Universal Service Administrative Co.

Schools and Libraries Program
News Brief

December 16, 2021

> **TIP OF THE MONTH: Don't forget to update your E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC) profiles**. All applicants can now review their profiles and make any additional updates for changes that occurred after USAC's review of their Funding Year (FY) 2021 FCC Forms 471. As in the past, the EPC administrative window to update profiles will close – and the applicant profiles will be locked – shortly before the FY2022 application filing window opens.

Commitments for Funding Year (FY) 2021 and FY2020

FY2021. USAC released FY2021 Wave 35 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) on December 9. As of December 15, FY2021 commitments total over $2.47 billion.

FY2020. USAC released FY2020 Wave 78 FCDLs on December 1. As of December 15, FY2020 commitments total just under $2.41 billion.

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

EPC Administrative Window Profile Update Options for FY2022

The EPC administrative window opened Tuesday, October 26, 2021 and will close shortly before the FY2022 application filing window opens early in 2022. 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. During the administrative window, applicants can update their student counts, National School Lunch Program (NSLP) participation rates, contact information, and request a C2 budget recalculation.

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.

Here are some options available to applicants to update their discount calculation information for FY2022 for those that are ready to start updating their profiles:

- An applicant may rely on both the NSLP and enrollment numbers from their most recently approved FCC Form 471 application and make no changes for FY2022.
- An applicant may use Fall 2021 enrollment numbers and Fall 2019 or Fall 2020 NSLP numbers.
- An applicant may use Fall 2021 enrollment numbers and Fall 2021 NSLP numbers.
- An applicant may use different enrollment numbers for their C2 budget than what they use for their discount calculations.

An applicant may use student enrollment numbers from the most recently approved FCC Form 471 and the most recent and available NSLP information, even if this information is across different school/funding years. See the 10/22/2021 E-Rate News Brief for more information. For detailed information on updating entity profiles, you can refer to the EPC Administrative Window page. We also have a video on the Webinars page that provides more information.

Adjusting the Category Two Budget

The current five-year Category Two (C2) budget cycle began in FY2021 and goes through FY2025. Your C2 budget is determined when the first C2 FCC Form 471 in the budget cycle is certified. In the event that your student count has increased, you may request to update your C2 budget in any subsequent year of the budget cycle, but you are not required to do so. Libraries may also update their square footage information if it should increase. This update based on the new student count is referred to as a "replacement C2 budget" request by USAC. You can request to update your C2 budgets in EPC during the EPC administrative window and during the FCC Form 471 application filing window up until the budgeted entity's first C2 FCC Form 471 for that funding year is certified. If you do not request an adjustment, the C2 budget will remain fixed. The Administrative Window webinar slides provide information on how to request a replacement C2 budget in EPC. We also have a short video that demonstrates the process. Go to the C2 Budget page to learn more.

The new Category Two (C2) budget tool provides data on the FY2021-FY2025 C2 budget cycle if you want to view your C2 budget information. It is available on the Tools page along with a video on how to use the tool.

Client Service Bureau Name Change and Holiday Hours

The Client Service Bureau (CSB) is now the USAC Customer Service Center (CSC), which will provide customer service across USAC programs with specialized agents trained to answer your E-Rate program questions. At the end of December, CSC will be reducing its open hours due to the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

CSC will be open during its customary hours through Thursday, December 23 (Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST).

However, CSC will be closed for the next two weeks on Fridays:

- Friday, December 24 - CLOSED
- Friday, December 31 - CLOSED

CSC will resume its customary hours starting at 8:00 a.m. EST on Monday, January 3, 2022.

Winter Deferral Period Starts December 17

Many E-Rate program participants are unavailable during the winter holiday season, and USAC recognizes that participants may need additional time to respond to requests for information.

During our annual winter deferral period - Friday, December 17, 2021 through Friday, January 7, 2022 - USAC will only continue reviews of forms and requests where documentation was received or where participants respond to information requests sent in the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC).

