Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) Information for Libraries & Schools

College and Career Ready

That's our goal.

The Department of Public Instruction is the state agency that advances public education and libraries in Wisconsin. Our goal is to ensure **every child** graduates ready for further education and the workplace.

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https://dpi.wi.gov/broadband

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Carolyn Stanford Taylor, State Superintendent

Topics

- Application process and timelines
- Eligible equipment and defining equipment needs
- Documentation and other record keeping requirements for equipment
- Eligible internet services and defining broadband needs
- Documentation and other record keeping requirements for internet services
- CIPA compliance

What is ECF?

- $7.1 billion [Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF)](#)

- The goal of ECF is to meet the remote learning needs of students, school staff, and library patrons who lack access to connected devices and broadband connections sufficient to engage in remote learning during the upcoming school year.

[DPI Funding Quick Reference Guide](#)

Where can equipment and services be used?

- Any off-campus location where remote learning is needed (i.e. home, community centers)

- Students do not have to be fully virtual. E.g., they may use their device and hotspot for homework in the evening.

- Laptops purchased for off-campus use can be used in libraries as they reopen but the priority is use off-campus.

Who is eligible to apply?

- Schools, libraries, and consortia eligible for the regular E-Rate program are eligible for the ECF program.

- All tribal libraries are eligible for ECF funding even if they are not currently eligible for the E-rate program.

How do I apply?

- Use the E-rate Productivity Center (EPC Portal)

- If you do not have an EPC account, contact the USAC Client Services Bureau at (888) 203-8100

- ECF will use E-rate tools and processes. E.g., USAC will create ECF versions of the Form 471, 472, etc.

What is the funding period?

- July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022
- Applicants will be reimbursed 100% of the costs for eligible services & devices
- There is no maximum amount on how much funding a library or school can apply for
- Equipment reimbursement caps are: $250/hotspot, $400/connected device.
- No cap for internet services/data, but costs must be reasonable.

What about pre-existing leases or contracts?

- Payments for all eligible equipment and services that are made between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022 will be reimbursed at 100%.

- This includes purchases made under a lease or contract agreement signed before July 1, 2021.

45 Day Application Window

- Likely open mid-June, meaning the filing window closes about August 1, 2021.
- Competitive bidding is not required; thus no Form 470 but applicants must follow any local procurement requirements
- If money remains in the fund after all requests have been committed, the FCC will either
  - Open a second window to cover future purchases, or
  - Open a second window to retroactively cover purchases made, between March 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021.

Will I get the full amount of my request?

- Yes, assuming enough funding to cover total demand

- No, if ECF funding is insufficient to cover demand, applications with highest regular E-rate discount rates will be funded first, thus some applicants may receive no funding

- Rural schools and libraries will get a 5% bump in their discount band for ECF

How will I get reimbursed?

- As with E-rate, recipients will file a ECF revised Form 472 (BEAR)
- If provider agrees, SPI method is also allowed (ECF Form 474)
- Schools and libraries that do not have sufficient funds to make purchases before being reimbursed will have the option of receiving reimbursement before making approved purchases.
- Applicants are required to register with the gov't System for Award Management (SAM). Register for FREE at www.sam.gov
  - Register now, because it may take 20 days for your registration to become active.

When will I receive my funding commitment?

- The Order says USAC is expected to approve/deny:
  - 50% of applications within 60 days (Oct. 1)
  - 70% of applications within 100 days (late Nov.)
  - Remaining 30% likely not funded before Dec. 2021

- Like the regular E-rate program, you may be contacted by a reviewer with questions about your application.

What equipment is eligible?

- Connected devices to ensure full participation in remote learning
  - Chromebooks
  - Laptops
  - Tablets
- Note: Desktop computers, smartphones, cybersecurity tools, external cameras, microphones, headphones, break-fix, spares, and insurance are ineligible expenses
- Warranties are eligible. E.g., a manufacturer's multi-year warranty for a period up to three years is covered if it is not a separately identifiable cost.

[ECF Eligible Services List - Appendix B](#)

How does the Order define unmet need?

The Order defines need as follows:

Students or patrons who:

"would **otherwise lack access** to connected devices **sufficient** to engage in remote learning."

Will schools be required to certify unmet needs?

Yes. On the ECF Form 471, <u>schools</u> will be required to certify the following:

The school or consortium listed on the ECF Form 471 is only seeking support for equipment and/or services provided to students and staff who otherwise lack connected devices and/or broadband services sufficient to engage in remote learning.

[DRAFT: ECF Form 471](#)

How do I determine which <u>students</u> need connected devices?

