

Connections for Classrooms – Round 5 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. How is Round 5 related to the previous rounds of the Connections for Classrooms (CFC) program?

This round represents another phase of the Connections for Classrooms Grant Program that will enable eligible districts and schools to upgrade their digital networks or, if additional network upgrades are not needed in the next two years, purchase additional digital devices to fully leverage high-speed broadband access for digital learning. It requires a separate application for funds from prior years, regardless of whether an LEA applied during the previous rounds of the grant program.

2. How much grant funding is available in this program?

Round 5 includes approximately \$10 million in funding, which will be awarded on a competitive basis. Funding for this round includes funding from the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) and the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE).

3. Who will evaluate these applications and how will the applications be scored?

A team of independent evaluators will review each application and assign scores according to the rubric that includes the following criteria:

Scoring Rubric Points Possible by Application Section	
Section 1: Applicant Information	0
Section 2: Grant Funding Request Amounts	0
Section 3: Description of Network/Device Inventory and Statement of Need	20
Section 4: Equipment Selection/Deployment/Maintenance Plans	15
Section 5: Incremental Investment Tie-In	10
Section 6: Digital Learning Plans	35
Section 7: Instructional Staff Readiness Plans	20
Section 8: Binding Authority and Assurances	0
TOTAL	100

The full rubric with more narrative on each criterion can be found in the Grant Application Instructions & Program Procedures guide located on the Connections for Classrooms website at <http://gosa.georgia.gov/2017-cfc-program-information>.

4. If a school/district applies early, will feedback and time for corrections/updating be a possibility?

No, once an application is submitted through the online process it may not be altered.

5. Will there be a review process that communicates back to potential applicants about the application prior to the final determination?

No, there is no intermediate process for application feedback prior to the grant award.

6. Which schools and districts are eligible for funding in this round?

Round 5 will have two parallel application processes—one for rural, high-need districts and the other for state special schools and charter schools, as defined below.

Eligible Districts

A district is eligible to apply for Round 5 funding if it meets the following criteria:

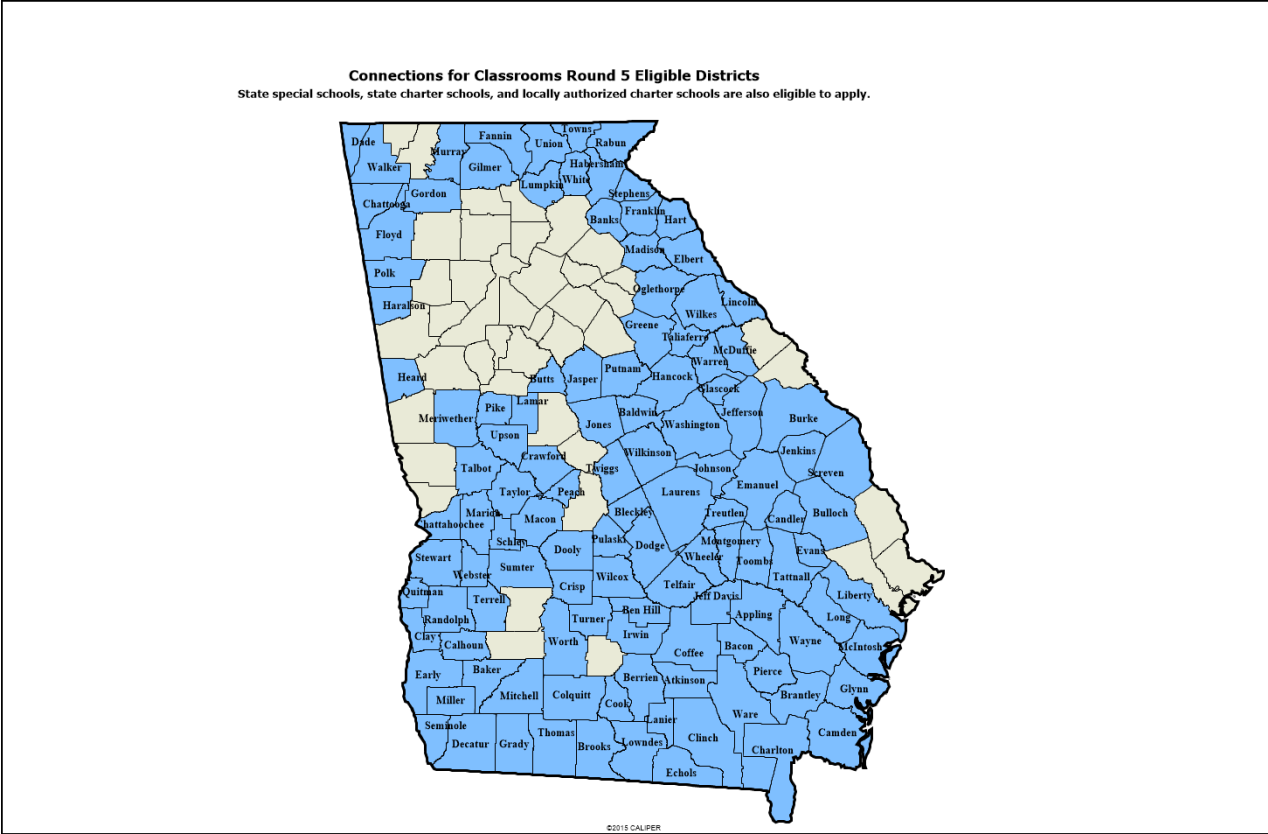
1. Is located in a county that is in Tiers 1, 2, or 3 using the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' annual job tax credit tiers. These counties represent the counties with the highest unemployment rate, lowest per capita income, and highest percentage of residents whose incomes are below the poverty level in the state. In addition to being the counties with high student need, the economic conditions make it less likely that these districts are able to bridge the device gap with BYOD policies and local purchases. [For more information on the tiers, click here.](#)
2. Serves less than 25 students per square mile. These LEAs must spend proportionally more funds per pupil since they serve a more dispersed population and do not have the economies of scale of larger districts. In addition, students are more likely to spend more time on buses and have more limited opportunities for dual enrollment, making digital learning more important.

