

Chronology: Educational Funding Group (EFG)

The DeKalb County School District (DCSD) participates annually in the federal E-Rate program to support critical network infrastructure, internet access, and eligible equipment needed to deliver reliable broadband services across schools and administrative facilities. The E-Rate program, funded through the Universal Service Fund and administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) under the direction of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), provides discounts to eligible schools and libraries for qualified telecommunications, internet access, and internal network services and equipment.

Due to the complexity of E-Rate regulations, application requirements, audit processes, and ongoing compliance obligations, DCSD requires specialised professional consulting support to ensure full regulatory compliance and to maximise available E-Rate funding opportunities. Educational Funding Group, Inc. (EFG) has served as the District's E-Rate consulting partner, guiding DCSD through the program's requirements and supporting the successful planning, application, and administration of E-Rate-funded projects.

The E-Rate program supports two primary service categories:

- Category 1: Services that provide connectivity to and within educational facilities, including wide area network (WAN) services and internet access.
- Category 2: Eligible internal connections and equipment, including wireless access points, switches, routers, data cabling, and uninterruptible power supplies (UPS).

Through its engagement with DCSD, EFG provides comprehensive professional consulting services designed to support the full E-Rate lifecycle, from strategic planning and competitive bidding through application, review, post-commitment administration, and reimbursement.

Key Services Provided by EFG:

Technology Review

- Reviews the District's existing and planned technology needs relative to E-Rate eligible services
- Aligns District projects with E-Rate eligibility rules and funding priorities
- Identifies opportunities to maximise E-Rate discounts and funding utilisation

Form Preparation and Filing Support

- Prepares and processes all required E-Rate applications and forms on behalf of the District
- Submits all filings to DCSD for review and approval prior to submission to USAC
- Supports annual FCC Forms and related program documentation

Competitive Bidding Support

- Guides the District through the E-Rate competitive bidding process in coordination with DCSD procurement procedures
- Assists with the review and evaluation of vendor proposals
- Supports identification of the most cost-effective and compliant E-Rate eligible solutions

USAC Review and Audit Support

- Prepares written responses to USAC Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) reviews
- Supports Cost-Effectiveness, Payment Quality Assurance (PQA), and Selective Service Reviews (SSR)

- Assists with other audits or compliance inquiries related to E-Rate-funded projects

Post-Commitment Administration

- Prepares and submits post-commitment changes and corrections, including service substitutions and SPIN changes
- Supports service certifications, appeals, and waiver requests to USAC and/or the FCC
- Reviews vendor invoices for E-Rate accuracy prior to reimbursement submissions

Document Retention and Compliance

- Retains copies of all E-Rate-related documentation for the required compliance period, currently ten (10) years from the last date of service
- Supports District compliance with FCC and USAC record retention requirements

E-Rate Regulatory Guidance and Ancillary Services

- Advises the District on changes to FCC and USAC E-Rate rules and regulations
- Tracks the District's Category 2 budgets
- Evaluates NSLP/CEP data as needed
- Reconciles E-Rate reimbursements to ensure accuracy and completeness

These services constitute professional consulting services requiring specialised regulatory, technical, and programmatic expertise. In accordance with the DeKalb County School District Board of Education Purchasing Policy governing professional services, EFG is engaged based on demonstrated qualifications, experience, and specialised knowledge of the E-Rate program rather than a traditional low-bid procurement process.

Continued collaboration between Educational Funding Group and DCSD has enabled the District to consistently maximise E-Rate funding benefits, maintain compliance with federal program requirements, and strategically plan and implement network and connectivity initiatives that strengthen instructional and operational technology infrastructure across the District.

Procurement:

In accordance with DeKalb County Board of Education Policy DJE III.C.4, contracts for professional services are awarded based on qualifications and the ability to assess professional expertise, and competitive bidding is seldom the best method for selecting such services. EFG meets the definition of professional services based upon their specialized skills, knowledge, and technical abilities.

Financial Impact:

Year	Cost
2024	\$75,000
2025	\$80,000
2026	\$80,000 requested