This is not clearly defined. <u>The Order (paragraph 81)</u> indicates
 a) that schools are the best judge of what they need; and
 b) that their judgement has to be "reasonable." From the Order:

> "We think that schools are in the best position to determine whether their students and staff have devices and broadband services sufficient to meet their remote learning needs … We, therefore, will not impose any specific metrics or process requirements on those determinations, but we expect schools to take reasonable measures to determine need."

Schools should be prepared to give a reasonable explanation of why their request reflects student needs as defined on slide 3.

How do I determine which <u>students</u> need connected devices?

- [Digital Equity Data](#)
  - Q4: What device does the student most often use to complete school work at home?
  - Q5: Is the primary learning device a personal device or school-provided device and is it shared with anyone else in the household?

or

- Other data as collected by the district to demonstrate need

Will libraries be required to certify unmet needs?

On the ECF Form 471, <u>libraries</u> will be required to certify the following:

The library or consortium listed on the ECF Form 471 is only seeking support for equipment and/or services provided to patrons who have signed a statement that they would lack access to equipment or services sufficient to meet their needs.

<u>DRAFT: ECF Form 471</u>

How do I determine which <u>patrons</u> need connected devices?

The Order does not require libraries to determine in advance what their patrons' needs will be. However, when checking laptops out to patrons, libraries must:

a)   provide them with a copy of its ECF "eligible use policy", and
b)   require them to sign a statement indicating that they have need for the equipment as defined in the slide before last.

The Order does not provide guidance on how libraries should determine how many laptops they can purchase using ECF funds.

Will I have to provide data documenting unmet needs?

Yes.

On the ECF Form 471, applicants will be required to answer a set of questions (not yet available) regarding the specific unmet needs that existed at the start of the pandemic and how the ECF will be used to address remaining unmet needs.

[DRAFT: ECF Form 471](#)

Will I have to explain how I got my data documenting unmet needs?

Yes.

Applicants need to provide a narrative of how they obtained the data to answer these questions and the timing of the data collections or needs assessments. Applicants can upload documentation along with their responses.

DRAFT: ECF Form 471

What are the recordkeeping requirements for equipment?

a. Device type, make/model, and serial number

b. Name of persons who received the equipment and dates the equipment was loaned out and returned

What service are eligible?

Internet purchased from commercial providers, including purchases from the [Digital Learning Bridge](#):

    a.   Cable modems

    b.   DSL

    c.   Fiber

    d.   Satellite

    e.   Fixed wireless

    f.   Hotspots with data plans

    g.   Modems, routers, and installation costs, taxes, & fees are included

[ECF Eligible Services List - Appendix B](#)

Can construction of new networks be funded?

In most cases schools and libraries **cannot** build out their own networks.

Construction of new school or library networks (CBRS, TV whitespace, dark fiber, etc), is only eligible for locations where the district or library can document that **no commercial internet service is available.** It will be difficult for most WI schools and libraries to document this and providers will likely challenge any claim of no service.

How do I determine which students need internet service?

- [Digital Equity Data](#)
  - Q1: Can the student access the internet on their primary learning device at home?
  - Q2: What is the primary type of internet service used at the residence?
  - Q3: Can the student stream a video on their primary learning device without interruption?

or

- Other data as collected by the district to demonstrate need

How do I determine which <u>patrons</u> need internet service?

The Order does not require libraries to determine in advance what their patrons' needs will be. However, when checking out hotspots with data plans to patrons, libraries must:

a)   provide them with a copy of its "eligible use policy," and
b)   require them to sign a statement indicating that they have need for the equipment.

The Order does not provide guidance on how libraries should determine how many hotspots they can purchase using ECF funds.

What are the recordkeeping requirements for internet service?

- Type of service (cable, etc.)

- Upload and download speeds

- Name(s) of recipients of service, their address and service start and end dates

Will I be required to provide my ECF records to the FCC or USAC?

- Yes, if requested as part of an audit or requested by PIA or the FCC.

- Wisconsin law protects library patron privacy, so public libraries will be allowed to provide anonymized data.

- If a school has a question about whether they must turn over student PII in the case of a federal audit, they can ask the auditor for the FERPA exception the auditor believes may apply and should seek legal advice.

- Required retention period is 10 years

When is CIPA required?

CIPA applies to:

the use of **school- or library-owned computers to access the internet (at school and at home)** if the school or library accepts

1. **ECF support for internet access** or
2. **E-Rate for internet access or internal connections**

When does CIPA not apply?

CIPA does <u>not</u> apply to:

A. Computers purchased with the ECF as long as the school or library <u>does not</u> receive
    1. ECF for internet access or
    2. E-rate for internet access or internal connections.

B. Student- or patron-owned computers used to access the internet even when schools or libraries receive ECF support or E-rate support

Thank You

- Questions

- Slideshow & Recording will be posted at
  https://dpi.wi.gov/broadband

- ECF FAQ Document