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Funding Opportunities and Reference Guide:
Emergency Connectivity Fund

AS OF JUNE 2021

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HELP IS ON THE WAY

In May 2021, the FCC adopted final rules to roll out the Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) program. The $7.17B program, funded by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, enables schools and libraries to purchase laptop and tablet computers, Wi-Fi hotspots and broadband connectivity for students, school staff and library patrons in need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ECF program also supports the provision of Wi-Fi on school buses. With an initial, short 45-day application window for purchases of eligible equipment and services between July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022, the time to act and take advantage of this historic program is now.

Included below is key information to help your school access these funds and give your students the best opportunity for successful remote learning.

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How To Apply:

1. Filing Window

The FCC and USAC will open the first ECF Program application filing window on Tuesday, June 29, 2021 at noon ET, which will fund equipment and services for the upcoming 2021-22 school year. The first application filing window will be open for 45 days, during which applicants will be able to submit requests for funding for purchases to be made between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022 to meet the needs of students, school staff, and library patrons who would otherwise lack access to basic educational opportunities and library services. Note: The FCC retained the option to open a second "prospective" filing window in lieu of a retroactive window should demand from the first window be much lower than expected.

2. Application Process

Applications will be submitted in the E-rate EPC Portal and will utilize Form 471 and Form 472 BEAR (or forms similar to these). There is no competitive bidding requirement and no use of forms 470 or 486. The initial application window is expected to open in late June 2021. Schools should file as soon as the window opens. The Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) will review applications and issue Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs). Funding commitments are expected to start by early September with 50% of decisions released by October. Appeals must be submitted within 30 days.

After receiving the FCDL, the applicant may submit reimbursement requests via the existing Form 472 (BEAR) process for services and equipment for which the applicant has already paid. Copies of detailed vendor invoices must be submitted with the BEAR form.

If an applicant cannot afford to pay the vendor in full and then seek reimbursement from ECF they may request a 'prepayment' through the BEAR process after which the ECF prepayment must be remitted to the vendor within 30 days. Applicants will be required to submit proof to USAC that the service provider has been paid.

Who is Eligible:

1. Eligible Entities

Schools and libraries eligible for E-rate will be eligible for ECF funding. Entities do not need to be currently participating in E-rate to apply for ECF.

2. Eligible Locations

Any off-campus location where education is occurring is eligible, such as community centers, churches, etc. (not just the home). Wireless service for school buses and bookmobiles to bring internet to students and library patrons who lack sufficient broadband are also eligible. Equipment and services may not be purchased for use solely at the school or library, but students, staff and patrons are permitted to bring such devices to the school or library. While remote learning may take place in the home for many students and library patrons, the FCC did not limit or define where remote learning can occur. If a connected device was purchased with the intent of providing off-campus remote learning, the FCC acknowledged that the device may be used on-campus as well. This reflects the additional ECF goal to close the homework gap.

3. Eligible Users

Students, staff or library patrons who otherwise do not have sufficient internet access or access to a connected device to engage in remote learning are eligible users. Applicants may purchase up to one connected device and one hotspot per eligible user. The order does not limit support to just "teachers"; rather, it incorporates a broader population by identifying "school staff" as eligible for support.

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What Services and Devices are Eligible:

1. Broadband Equipment

→ Wi-Fi hotspots

→ Modems

→ Routers

→ Devices that combine a modem and router

→ Cellular air-cards

Wi-Fi hotspots are capped at $250, while other items, such as modems and routers, are not subject to a specific price cap, but should be a reasonable price. One Wi-Fi hotspot is allowed per user, and, for fixed internet connections, only one service connection is allowed per location.

2. Broadband Services

Broadband service connections for individuals have no price cap, but should be within a reasonable range of $15 to $25 per month. There are no minimum standards for network connections. No more than one fixed broadband internet access connection (such as a cable modem internet) per location is permitted. No more than one laptop/tablet and no more than one Wi-Fi hotspot per student, school staff member, or library patron are permitted. Multiple hotspots may be provided to multiple eligible users in the same home.

Schools and libraries must make this certification as part of their application for funding and must retain documentation of reasonable measures taken to determine who needed laptops/tablets and internet. Internet access services include wireless services like 4G/LTE service to hotspot devices. Equipment necessary to make internet connections functional, such as modems, routers, power adapters, etc. are eligible.

