

[Back](#) [header](#)

Schools and Libraries News Brief

March 3, 2006

Funding Year 2005 Waves

USAC will release Wave 37 funding commitment letters on March 8. As of March 3, FY2005 commitments total over \$1.33 billion. See [Automated Search of Commitments](#) for more information.

USAC Site Visits

In January 2005, USAC launched a site visit program as part of its expanded outreach initiative. As of March 3, USACs contractor, BearingPoint, has completed over 1,000 site visits to schools and libraries throughout the United States and its territories. This initiative has provided important benefits to USAC including opportunities to:

- Observe Universal Service Funds in use
- Assess USACs outreach and education initiatives
- Review management techniques and practices employed in the field
- Ensure that program funds are being used in compliance with FCC rules
- Receive suggestions from applicants for program improvements
- Record site-specific issues for follow-up by USAC.

USAC randomly selects about 80 school and library sites for visits each month based on recent disbursements.

Before the Site Visit. The site reviewer calls the applicant to schedule the site visit and follows up with a confirmation letter that provides details regarding the invoice and funding request that will be reviewed. The letter provides a list of documents that the applicant needs to have readily available during the site visit. The [site visit preparation tips](#) on USACs website provide information to help applicants plan for the site visit and avoid time-consuming follow-up that can result when equipment and documents are not accessible during the visit.

During the Site Visit. The site reviewer meets with the contact person and concentrates on equipment and services related to the identified invoice. The following activities typically occur in a site visit:

- Interviews with appropriate staff to discuss the applicants management of processes and documentation
- Review of documentation
- Physical checks of installation and maintenance of equipment and services
- Observation of students or patrons using the equipment and services
- Interview with a teacher or librarian to gain understanding of how technology is used
- Identification of outstanding issues or questions for follow-up by USAC staff
- Collection of feedback and suggestions.

After the Site Visit. About 90 days after the site visit, USAC will send a letter to the applicant advising either that no questions resulted from the site visit or that USAC staff will be in contact to clarify outstanding issues or request additional information. Potential issues frequently identified during site visits that require USAC follow-up include:

- Missing documentation -

- copies of customer bills (i.e., bills provided by the service provider to the applicant) and proof of payment of applicant share
- contracts signed and dated by both the applicant and the service provider
- evidence of a competitive bidding process, including copies of winning and losing bids and evaluation sheets
- Missing or out-of-date [technology plans](#) and approval letters signed by [USAC-certified technology plan approvers](#)
- Equipment not installed at the expected location
- Equipment not functioning
- Ineligible use of equipment, such as use of servers for data storage.

Many applicants need to improve recordkeeping to assure that they are complying with FCC rules for document retention and can easily locate relevant documentation when requested during application reviews, site visits, or audits. Additional information about [document retention requirements](#) is available on USACs website.

USAC also investigates issues that applicants raise during site visits concerning specific problems or unique situations and works with them to resolve confusion about program requirements. USAC staff has assisted some applicants by making contacts to help them obtain reimbursements. In other cases, USAC staff has provided explanations of how various procedures affect applicants situations, including cases where planned equipment was discontinued. USAC has tracked down funding commitment letters that were misdirected because the contact person had changed and has provided information about pending applications or invoices. In other cases, USAC staff has helped applicants to understand the reasons for denials of their applications or invoices.

Focusing Outreach

Site visits have revealed applicant confusion about certain program rules and requirements and highlighted the need for short, clearly written guidance. USAC continues to refine its outreach program to focus on specific issues and to direct training and education where it is most needed. Recent USAC initiatives that have been informed by site visit observations and feedback include:

- USACs website redesign incorporates simple, clear [steps for applicants](#) to work through the application process and provides links to related program documents.
- One-page [tip sheets](#) provide high-level summaries of particular requirements and direction to more information.
- The weekly [Schools and Libraries News Briefs](#) include timely information and tips to help applicants and service providers improve their processes and program compliance.
- Revisions in cover pages for FY2006 letters will result in an informative, short list of Important Reminders and Deadlines with links to website documents for further guidance.

More Information About Site Visits

Visit USACs website to read [Interim Outreach and Education Site Visit Reports](#) and to read the January 2006 special report titled [Focusing on Success](#) about observed innovative uses of technology and success stories in schools and libraries in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories. For additional information, tips, and highlights, visit [USAC's Expanded Outreach Site Visits](#) area of the website.

Tip: Organize Your Files

Now that the Funding Year 2006 filing window is closed, take time to organize your documentation. Preparing now can save you from last-minute work if you are asked to respond to inquiries during the review of your application or if you are notified about an upcoming site visit. Moreover, complete files will be essential if a new contact person must respond to inquiries later. Make sure you have, at a minimum, the following in your files:

- Complete copies of all forms filed, including attachments
- Proof of competitive bidding and copies of all winning and losing bids
- Your bid evaluation matrix
- Copies of contracts signed and dated by both the applicant and the service provider
- Your technology plan and approval letter for the funding year
- Budget documents that show you have sufficient funds to pay your share and to support your Item 25 certification.

Funding Year 2006 Reminder: [File Item 21 attachments online](#) using your Form 471 Application Number and security code.

You may download and print copies of [Schools and Libraries News Briefs](#) on USACs website. You may [subscribe](#) to or [unsubscribe](#) from this news brief. For program information, please visit the [Schools and Libraries area](#) of the USAC website, [submit a question](#) , or call us toll-free at 1-888-203-8100. Feel free to forward this news brief to any interested parties.

Please do not reply to this email directly, as it was sent from an unattended mailbox.

1997-2006, Universal Service Administrative Company, All Rights Reserved.

[Back](#)