

# Top 5 Questions School Leaders Ask About E-Rate and Cisco

**Navigating tight budgets and rising technology demands, school leaders have a critical opportunity in the coming E-rate cycle to secure substantial federal funding that can transform digital learning environments.**

With up to 85% discounts available on essential infrastructure like Wi-Fi, switches, and security, E-rate remains one of the most impactful programs for closing the digital divide and supporting long-term connectivity goals. As emergency pandemic relief winds down and technology needs continue to grow, taking full advantage of E-rate is not just smart—it's essential for sustaining equitable access, protecting data, and preparing networks for future-ready learning. Planning now ensures districts and libraries can act strategically when the filing window opens. Below are the top questions leaders ask when exploring how Cisco fits into their E-rate strategy.



## 1 What E-Rate funding is available for networking solutions?

Cisco offers a broad portfolio of E-Rate Category Two (C2) eligible products, including wireless access points, switches, routers, and basic firewalls. These solutions support reliable, scalable, and secure connectivity throughout schools and libraries, meeting the increasing demands of digital learning environments. Under current FCC rules, schools are eligible for \$201.57 per student, and all applicants receive a minimum C2 funding floor of \$30,175. Discounts range from 20% to 85%, depending on poverty level and rurality.

## 2 How can we simplify the E-Rate application process?

While Cisco and BlueAlly cannot complete forms on behalf of applicants, they provide valuable support through product eligibility tools, budget calculators, and E-rate-focused resources. These tools help districts align procurement strategies with funding rules and avoid common pitfalls when preparing competitive bids.

### 3 What makes BlueAlly and Cisco ideal for E-Rate funded deployments?

Cisco's cloud-managed networking solutions are purpose-built for education, with intuitive dashboards, zero-touch deployment, and real-time network visibility that reduce the burden on IT staff. For decision-makers, Cisco's Try Before You Buy program offers eligible districts the chance to pilot equipment onsite before filing Form 470, ensuring the solution fits their environment and needs. This no-cost, low-risk evaluation is especially valuable in high-stakes, high-density deployments.

### 4 How can I support long-term digital equity and universal connectivity goals?

Cisco's solutions are aligned with national goals to ensure broadband access for all learners. Their technologies support 1:1 device programs, outdoor Wi-Fi for underserved areas, and scalable infrastructure that can adapt as instructional models evolve—all while supporting data security and network resilience.

### 5 What's the best time to start engaging for an E-Rate project?

The ideal time to start is before submitting Form 470. Early engagement allows for solution planning, testing through Cisco's Try Before You Buy program, and collaboration with E-rate consultants or procurement teams. Once Form 470 is filed, free trials and solution changes are restricted—making early planning key to funding success.

## Start Your E-rate Journey Today

By taking a proactive approach to E-rate and leveraging Cisco's purpose-built education solutions, school leaders can turn funding into future-ready infrastructure. With the right timing, trusted partners, and the ability to trial technology before committing, now is the moment to plan strategically and ensure every dollar drives meaningful, lasting impact.

### Need More Information?

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