If USAC does not receive a response during this period, the form or request will be placed in a deferred status until January 7, 2022. However, we will be reviewing applications during the winter deferral period if we have answers to our questions. For those of you who are able to respond to our questions, please do so. This will allow us to continue our work and issue funding decisions more quickly.

FCC Extends Gift Rule Waiver

On October 7, 2021, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released an Order (DA 21-1257) that extends its temporary waiver of the E-Rate program gift rule through June 30, 2022, (the end of Funding Year 2021), due to the ongoing disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. With this action, the FCC continues to ensure that schools and libraries can benefit from and solicit offers for improved broadband connections or equipment for remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic without violating FCC rules.

Fall 2021 Training - Recordings Available on Demand

From November 16-18, USAC offered a series of online training sessions for Schools and Libraries (E-Rate) program participants, including Tribal applicants. USAC conducted two one-hour webinars each day. All the sessions were recorded and are available to view. You can register to watch a recording using the links available under **Previous Trainings** on the E-Rate Webinars page.

Tribal Schools and Libraries: Designate Your Tribal Status in Your EPC Profiles

Before the EPC administrative window closes in early January 2022, we encourage you to review the Tribal designations for your entities in EPC. USAC uses the Tribal designation to understand who is participating in the program, to provide Tribal outreach and training, to assess Tribal training efforts, and to report and analyze data about Tribal lands and Tribal entities.

A school or library entity may self-designate as a Tribal entity in EPC if it meets any of the following descriptions:

- The majority of students or library patrons served are Tribal members;
- The entity is located partially or entirely on Tribal land;
- The entity is a school operated by or receiving funding from the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE); or
- The entity is a school or library operated by a Tribal Nation.

If you need help finding the Tribal checkbox in EPC, watch the EPC Tribal Check Boxes video on how to find and designate your entity's Tribal status.

Please note the following:

- The Tribal checkbox applies to an individual school or library – it does not apply to a school district or library system. In other words, a school district or library system can include a school or library designated as a Tribal entity even though the descriptions above do not apply to the entire school district or library system.
- USAC cannot check the Tribal checkbox on your behalf. You must check the appropriate box in your EPC profile yourself.

Search Tools No Longer Available on USAC.org

With the launch of the new E-Rate Entity Search Tool (see 11/12/2021 E-Rate News Brief), USAC will be retiring the following Entity and Urban/Rural tools **as early as Thursday, December 16**:

- Urban/Rural Status Lookup
- Urban/Rural Reports by State
- Entity Download Tool
- Entity Search Tool
- Category Two (C2) Budget Tool for FY2015 to FY2019

Additional End of Service Notice for FY2015 and earlier FCC Form 470 and 471 Tools

In addition to the tools above, USAC will also retire the following FY2014 and FY2015 data tools **as early as Thursday, December 16**. While the archived data will still be available (see below), the public tools will be permanently offline.

- View an FCC Form 471 (FY2015)
- Download 471 Information (FY2015)
- View an FCC Form 471 (FY2014 and prior)
- View 471 Status (FY2015 and prior)
- View an FCC Form 470 (FY2015 and prior)
- Download FCC Form 470 Information (FY2014 and FY2015 only)

How can I access archived data in the future?
While these download tools will not have a direct replacement on the USAC Open Data website, users can access much of the archived FCC Form 471 data with USAC's Data Retrieval Tool (DRT). To request FCC Form 470 data (or FCC Form 471 data not found in the DRT), please contact us directly.

FCC Encourages Use of Updated CORES Registration

The FCC adopted a June 2021 report and order to require entities and individuals doing business with the FCC to provide their email addresses when they register for FCC Registration Numbers (FCCRNs) using the upgraded **Co**mmission **Re**gistration **S**ystem (CORES) and to keep email information current along with other information used to register. The rule became effective November 29, 2021. The FCC will announce when Legacy CORES will be decommissioned and will provide outreach to assist users in updating their information or registering for an FCCRN. More information can be found on the FCC's CORES page.