The map on the following page graphically shows the eligible districts in blue.

Eligible Schools

Schools in the following categories are eligible to apply:

- Locally authorized charter schools that have not been included in their LEA's E-Rate application,
- State Charter Commission authorized charter schools,
- State special schools



7. Where is additional information on the grant program, including application forms and grant guidelines, located?

Information and documents related to Round 5 can be found on the Connections for Classrooms website at <http://gosa.georgia.gov/2017-cfc-program-information>.

8. What is the deadline for the application of the grant?

The application deadline is November 15, 2017, at 5:00 PM ET.

9. When will the grant awards be made?

Grant awards will be announced in January 2018. The contact persons listed in the application will be notified of award decisions.

10. For what equipment or services can eligible schools and districts apply?

Applicants can apply for one of the following three priorities. Requests cannot be split between multiple priority areas.

Priority 1: Local match funding for FY2018 E-Rate Category 2 school network infrastructure costs

Priority 2: School or district network infrastructure up to \$50 per student

**To be eligible for this item, districts must have utilized all Category 2 E-Rate eligibility. Only equipment and services that would be Category 2 eligible will be available for request.*

Priority 3: Digital devices up to \$50 per student

**To be eligible, districts must have utilized all Category 2 E-Rate eligibility or can commit in writing that no E-Rate eligible network upgrades are needed over the next two years. See Grant Guidelines document for list of eligible equipment.*

For Priorities 2 and 3, the October 2017 FTE K-12 enrollment should be used to determine total eligibility. These funds are not intended to purchase a \$50 device or piece of equipment per student. Rather, the total eligible funding amount derived from the \$50/student should be used for network equipment or end-user digital devices that comply with grant requirement and will best serve the students.

11. Who can apply for E-Rate funding that would fall under Priority 1?

Priority 1 focuses on ensuring districts maximize federal infrastructure funds through the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) [E-rate Program](#), which provides discounted rates for school internet access and telecommunication needs. In 2014, the FCC infused \$2 billion in additional funds to focus on Category 2 services, making federal funds available to more districts and schools than in the past. Under the expansion, the Universal Services Administrative Company (USAC), which administers E-Rate for the federal government, schools are eligible to apply for up to an 85% discount on eligible network equipment and services for up to \$150 per student (it has since increased to \$153.47 for FY17). The discount rate is determined based upon the school/district's free/reduced price lunch percentage and whether the school is considered urban or rural. LEAs that receive Category 2 E-rate funds must fund the remaining "local match" of the cost before being able to expend federal E-rate funds, which creates a barrier for many schools and districts. For example, if a school has 1,000 students and a discount rate of 85%, the school can apply for up to \$153,470 in funding. Of this amount, E-rate would cover 85% (\$130,449.50), and the applicant would be responsible for the remaining 15% (\$23,020).

Schools that serve as a local educational agency (LEA) can apply directly to USAC. Locally authorized charter schools can apply as a "consortium" with its authorizing district, listing the district as the consortium member but only applying for service for itself (the charter) and utilizing the district discount rate.

12. If my school or district is applying for Priority 1, how do we apply for E-Rate funding?

The Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) provides directions for applying for E-Rate at this link: <http://www.usac.org/sl/applicants/default.aspx> . In addition, the University System of Georgia houses an E-Rate support team that aids schools, districts, and libraries in applying for E-rate. More information and contact information are available at this link: <http://www.gae-rate.usg.edu/>

13. How will funds be dispersed to awardees, and how often can disbursements be requested?

Funds will be dispersed via a reimbursement method and may be requested no more than once per calendar month. The procedures to request reimbursement for Round 5 are included in the Grant Application Instructions & Program Procedures guide on the grant program website: <http://gosa.georgia.gov/2017-cfc-program-information>.