Self-provisioned networks are presumed to be ineligible, except in cases where "no commercially available [internet] services exist". In limited cases where there is no commercially available service that can reach students, school staff, or library patrons, the FCC can fund the construction of networks "and/or purchase customer premises equipment to receive datacasting services". CBRS and private LTE solutions were specifically excluded from the definition of a "router" or "modem," but could potentially be funded in situations where there is no commercially available service that can reach a given user population.

QUICK FACTS

→ Hotspots are capped at $250.

→ Wi-Fi enabled laptops can be up to $400.

→ Broadband should be between $15 - $25 per month.

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3. Connected Learning Devices

Wi-Fi-enabled laptops and tablets up to a $400 value are eligible. Applicants can purchase more expensive devices, but reimbursements will be capped at the $400 limit. No SmartPhones or Desktop computers. One connected device per student is allowed. There is no allowance for breakage/spares. Components that are sold with the equipment such as cords and chargers are also eligible and do not require cost-allocation.

4. Limited Support for Off-Campus Networks

Where applicants can prove there is no commercially available internet access available, funding to build such networks is permitted. Applicants will have to provide clear evidence demonstrating how they determined that an existing fixed or mobile broadband network was not available, and that they sought service from existing providers, and that those providers were unable or unwilling to provide services sufficient to meet the remote learning needs. Eligible costs are:

→ Monthly charges, special construction, installation and activation charges, modulating electronics and other equipment necessary to make broadband internet access service functional ("Network Equipment") and maintenance and operation charges.

→ Special construction is defined as the construction of network facilities, design and engineering, and project management.

→ Customer premises or end-user equipment to receive datacasting services.

Note: Dark fiber and electronics to light dark fiber are NOT eligible.

5. Eligible Usage

Eligible equipment and services must be used primarily for educational purposes. Schools and libraries are permitted to allow the use of eligible equipment and services for other purposes when they are not needed for educational purposes in the first instance. Schools and libraries are required to restrict access to eligible connected devices to only those students, school staff, and library patrons with appropriate credentials.

6. Ineligible Equipment and Services

Smartphones, desktop computers, spare equipment/parts, software, user licenses, filtering, firewall equipment, firewall services that are purchased separately and are not included in the base price for the equipment, private network setup and maintenance fees, backup power equipment (e.g., backup batteries, redundant power cords, uninterruptible power supply (UPS), generators, and surge protectors, etc.), cybersecurity tools (including, for example, virtual private network (VPN) licenses, network monitoring, separate costs for non-connected accessories (e.g., headsets, cases, mouse pads, cable clips, laptop bags, tablet stands, wall mounts, and charging stations, etc.), voice services, standalone cameras and microphones, technical support, maintenance costs, separate costs for warranties and protection plans, video conferencing equipment and related software subscriptions (e.g., Zoom subscriptions), and learning management systems.

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Frequently Asked Questions:

→ **When do products and services need to be delivered to qualify for support?**

Products and services delivered from July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022 are the initial priority. Only those items provided during this timeframe will qualify for support in the first filing window. If there are funds remaining after the first filing window, the FCC may decide to open a subsequent filing window(s), either for new purchases and/or for purchases made from March 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021.

→ **Is there a limit on reimbursement amounts or a Price Cap?**

Hotspot equipment and connected devices are subject to maximum reimbursements. $250 is the "maximum reasonable cost for a Wi-Fi hotspot provided by a school or library to a student, school staff member, or library patron". Applicants can spend more but will only be reimbursed up to $250 per hotspot. This maximum allowable cost is for the equipment itself, not the service. The cost of the service is not subject to a predefined price cap. $400 is the maximum reimbursement amount for chromebooks, laptops, tablets, etc. An applicant can spend more but will only be reimbursed up to $400 per device. An applicant may request a waiver of the $400 limit for users with disabilities, if necessary. Other items, such as modems and routers, are not subject to a specific price cap, but USAC will review requests and identify those that are substantially higher than normal.

