

Category Two

The second category of equipment and services eligible for E-rate support, Category Two, includes the internal connections needed for broadband connectivity within schools and libraries. Support is limited to the internal connections necessary to bring broadband into, and provide it throughout, schools and libraries. These are broadband connections used for educational purposes within, between, or among instructional buildings that comprise a school campus (as defined below) or library branch, and basic maintenance of these connections, as well as services that manage and operate owned or leased broadband internal connections (e.g., managed internal broadband services or managed Wi-Fi). Category Two support is subject to per-school or per-library budgets as set forth in 47 CFR § 54.502. The eligible components and services in Category Two are:

Eligible Broadband Internal Connections

- Access points used in a local area network (LAN) or wireless local area network (WLAN) environment (such as wireless access points)
- Antennas, cabling, connectors, and related components used for internal broadband connections
- Caching
- Firewall services and components separate from basic firewall protection provided as a standard component of a vendor's Internet access service.
- Switches
- Routers
- Racks
- Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS)/Battery Backup
- Wireless controller systems
- Software supporting the components on this list used to distribute high-speed broadband throughout school buildings and libraries

Notes: (1) Functionalities listed above that can be virtualized in the cloud, and equipment that combines eligible functionalities, like routing and switching, are also eligible.

(2) A manufacturer's multi-year warranty for a period up to three years that is provided as an integral part of an eligible component, without a separately identifiable cost, may be included in the cost of the component.

(3) Caching is defined as a method that stores recently accessed information. Caching stores information locally so that the information is accessible more quickly than if transmitted across a network from a distance. A caching service or equipment that provides caching, including servers necessary for the provision of caching, is eligible for funding.

Eligible Managed Internal Broadband Services

- Services provided by a third party for the operation, management, and monitoring of eligible broadband internal connections are eligible managed internal broadband services (e.g., managed Wi-Fi).
- E-rate support is limited to eligible expenses or portions of expenses that directly support and are necessary for the broadband connectivity within schools and libraries. Eligible expenses include the management and operation of the LAN/WLAN, including installation, activation and initial configuration of eligible components, and on-site training on the use of eligible equipment.
- In some eligible managed services models, the third-party manager owns and installs the equipment and school and library applicants lease the equipment as part of the managed services contract. In other cases, the school or library may own the equipment, but have a third party manage it for them.

Basic Maintenance of Eligible Broadband Internal Connections

E-rate support is available for basic maintenance and technical support appropriate to maintain reliable operation when provided for eligible broadband internal connections.

The following basic maintenance services are eligible:

- Repair and upkeep of eligible hardware
- Wire and cable maintenance
- Configuration changes
- Basic technical support including online and telephone based technical support
- Software upgrades and patches including bug fixes and security patches

Eligibility Limitations for Category Two:

Eligibility limitations for managed internal broadband services – The equipment eligible for support as part of a managed internal broadband service may only include equipment listed as a broadband internal connections component above. Upfront charges that are part of a managed service contract are eligible for E-rate support except to the extent that the upfront charges are for any ineligible internal connections (e.g., servers other than those that are necessary to provide caching) which, if included in the contract, must be cost allocated out of any funding request.

Eligibility limitations for basic maintenance – Basic maintenance is eligible for support only if it is a component of a maintenance agreement or contract for eligible broadband internal connections. The agreement or contract must specifically identify the eligible internal connections covered, including product name, model number, and location. Support for basic maintenance will be paid for the actual work performed under the agreement or contract. Support for bug fixes, security patches, and technical support is not subject to this limitation. Basic maintenance does not include:

- Services that maintain ineligible equipment
- Upfront estimates that cover the full cost of every piece of eligible equipment
- Services that enhance the utility of equipment beyond the transport of information, or diagnostic services in excess of those necessary to maintain the equipment’s ability to transport information
- Network management services, including 24-hour network monitoring
- On-site technical support (i.e., contractor duty station at the applicant site) unless applicants present sufficient evidence of cost-effectiveness
- Unbundled warranties

Eligibility Explanations for Certain Category One and Category Two Services:

Internet access – Eligible Internet access may include features such as basic firewall protection, domain name service, and dynamic host configuration when these features are provided as a standard component of a vendor’s Internet access service. Firewall protection that is provided by a vendor other than the Internet access provider or priced out separately will be considered a Category Two internal connections component. Examples of items that are ineligible components of Internet access include applications, content, e-mail, and end-user devices and equipment such as computers, laptops, and tablets.

Wireless services and wireless Internet access – As clarified in the *2014 Second E-rate Order*, data plans and air cards for mobile devices are eligible only in instances when the school or library seeking support demonstrates that the individual data plans are the most cost-effective option for providing internal broadband access for mobile devices at schools and libraries. Applicants should compare the cost of data plans or air cards for mobile devices to the total cost of all components necessary to deliver connectivity to the end user device, including the cost of Internet access and data transmission service to the school or library. Seeking support for data plans or air cards for mobile devices for use in a school or library with an existing broadband connection and wireless local area network implicates the E-rate program’s prohibition on requests for duplicative services.

Off-campus use, even if used for an educational purpose, is ineligible for support and must be cost allocated out of any funding request.

Managed internal broadband services, such as managed Wi-Fi, are eligible only for Category Two support.

Connections between buildings of a single school – The classification of connections between multiple buildings of a single school is determined by whether the buildings are located on the same campus. A “campus” is defined as the geographically contiguous grounds where the instructional buildings of a single eligible school are located. A single school may have multiple campuses if it has instructional buildings located on grounds that are not geographically contiguous. Different schools located on the same grounds do not comprise a single campus. The portion of the grounds occupied by the instructional buildings for each school is a campus for that school.

- Connections between buildings on different campuses of a single school are considered to be Category One digital transmission services.
- Connections between different schools with campuses located on the same property (e.g., an elementary school and middle school located on the same property) are considered to be Category One digital transmission services, unless they share the same building.
- Connections between buildings of a single school on the same campus are considered to be Category Two internal connections.

Network equipment with mixed eligibility – On-premises equipment that connects to a Category Two-eligible LAN is eligible for Category One support if it is necessary to make a Category One broadband service functional. If the price for components that enable the LAN can be isolated from the price of the components that enable the Category One service, those costs should be cost-allocated out of the Category One funding request.

Miscellaneous

As described below, various miscellaneous services associated with Category One or Category Two are eligible for support. Applicants should request eligible miscellaneous services in the same category as the associated service being obtained or installed.

Fees

Fees and charges that are a necessary component of an eligible product or service are eligible including:

- Change fees
- Contingency fees are eligible if they are reasonable and a regular business practice of the service provider. Contingency fees will be reimbursed only if the work is performed.
- Freight assurance fees
- Lease or rental fees on eligible equipment
- Per diem and/or travel time costs are eligible only if a contract with a vendor for the eligible product or services specifically provides for these costs
- Shipping charges
- Taxes, surcharges, and other similar, reasonable charges incurred in obtaining an eligible product or service are eligible. This includes customer charges for universal service fees, but does not include additional charges for universal service administration.

Installation, Activation, and Initial Configuration

Installation, activation, and initial configuration of eligible components are eligible. These services may include:

- Design and engineering costs if these services are provided as an integral component of the installation of the relevant services
- Project management costs if these services are provided as an integral component of the installation of the relevant services
- On-site training is eligible as a part of installation services but only if it is basic instruction on the use of eligible equipment, directly associated with equipment installation, and is part of the contract or agreement for the equipment. Training must occur coincidentally or within a reasonable time after installation.