E-Rate 2022:

Eligibility & Future-Proofing Your School's Technology





Although the 2021-2022 school year is still in progress, like any forward-looking school leader, you are already preparing for the road ahead.

One of the most important aspects of this preparation process is understanding not only the funding that your school will have to work with, but also whether you have the technology and infrastructure you need to effectively reach your community. That's why understanding and maximizing the 2021 changes to the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Universal Service Program for Schools and Libraries, known as the <u>E-Rate program</u>, are so important. The E-Rate program touches both of these important foundational elements of your services and has the potential to <u>help your</u> <u>programs reach new heights</u>.

This guide will cover eligibility categories, future-proofing your technology, and more.

The Shift of the 2021 E-Rate Program _

The biggest E-Rate program change took effect in July 2021. It was a shift in how the FCC provided funding to schools and libraries for their students and their network technology investments.

The shift involved four key aspects:



An increase in money per year, allocated at \$167 per student per year to school districts and \$4.50 per square foot for libraries regardless of location. (Note: Only full-time students will be considered as part of the FCC's funding decisions.)









A shift in emphasis for 3-5 year planning of funding versus a year-by-year approach, including the fact that the E-Rate program budget will not change due to inflation during this five-year period.



Funding and billing will be distributed and handled, respectively, at a district- or systemwide level, which gives administrators more ability to move funding to the sites that need it the most.



Districts have the ability to move equipment from site to site based on need, as long as it is documented for future possible FCC reference.

In addition, there is an opportunity for <u>E-Rate program</u> <u>participants</u> to "update their student counts or square footage information in subsequent funding years to reflect, for example, an increased budget due to increased student enrollment."

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What You Need to Know About Eligibility

There are two key aspects concerning eligibility; the type of program and the type of <u>covered service</u>.

For the type of program, the following organizations are eligible for E-Rate funding:



Public and most non-profit elementary and secondary schools or districts that meet official federal definitions



All public and many private libraries that meet specific federal definitions

In any case, the organization must use a competitive bidding process to select the most cost-effective vendor to provide the necessary goods or services.



The list of <u>eligible E-Rate expenses</u> is long, but in general they fall into two categories:

Category One Category Two Data transmission services and/or Internal Connections \diamond internet access of any speed or type Managed internal broadband services ٥ Basic maintenance of internal \diamond connections Any equipment related to providing ٥ the above services, including cabling, racks, routers, switches, and UPS power systems Managed services provided by a third ٥ party for the operation, management, maintenance, or monitoring of any of these services

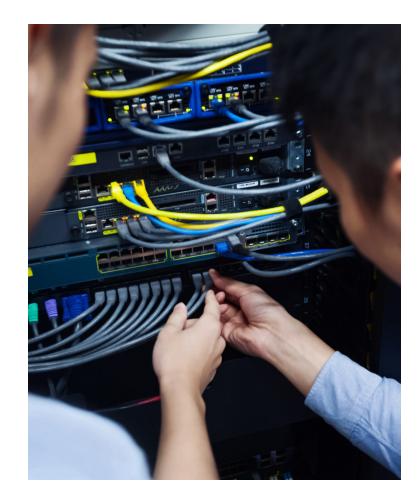
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How to Leverage E-Rate to Future-Proof Your Technology

The most recent academic years have proved just how vital it is for schools and libraries to have flexible, reliable, and secure connectivity and network infrastructure devices.

Fortunately, you don't have to learn about, demo, test, and develop your multi-year implementation plan on your own.

Get the help of network engineers who can evaluate the current performance and future requirements of your network infrastructure.



For example, your library or district can:



Hold regular planning and listening sessions with your stakeholders to learn about the technology and connectivity that they need to meet their mission.



Get the help of network engineers who can evaluate the current performance and future requirements of your <u>network infrastructure</u>.



Conduct pre-bidding discussions with service providers to learn about implementation timelines, see new products and demonstrations, and hear about other key considerations.

Armed with feedback from each of these avenues, your team can then develop a plan to address your upcoming needs and lay the foundation for future investments.



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Set Your Program up for Success with VectorUSA

VectorUSA has worked with over 340 K-12 school districts since 2000, successfully completing more than \$500 million in E-Rate funded projects.

In other words, if your organization is looking for a partner to help with any aspect of your E-Rate program—from planning and pre-bidding to implementation and ongoing management—our experts welcome the chance to get to know you and your mission better.

Contact us to get started with your own free consultation.

Contact Us