→ **How do CIPA laws impact ECF?   (Internet Filtering)**

Applicant-owned devices funded by ECF are subject to CIPA. ECF recipients will be required to comply with CIPA requirements in a similar way to E-rate funding recipients. The CIPA requirements will apply for the use of computers (laptops, tablets, etc.) that are owned by the applicant (school or library) if the applicant receives funding for internet service through ECF or E-rate. Compliance with CIPA is not required if 1) the devices are owned by the school or library applicant, but the applicant is not receiving internet service funding from either ECF or E-rate; or if 2) the devices are owned by a third-party (the student or library patron). The CIPA certifications for the ECF program will be included on the FCC Form 471 that applicants submit for ECF funding requests (no additional Form 486 CIPA certification will be required).

→ **Does my organization still qualify if we previously received support?   (ESSER/CARES)**

There are no reimbursements for other pandemic relief. The FCC will not provide support for eligible equipment and services that have already been reimbursed through other federal pandemic relief programs (e.g., CARES Act, Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, or other provisions of the American Rescue Plan); state programs specifically targeted to providing funding for eligible equipment and services; other external sources of funding or gifts specifically targeted to providing funding for eligible equipment and services.

→ **How long do I need to keep my records for purchases?**

Applicants must retain all records related to ECF for at least 10 years from the last date of service or delivery of equipment. Records include asset inventories, date of distribution, recipient, vendor invoices, proof of vendor payment, contracts, usage reports, etc.

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How Kajeet Can Help

Here's How Kajeet Can Help Your School Take Advantage of the ECF:

Kajeet's suite of **Education Broadband**™ services and connected devices are **100% reimbursable through ECF.** All hardware, including chromebooks, laptops, routers and Wi-Fi hotspots, are provisioned on its connectivity management platform, Sentinel. As a complete solution, Sentinel enables administrators to easily monitor and control data allocations across multiple carriers, track how devices are used, and filter content as needed.

Kajeet will help your administration make the most out of the ECF with:

Sentinel: A singular console for management over everything – an all-in-one platform solution with no additional costs.

Kajeet's private network: A safe harbor for students to learn, free from internet distractions combining filter, firewall, reporting, and internet gateway that is device and network agnostic.

No hassle distribution: Kajeet's equipment is delivered pre-kitted and ready to distribute, eliminating logistics requirements.

No monthly bills: Kajeet offers the convenience of a one-time payment that is applicable to the ECF – other systems are on a monthly payment plan that tie up valuable administration hours.

Reduce administrative burdens: Real-time visibility into usage and traffic so that school staff and students are focused on learning.

Device management: Gives administrators complete control over the connectivity of every device.

Security: Best-in-class proactive protection and centralized threat management with custom firmware so students cannot get around any settings, factory reset a device, or move the SIM card to another device.

Kajeet customer services: Kajeet offers assigned account management and a dedicated support team that efficiently helps schools optimize every aspect of the program.

With Kajeet, teachers can improve pedagogy without worry of disenfranchisement, empower their students and elevate their school. And, with funding supplied by the ECF, there's never been a better time to invest in student success.

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About Kajeet

Kajeet, the industry leader for safe mobile student Internet connectivity, is bridging the digital divide in school districts across the country. Kajeet provides an affordable mobile broadband solution that connects economically disadvantaged students to the resources they need to complete required assignments and projects outside of school. The Kajeet SmartSpot® solution, a portable Wi-Fi hotspot combined with the innovative Sentinel® cloud portal, enables administrators and teachers to provide CIPA-compliant, customizable filtered Internet access that keeps students focused on school work and provides off-campus Internet connectivity without worry of data abuse. Kajeet products and services, which operates on both the Sprint and Verizon network, are protected by the following issued U.S. patents: 9,237,433; 9,137,389; 9,137,386; 9,125,057; 8,995,952; 8,929,857; 8,918,080; 8,774,755; 8,774,754; 8,755,768; 8,731,517; 8,725,109; 8,712,371; 8,706,079; 8,667,559; 8,644,796; 8,639,216; 8,634,803; 8,634,802; 8,634,801; 8,630,612; 8,611,885; 8,600,348; 8,594,619; 8,588,735; 8,285,249; 8,078,140; 7,945,238; 7,899,438; 7,881,697.
Other patents are pending.

Acknowledgments

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