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# Schools and Libraries Program News Brief

October 22, 2021

**Article Update:** The article titled "FY2022 Student Enrollment Numbers" in this News Brief was updated on 10/29 to clarify that applicants can use student count and NSLP data from different school years/funding years if data is not available due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Read the details below.

**TIP OF THE MONTH:** On October 7, 2021, the FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau released an Order ([DA 21-1257](#)) granting another extension of the gift rules waiver from June 30, 2021 (the date the previous waiver expired) through June 30, 2022, the last day of FY2021. For more information, refer to the [Order](#).

## SL News Brief Moves to Monthly Publication Schedule

After over 15 years of continuous weekly publication, the Schools and Libraries News Brief took a break over the summer and now returns as a monthly publication. During the busier times of the E-rate calendar, we plan to publish additional issues and special editions to provide important program information and deadline reminders. We will also post information about deadline reminders, training, and timely program notifications on the [Announcements](#) and [Upcoming Dates](#) pages on the USAC website.

As we will no longer publish news on a weekly basis, you can track information about funding commitment waves using the [Search Commitments Tool](#) on USAC's website. On the date that USAC issues Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs), you can access your FCDL notification from the Notifications section of your landing page in the E-rate Productivity Center (EPC).

## Invoicing Reminders

October 28, 2021 is the deadline to file an invoice or to request an invoice deadline extension for most Funding Year (FY) 2020 recurring service Funding Request Numbers (FRNs). This invoice deadline applies to both applicant and service provider invoices – FCC Form 472 (BEAR Form) and FCC Form 474 (SPI Form), respectively.

**Applicants who intend to file BEAR Forms for FY2020 recurring services should request an invoice deadline extension if they do not have BEAR Form access through One Portal AND an approved FCC Form 498 (see below). Service providers should also request an extension if they will not be prepared to invoice for these services by the October 28 deadline.**

- For information about BEAR Form access, go to the [BEAR Access](#) page.

- For assistance in filing and certifying the applicant version of the FCC Form 498, you can call CSB. Note that you cannot start a BEAR Form until you have provided proof to USAC of your banking information, which you can [upload](#) after you have certified the form.

### How to Request an Invoice Deadline Extension for FRNs From FY2016 and Forward

Both applicants and service providers can request an invoice deadline extension in EPC by following the steps below. Remember that there is no penalty for requesting an invoice deadline extension and not using it.

- **Applicants:**
  - On your landing page, click the link to the billed entity record (the name in the "Welcome!" link near the top of the page or the first entry under the **My Entities** section).
  - Select the **Related Actions** menu and choose **Invoice Deadline Date Extension Request**.
  - Enter the FRN(s) you would like to extend, separated by commas.
  - Click the **Check Eligibility** button. All of the FRNs from your list that can be extended will appear on a grid.
  - Click **Submit**.
  - Review the resulting **News** post for the results.
- **Service providers:**
  - From the **Records** tab at the top of any EPC page, click the **Service Providers** option.
  - Use the Search function to locate your service provider record.
  - Select the **Related Actions** menu and choose **Invoice Deadline Date Extension Request**.
  - Enter the FRN(s) you would like to extend, separated by commas.
  - Click the **Check Eligibility** button. All of the FRNs from your list that can be extended will appear on a grid.
  - Click **Submit**.
  - Review the resulting **News** post for the results.

### Deadline Reminder for the FY2021 FCC Form 486

October 29, 2021 is the deadline to file an FCC Form 486 if your FCDL is dated on or before July 1, 2021 and your service start date is July 1, 2021. If these conditions apply to you, please certify your FCC Form 486 on or before this deadline. The FCC granted an extension of this deadline for applicants located in Louisiana and Mississippi affected by Hurricane Ida. The new FCC Form 486 deadline for these applicants is January 31, 2022. For more information, please see the article below on hurricane relief.

If your FCC Form 486 appears to be late, we will send you an FCC Form 486 Urgent Reminder Letter to remind you of the upcoming deadline. Note that we use the service start date you reported on your FCC Form 471 to determine when to send the letter, so if your service start date has changed, your deadline may have changed as well.

This reminder letter is posted to your **News** feed in EPC, and we also send an email to the contact person on the FCC Form 471. **These letters will start going out on October 30, 2021 for FY2021 commitments.**

You have 15 days after the date of this letter to certify your FCC Form 486 without penalty. Again, if your service start date has changed, the service start date you enter on your certified FCC Form 486 will determine whether your filing is considered late.

Applicants whose services start after July 1, 2021 or whose FCDLs are dated after July 1, 2021 (including any that have not yet been issued) will have an FCC Form 486 deadline later than October 29. However, we encourage you to certify your FCC Form 486 as soon as possible after services start for FY2021 and you can accurately make all of the certifications on the form.

