

Top Ten Tips for Service Providers

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Top Ten Tips

- Get online
- Talk to and work with your customers
- Save and organize your records
- Don't procrastinate
- Let applicants write their own technology plans
- Let applicants design and run their own competitive bidding
- Become familiar with each year's ESL
- Provide services within the approved timeframe
- Bill applicants before invoice submission
- Submit correct invoices

Get online

- Manage your Form 498 information
- Set up and manage online accounts for other employees in your company
- Approve BEAR Forms
- Submit program forms for other USAC programs
- Get information and updates (website, SL News Briefs, call agendas and minutes)

Talk to your customers

- Form 471 information
 - Tell applicants if you notice discrepancies on Form 471 Receipt Acknowledgment Letters
 - Provide correct contract numbers, billing account numbers, prices, etc. if requested
- Item 21 Attachments and PIA review – provide if asked:
 - Pricing of eligible and ineligible components
 - Cost allocations
 - Network diagrams

Talk to your customers

- Service delivery
 - Determine service start date
 - Go over details of work being performed
 - Applicant can request service delivery deadline extensions if:
 - Service provider is unable to complete delivery for reasons beyond the service provider's control
 - Service provider is unwilling to complete delivery after USAC withheld payment for more than 60 days on a properly completed invoice

Talk to your customers

- Service substitutions
 - Notify applicants of any service changes in plenty of time to submit request to USAC
 - Communicate with USAC if a product or service has been or will be discontinued
 - Assist applicants with preparation of documentation
 - Answer technical questions from USAC's services team

Talk to your customers

- Invoicing – BEAR Forms
 - Make sure you have billed your customer for the full amount of the service
 - Encourage your customers to file BEAR Forms online
 - Communicate about any line items or BEAR Forms that you do not approve
 - Check weekly for online BEAR Forms awaiting your approval

Talk to your customers

- Invoicing – SPI Forms
 - Provide discounts on customer bills and bill your customers before sending SPI Forms to USAC
 - Send any service certifications to your customers promptly
 - Encourage your customers to return the service certifications directly to USAC
 - Forward to USAC any returned to you as soon as possible

Talk to your customers

- Invoicing deadline extension requests
 - Help customer with request or inform customer you are making the request
 - Make sure contracts have been extended and, if necessary, a Form 500 filed to notify USAC of new contract expiration dates
 - After the request is approved, note the new invoicing deadline on the [FRN Extension Table](#)

Save your records

- Applicants and service providers must maintain records for five years after the last date to receive service
 - With extended service delivery deadlines, five years after the last date to receive service may be years after the end of the funding year
 - Good documentation leads to accurate invoices
 - You may be able to help your customers with certain documents requested by auditors

Don't procrastinate

- File Form 473 after the application filing window opens
- Review contracts promptly
 - If you prepare contracts for customer signatures, review them for compliance with any program changes
 - If a state or other agency prepares contracts for your signature, make sure you can comply with the terms and conditions

Don't procrastinate

- Deliver and/or install services by the service end date
 - June 30 for recurring services
 - September 30 for non-recurring services
- Ask for service delivery deadline extensions before September 30 if needed
 - According to program rules, USAC cannot grant service delivery extension requests submitted after the last day to receive service

Don't procrastinate

- Invoice promptly
 - Recurring services
 - Goal: “Last SPI in July”
 - Goal: “Last BEAR in September”
 - Invoicing deadline is October 28
 - Non-recurring services
 - Invoicing deadline is January 28 for services with a delivery deadline of September 30

Don't procrastinate

- Invoice deadline extension requests
 - Plan to submit extension requests as soon as possible after the original invoicing deadline
 - While there is no programmatic deadline for invoice deadline extension requests, the longer you wait the less likely it is that USAC will approve them

Avoid tech planning

- Technology planning is an applicant responsibility
- The “written” technology plan forms the basis for the Form 470
 - Service providers cannot prepare, sign, or be the contact person for the Form 470, so USAC should not see service provider involvement in the technology planning process either

Limit your role to bidder

- Service providers cannot prepare, sign, or be the contact for a Form 470
- For the applicant to maintain an open and fair competitive bidding process, no service provider can have advance knowledge of, or otherwise influence, the competitive bidding process
- Review Forms 470 and RFPs and submit bids or responses as appropriate

Know each year's ESL

- The Eligible Services List (ESL) for each funding year describes the products and services that are eligible for that year
 - The FCC provides an opportunity for you to submit input on content each year
 - Reading and understanding the current list:
 - Allows you to separate out eligible and ineligible products and services
 - Reminds you of changes to propose for the following year

Work within timeframes

- Services must not be delivered before July 1 of the funding year
 - Exception: Installation work that must be completed for services to be received July 1
- Monitor the applicant filing of a Form 486
 - USAC may reset the Form 486 service start date if the form is late or the applicant violates certain program rules
 - USAC will not pay discounts on services delivered before the service start date on the Form 486 Notification Letter

Work within timeframes

- Services must not be delivered after the service end date
 - Recurring services – June 30
 - Non-recurring services – generally September 30
 - Remember to extend contracts if necessary and ask your customer to report the new contract expiration date to USAC on a Form 500

Bill, then invoice

- **SPI Form**
 - Bill customer for non-discount share, then invoice USAC for discount amount
- **BEAR Form**
 - Bill customer for total cost of product or service, then
 - Receive payment from customer, then
 - Approve BEAR Form
 - Remember to remit payment to customer within 20 days after you receive it from USAC

Submit correct invoices

- Invoices must be based on services customer received and on customer bills
 - Don't invoice to cap
 - Example: First invoice is \$12,000 because funding commitment is \$12,000
 - Don't prorate to cap
 - Example: Each invoice for monthly service is \$1,000 because funding commitment is \$12,000

Submit correct invoices

- Review common invoicing mistakes and avoid them
 - Don't enter a Customer Billed Date (Column 11) and a Shipping Date to Customer (Column 12) on the same line
 - Don't enter the Form 486 service start date on each line item for the same FRN
 - Don't submit duplicate invoices
 - Be sure the Form 471 number and FRN match

Questions?