



Everything You Need to Know About the E-Rate Program

Everything You Need to Know About the E-Rate Program

Over the last two decades, American life has been transformed by the information revolution. We rely on modern technology to gain access to news, information, work, training and education, or to communicate with our friends. Few schools and libraries have the resources available to keep up with the rapidly changing technology needs of students and educators. In 1996, Congress enacted the E-Rate Program as part of the Telecommunications Act to bridge the digital divide and bring the power of the internet and technology to low-income schools and communities.

What Is the E-Rate Program?

The E-Rate program is designed to give eligible K-12 schools and public libraries access to services and products that are essential for learning,

including data communications, voice, and video technology. E-Rate provides discounts on technology services based on the location of the school or library and the level of poverty in the area. Discounts can range from 20% to 90% on the cost of equipment and ongoing maintenance of the technology solutions.

E-Rate Eligibility

Schools and libraries must meet eligibility criteria to qualify for E-Rate program discounts. Most elementary and secondary schools serving grades K-12 including religious schools, private schools, and public schools are eligible for discounts. School eligibility requires that the school meets the definition of elementary and secondary schools as found in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Non-traditional educational facilities such as Head Start, pre-kindergarten, adult education facilities, and juvenile justice facilities may also be eligible.

Schools that operate as for-profit businesses or receive endowments over \$50 million are not eligible for E-Rate funding.

Public libraries are also eligible for E-Rate program discounts if the library meets the

definition of library or library consortium found in the 1996 Library Services and Technology Act. Eligibility for the E-Rate program also requires that the library is eligible for assistance from a state library administrative agency under the Act.

The E-Rate Process

If your school or library is applying for E-Rate program discounts for the services and products listed under E-Rate Category 2 services, you will need to develop a technology plan.

Category 2 Services Include:

- Internal Connections
- Basic Maintenance of Internal Connections

The technology plan should be developed before you fill out the application paperwork. Every technology plan must contain outlines for four criteria:

- Goals and objectives of your school or library
- Professional development plan
- Needs assessment
- Evaluation process

“E-Rate provides discounts on technology services based on the location of the school or library and the level of poverty in the area.”



When the technology plan is created, a USAC-certified technology plan approver must approve it. Your school or library should be able to demonstrate the ability to pay the non-discounted portion of the total price of services.

Upon completion of the technology plan, FCC Form 470 is filed to announce that your school or library will seek funding from the E-Rate program to purchase equipment and services. You then have 28 days to select a service provider. Teknique IT would love to assist you with your E-Rate needs.

After you select your service provider you can submit FCC Form 471 to apply for funding. The form includes the service provider, the goods and services you are looking to receive funding for, and their cost.

After the application is reviewed and approved, you will receive a Funding Commitment Decision Letter, allowing you to begin receiving services.

Your E-Rate discounts can be realized through discounted billing through Teknique IT, or you can pay your service provider in full and seek reimbursement from the Schools and Libraries Division (SLD).