## **Deadline Relief for E-rate Participants in Mississippi and Louisiana**

On September 3, 2021, the FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB) released an Order ([DA 21-1107](#)) that waived certain E-rate program rules and deadlines to assist participants and providers located in the areas affected by Hurricane Ida. For the purposes of the waivers granted in this Order, the FCC defined "Affected Disaster Areas" as the Louisiana parishes and Mississippi counties that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designated as eligible for Individual or Public Assistance for the purposes of federal disaster relief as of September 3, 2021, which includes all parishes and counties in those states.

For schools and libraries located in Affected Disaster Areas, the WCB waived the following E-rate program deadlines that may occur after September 3, 2021, and provided those affected with up to 150 calendar days (until January 31, 2022) to file:

- Requests for review or waiver of decisions by USAC, directed to USAC or the FCC.
- FCC Form 486 (Receipt of Service Confirmation and Children's Internet Protection Act Certification (CIPA) Form).
- FCC Form 472 (Billed Entity Applicant Reimbursement (BEAR) Form) and FCC Form 474 (Service Provider Invoice Form).

## **Service Implementation Deadline Extensions**

WCB also extended the FY2020 implementation deadline for non-recurring services, other than special construction, to September 30, 2022 for applicants in the Affected Disaster Areas. For applicants located in the Affected Disaster Areas that have a special construction deadline of June 30, 2022, the deadline to complete special construction and light the new fiber is extended until June 30, 2023, subject to the applicant filing a valid [FCC Form 500](#) certifying that construction for the special construction project was unavoidably delayed due to damage caused by Hurricane Ida.

## **Documentation Retention and Production**

In the Order, with respect to destroyed records, the WCB waived [document retention](#) rules requiring schools, libraries, consortia, and service providers to retain all documents related to their application for at least 10 years after the latter of the last day of the applicable funding year or the service delivery deadline for the funding request. Applicants and service providers will not be penalized for failure to retain records destroyed by Hurricane Ida.

## **Service and Equipment Substitutions**

WCB also provided increased flexibility for [service substitutions](#) in the Affected Disaster Areas. For applicants located in Affected Disaster Areas that need to replace a service or product that has been disrupted, destroyed, or rendered unusable by Hurricane Ida, the FCC waived service substitution rules to exclude the requirement that the substituted service or product must have the same functionality as the service or product that it is replacing. Applicants must still confirm that a service substitution:

- Does not violate any contract provisions;
- Does not violate state or local procurement laws;
- Does not result in an increase in the percentage of ineligible services or functions; and

- Is within the scope of an FCC Form 470.

## Special Construction Service Delivery Deadline Extension

On June 21, 2021, WCB waived and extended the special construction service delivery deadline to June 30, 2022 for all Funding Year (FY) 2019 and FY2020 applicants whose deadlines expire on June 30, 2021 or during calendar year 2021 (see Order [DA 21-726](#)). Applicants with special construction requests for earlier funding years whose deadline was [previously extended to June 30, 2021](#) may seek a waiver from the FCC for an extension of their deadline, provided they can demonstrate construction was unavoidably delayed and that there is good cause to waive the service delivery deadline.

## Use Open Data to Confirm Your Invoicing and Service Delivery Deadlines

As mentioned above, due to the deadline relief provided in multiple FCC Orders, your Invoice Deadline Date (IDD), and/or Service Delivery Deadline (SDD) for non-recurring services may have changed.

You can use USAC's [Open Data](#) platform to confirm these deadlines. This data can be located in the [FRN Status dataset](#).

- From the dataset landing page, click the **View Data** button in the menu next to the name of the dataset. You can search the dataset by Billed Entity Number (BEN), and Funding Request Number (FRN) to locate data specific to your entity to help you calculate your deadlines such as service start date (SSD), and last date to invoice (IDD).
- You can find the IDD using the field "Last Date to Invoice." The SDD field is called "Service Delivery Deadline."
- To begin your search, go to the **Find in this Dataset** search box located directly above the data on the right-hand side of the screen. Then, type your BEN or FRN in the search box and press "enter" on your keyboard. This will filter the data by only displaying the rows that have the data entered in the search box in any of the available columns.
  - For more information about setting filters to locate specific applications, BENs, or FRNs, watch the [Open Data video tutorial](#).
  - View the [dataset glossary](#) to find out more about this dataset.

## FY2022 Student Enrollment Numbers

Generally, applicants provide full-time enrollment and National School Lunch Program (NSLP) data as of October 1 prior to the filing of the FCC Form 471, or utilize the most current figure available. We acknowledge that it may be challenging to provide student enrollment and NSLP numbers as of October 1, 2021 due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student enrollment and NSLP participation at schools.

