



Request for Proposals (RFP) E-Rate Consulting Services

Issued by: I-CARE, Inc.

Statesville, North Carolina

Issue Date: July 1, 2026

Proposal Due Date: by 4pm on July 31, 2026

1. Introduction

I-CARE, Inc. is a nonprofit Community Action Agency serving residents of Iredell, Alexander, Catawba, and Lincoln counties in North Carolina. I-CARE operates multiple facilities including Head Start and Early Head Start centers and administrative offices that rely on telecommunications and broadband services supported by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Schools and Libraries Universal Service Program, commonly known as the E-Rate Program.

I-CARE, Inc. is seeking proposals from qualified and experienced consultants to provide professional E-Rate consulting services. The selected consultant will assist the organization with E-Rate program compliance, competitive bidding support, application preparation, funding management, and post-commitment administration.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Request for Proposals (RFP) is to identify and contract with a qualified E-Rate consultant to support I-CARE, Inc. in securing and managing E-Rate funding in compliance with FCC regulations and Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) program requirements.

3. Scope of Services

Application Preparation

- Prepare and/or assist with FCC Forms 470, 471, 486, 472 (BEAR), and 500, as applicable.
- Prepare all required former Item 21 and related supporting documentation.

- Identify eligible services and perform cost allocation where necessary.
- Review applications with I-CARE prior to certification.

Competitive Bidding Support

- Develop samples of bid evaluation matrices and scoring tools.
- Coordinate vendor questions and prepare written responses for I-CARE approval.
- Prepare procurement documentation and evaluation records.
- Assist with compliance while recognizing I-CARE retains sole authority for procurement decisions, evaluation, vendor selection, and contract award.

Post-Commitment Support

- Respond to Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) inquiries.
- Assist with funding commitment modifications and adjustments.
- Prepare service substitutions, SPIN changes, and appeals when necessary.
- Track funding commitments through implementation.

Invoicing Support

- Assist with BEAR and/or SPI invoicing.
- Review vendor invoices for E-Rate compliance.
- Reconcile invoices with funding commitments and approved services.

Audit and Record Retention Support

- Provide assistance during USAC or FCC audits.
- Maintain and organize documentation supporting all funding years.
- Support I-CARE's record retention obligations and provide electronic copies of all records upon request.

4. Contract Term

The anticipated contract term shall begin July 1, 2027 and continue through June 30, 2030. I-CARE reserves the option to renew the agreement for two additional one-year periods at its sole discretion.

5. Consultant Qualifications

Proposals should demonstrate the following qualifications:

- Experience supporting competitive bidding processes
- Experience with multi-site E-Rate applications
- Experience with Category One voice/data services
- Experience with Category Two budgeting rules, internal connections and equipment
- Experience with Wi-Fi infrastructure funding
- Experience with managed internal broadband services
- Experience with nonprofit eligibility rules for Head Start

- Experience supporting PIA reviews and E-Rate audits
- Strong documentation and compliance practices
- Demonstrated experience managing E-Rate applications
- Familiarity with nonprofit or multi-site applicants
- Knowledge of FCC and USAC E-Rate program rules

6. Conflict of Interest Certification

Proposers must certify that they are independent of all E-Rate service providers and receive no commissions, referral fees, or other compensation from vendors participating in I-CARE's E-Rate procurement processes.

The Consultant must also disclose vendor partnerships, referral arrangements, and any reseller relationships that pose a conflict of interest.

Failure to disclose and our learning of any undisclosed conflicts will result in immediate contract termination.

7. Compensation Structure

Consultant compensation shall be structured as a fixed annual fee, fixed project fee, or hourly rate. Compensation may not be contingent upon the amount of E-Rate funding received or the approval of any funding request.

8. Record Ownership and Retention

All E-Rate documentation prepared or maintained by the consultant shall be the property of I-CARE, Inc. The consultant must provide copies of all records upon request in electronic format. Documentation must be retained in accordance with E-Rate program requirements for a minimum period of ten (10) years.

9. Termination Clause

I-CARE reserves the right to terminate the contract for convenience with thirty (30) days written notice. Upon termination, the consultant shall provide all E-Rate documentation and records associated with services performed under the agreement.

10. Proposal Requirements

Proposals must include the following information:

- Company overview
- Description of relevant E-Rate experience
- Proposed service approach
- Qualifications of assigned staff

- Proposed fee structure
- References from current or recent clients
- Conflict-of-interest certification

11. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Cost of services (**30%**)
- Relevant E-Rate experience (**20%**)
- Funding optimization strategy (**10%**) - Demonstrated ability to structure funding requests to maximize eligible E-Rate support while maintaining compliance with FCC and USAC rules
- PIA and audit support experience (**15%**) - Demonstrated experience assisting clients through Program Integrity Assurance reviews, USAC inquiries, and E-Rate audits
- Qualifications of assigned staff (**10%**)
- References and past performance (**10%**)
- Experience with Nonprofit/Multi-Site Applicants (**5%**) - Experience supporting nonprofit organizations or multi-site applicants such as Head Start programs

12. Procurement Compliance

This procurement will comply with applicable federal procurement standards under 2 CFR 200 Uniform Guidance. I-CARE reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and to negotiate with the selected consultant.

13. Proposal Submission

Proposals must be submitted by 4pm on July 31, 2026 to:

bryan.duncan@icare-inc.org

Please put "ERATE Consultant RFP response" in the email subject line.



Attachments to E-Rate Consultant RFP

Attachment A – Proposal Submission Form

Firm Name: _____

Address: _____

Primary Contact: _____

Title: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), if applicable: _____

Authorized Representative: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Attachment B – Price Proposal

Provide a fixed annual fee for each contract year. Identify any optional hourly services and any reimbursable expenses. Contingency fees are prohibited.

Service	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Renewal 1	Renewal 2
Annual Consulting Fee					
Optional Hourly Services					
Other Costs					

Attachment C – Conflict of Interest & Independence Certification

The proposer certifies that it is independent of E-Rate service providers, receives no undisclosed commissions, referral fees, or vendor compensation, and has disclosed all relationships that could create an actual or perceived conflict of interest.

Authorized Representative: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Attachment D – Certification Regarding Debarment and Suspension

The proposer certifies that neither the firm nor its principals are presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in federally funded transactions.

Authorized Representative: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Attachment E – Non-Collusion Affidavit

The proposer certifies that this proposal was prepared independently and without collusion with any other proposer or potential proposer.

Authorized Representative: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

