCDLs are issued, you can access your FCDL notification from the **Notifications** section of your landing page in EPC.

### Update on Fall Training

Registration is still open for Portland, Oregon on November 14, located at:

DoubleTree Hotel Portland  
1000 NE Multnomah Street  
Portland, Oregon 97232

You can register for the Portland training on the Upcoming Events section of the [Trainings & Outreach](#) page on the USAC website.

Note that attendees will make their own arrangements for hotels and meals.

### Open Data Platform Launched

USAC has launched the first stage of its new Open Data platform, which is available at <https://opendata.usac.org>. This platform is designed to provide program data for all users in a clear and consistent format. It will eventually contain data from all four USAC programs.

In this first stage, the Schools and Libraries program datasets will be limited to data from certified FY2016 and FY2017 FCC Forms 470 and 471, entity profile information from EPC, and select data related to the FCC Forms 498 and 486.

Users will be able to view, search, filter, and manipulate the data in each dataset and extract that data in a variety of formats, including an API.

### **Why is USAC adding this platform?**

We expect that the Open Data platform will be easier to search and the resulting data will be more accessible to more users. The platform also provides stakeholders with the ability to choose customized views of the available data. This gives users more flexibility to find exactly what they want.

Because the current tools on the Schools and Libraries section of the USAC website have been developed on an ad hoc basis, they are not always consistent in terms of data displayed, timing of data updates, or search options and capabilities. Users must also conduct a new search each time they use these tools, and for various reasons, the searching may be limited by date or state.

The greatest advantage of the Open Data platform is that it allows you to customize your view(s) of the available data. As just one example, in order to download an FCC Form 471, the current tool requires users to download the data for an entire state for a single funding year. On the Open Data platform, users can choose to filter by any of the fields, such as Application Number, Billed Entity Number, or Zip Code, to find only the relevant FCC Forms 471 for both FY2016 and FY2017.

You can also create your own account, choose the specific fields in a dataset that you would like to see, and then get an updated report based on your choices each time you log in.

### **How will I know what to do?**

We recommend that you watch the instructional videos provided on the Open Data platform to help you understand the data, how it is presented, and how you can perform a search. There is a large amount of data in each dataset, and it may appear overwhelming if you do not have the context that the instructional videos provide.

There are currently eight videos posted on the [Video Guides](#) page to get you started:

- [Sort a Dataset](#)
- [Search Within a Dataset](#)
- [Comment on a Dataset](#)
- [Basic Filtering](#)
- [Create a Map](#)
- [Create a Chart](#)
- [Use Data Lens](#)
- [Aggregate Data](#)

In the near future, we will also hold a webinar to go over the features and functions of the platform. Watch the SL News Brief and the **Upcoming Events** section of the [Trainings & Outreach](#) page for more information.

### **How do I get started?**

Go to the [Open Data](#) platform. From the main page, click the blue section marked **E-rate**.

Each dataset is clearly named and follows the general pattern of the datasets used by existing tools on the [Tools page](#). Click on a dataset's title to review the available data in that dataset.

### **What if I still have questions?**

The best way to ask questions about the platform is located within the datasets. Each dataset has a button labeled **Contact Dataset Owner**. Click on that link and provide a subject, a brief description of your question or comment, and your email (so someone can get back to you).

### **I'm used to the existing tools. Why should I use this new platform?**

In the short term, you don't have to switch. The existing tools will remain on USAC's website. Because the information collected on program forms has changed from funding year to funding year, it will take us time and be a challenge to move the older data into the Open Data platform.

However, we encourage you to explore the Open Data platform, perform searches, ask questions, and provide feedback so we can continue to improve the user experience.

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