When applicants update their entity profiles in preparation for the FY2022 application filing window, they will be permitted to provide full-time student enrollment numbers from their most recently approved FCC Form 471/NSLP profile information (including FY2020 or FY2021). Applicants can use their more recently approved Form 471 student enrollment/NSLP information available. This includes providing Full-Time student enrollment numbers from the most recently approved Form 471 and the most recent and available NSLP information, even if this information is across different school/funding years.

## Category Two Budget Reminder

In regards to their Category Two budgets, applicants are reminded that they are required to validate their student enrollment numbers *once* during the five-year funding cycle to set their Category Two

budgets and may opt to provide updated enrollment numbers in future funding years during the five-year cycle.

## **EPC Administrative Window Opens Tuesday, October 26, 2021**

The EPC administrative window is the period during which applicants can make updates to their profile information in EPC to prepare for the upcoming FCC Form 471 application filing window.

Each year, USAC updates applicant profiles in EPC using the reviewed and approved profile information from their current year FCC Forms 471. We do this so that applicants can start the application process for the upcoming funding year with information in their profiles that is accurate as of the date of their FCDL.

USAC has completed this process for applicants whose profile information was updated during the Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) review of their FY2021 applications. Applicants can now review their profiles and make any additional updates.

The administrative window will open Tuesday, October 26, 2021 and will close – and the applicant profiles will be locked – shortly before the FY2022 application filing window opens early in 2022.

For detailed information on updating entity profiles, you can refer to the [EPC Administrative Window](#) page. Here are a few reminders for those of you who are ready to start updating your profiles:

- School districts report their student counts separately for two different purposes – to calculate their discount and to calculate their C2 budget. For the C2 budget calculation, they have the choice to update their individual school profiles or to report a total number in the school district profile.
- If you have new child entities (individual schools for school districts or library branches for libraries), the Client Service Bureau (CSB) can create them for you. Open a customer service case in EPC or call CSB at (888) 203-8100 for assistance.
- Submit any FY2021 Receipt Acknowledgment Letter (RAL) modifications or FY2021 appeals before you add new entities or new entity subtypes to your organization's profile information. This will allow us to process your RAL modification or appeal more quickly.

## **New Supply Chain Guidance Now Live on USAC.org**

Participants of the universal service programs, as well as the COVID-19 Broadband Programs, are being called on to do their part to help ensure the integrity of our communications networks and the communications supply chain.

USAC updated the [Supply Chain](#) webpage to include three new pages: [COVID-19 Broadband Programs](#), [Audits](#), and [FAQs](#).

Beginning Q1 2022, USAC will conduct supply chain audits to determine USF recipients' compliance with these new supply chain rules. USAC will select a sample of service providers and program participants to audit. These audits will continue on a rolling basis over the next few years and will be separate from [Beneficiary and Contributor Audit Program \(BCAP\)](#) audits or [Payment Quality Assurance \(PQA\) Program](#) assessments.

USAC also created [Supply Chain FAQs](#) to provide clarity around commonly asked questions. USAC will update this section as new FAQs become available.

## **You're Invited: Supply Chain Audit Webinar – Nov. 9**

USAC will host a [supply chain audit webinar](#). This session will be held on **Tuesday, November 9 from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. ET**. Participants will have the opportunity to ask any questions they have that relate to the supply chain audit process. The webinar will cover the following topics:

- Program participant responsibility
- USAC's role and responsibility
- Our audit approach
- How to prepare for these audits

The webinar is free and open to anyone; registration is required. [Register here](#).

The supply chain certification process is ever-evolving, and it is the responsibility of participating providers to stay up-to-date on this topic and to comply with the supply chain rules.

For additional supply chain details and background, please review the [Supply Chain](#) web page.

## **USAC Seeks Feedback on User Experience-Related IT Enhancements**

The [Share Your E-rate User-Experience System Ideas](#) form is available for program participants to submit their ideas and feedback for improving and/or enhancing the user experience of E-rate information systems. Please share your feedback to help us continue to improve the program.

We may ask you for additional information about any suggestions you submit to us. However, if you do not want USAC to contact you, simply notify us by email.

We have also posted a list of the [User Experience-Related System Enhancements](#) that contains the user-submitted suggestions we have implemented, organized by the date USAC deployed the enhancement. We will continue to update the list as we deploy new system enhancements.

Occasionally, we may offer external users the opportunity to test changes to forms or tools and provide feedback before the final version is completed. If you are willing to volunteer to be part of a demonstration and feedback session for our User Acceptance Testing (UAT), please check the "Yes" box at the bottom of the form. We will contact you at the email address you provided if a UAT opportunity arises.

If you have specific inquiries or requests for assistance related to the information systems, please create a customer service case in EPC or call CSB at (888) 203-8100.

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