14. Can our school or district apply for local match funding under Priority 1 if we already applied for E-Rate Category 2 in a prior year?

Schools or districts that have already applied for E-Rate for Category 2 in FY 2015, 2016, or 2017 cannot receive CFC grant funds to pay for the local match for those years. CFC will only reimburse local match spending for the FY2018 E-Rate cycle, which opens in early 2018.

15. How will my award be determined?

Due to limited funding, this round will include a competitive application submission and review process to determine awards. Strong applicants will clearly describe how this grant will enable them to upgrade and improve their digital networks to change instruction to implement digital learning, specifically facilitating learning with technology that gives students some control over time, place, path, and/ or pace. In addition, they will demonstrate their need for network equipment or devices, outline their equipment selection/deployment/maintenance plans, and explain how this investment ties into their current network. Each application will be scored by at least two independent reviewers. Depending on the number and quality of applications received, applicants may receive full, partial, or no funding. The rubric is included in the Grant Application Instructions & Program Procedures guide published on the grant program website: <http://gosa.georgia.gov/2017-cfc-program-information>.

16. Under Priority 3, what digital devices can applicants request in the application?

Portable or desktop personal computing devices such as tablets, laptop computers, desktop computers, or other mobile devices used for instruction that also comply with Georgia Milestones minimum standards. [Specifications available here.](#)

17. Will this round affect my funding from previous CFC grant rounds?

No, funding from this round does not affect any previous Connections for Classrooms award.

18. What is the timeline for this round of funding?

Key dates for this round are as follows:

- **September 21, 2017:** GOSA published a grant notice on the program website and opened Round 5 application: <http://gosa.georgia.gov/2017-cfc-program-information>
- **October 3, 2017 2:00-3:00 PM:** Webinar on Round 5 Grant Application and Program Overview *Webinar login information will be posted when available on the grant program website.*
- **October 18, 2017 3:00-4:00 PM:** Webinar for Locally Authorized Charter Schools on How to Apply for E-Rate. *Webinar login information will be posted when available on the program website.*
- **October 24, 2017:** GaDOE K-12 Network Summit at Rock Eagle 4-H Conference Center. Overview of Grant Program and E-Rate Program Updates for FY2018 filing
- **November 15, 2017:** The application window closes as of 5:00 PM ET.
- **January 2018:** Award announcements will be made.

- **February 28, 2018:** The last date to submit the LEA's Notice of Intent to GOSA for Connections for Classrooms – Round 5 funding. Notices of Intent will not be accepted after this date, and funds will be reallocated for other purposes.
- **March 31, 2020:** The last day to submit a request for reimbursement of expenses related to Round 5 awards.

19. Will the reimbursement process be the same as the reimbursement process for the 2014 Connections for Classrooms program?

The reimbursement process will be similar to prior rounds and is explained in the Grant Application Instructions & Program Procedures guide located on the Connections for Classrooms website at <http://gosa.georgia.gov/2017-cfc-program-information>.

20. Will Round 5 Eligible Devices purchased before the announcement of the grant awards of CFC be eligible for reimbursement?

No, all devices must be purchased after the announcement date of the Round 5 awards to be eligible for reimbursement.

21. Do I need to spend my entire Round 1, 2, or 3 awards before I am eligible for reimbursement from my award from this round?

No, the spending deadlines outlined for the 2014 - 2016 Connections for Classrooms program will not affect your eligibility or award reimbursement for this round.

22. If part of my previous Connections for Classrooms awards was rescinded, will I be eligible for that amount in this round?

Award amount eligibility is determined based upon the calculations outlined in Question #10. Prior awards do not affect eligibility.

23. Where can I find additional information about Round 5 of the Program?

Complete information on Round 5 can be found on the Connections for Classrooms website at <http://gosa.georgia.gov/2017-cfc-program-information>.

24. How do I apply for Round 5?

Applications are submitted online at <https://fs3.formsite.com/GOSAGHP/form71/index.html?1505415935900>. Complete instructions on the application process are found in the Grant Application Instructions & Program Procedures guide located on the Connections for Classrooms website at <http://gosa.georgia.gov/2017-cfc-program-information>. Please read the full instructions prior to beginning the application.

25. My district did not apply for Rounds 1 – 4 of the Connections for Classrooms funding. Is it possible to apply for funding in this round?

Yes, LEAs that did not apply for previous rounds of the Connections for Classrooms program may apply for this round if they are on the eligible district list.

26. Who should an LEA representative contact with questions during participation in the program?

Concise and complete information on Round 5 can be found on the Connections for Classrooms website at <http://gosa.georgia.gov/2017-cfc-program-information>. Further questions may be directed to the Connections for Classrooms Program Manager, Steve Korwan, at skorwan@georgia.gov.