Back

header

Schools and Libraries News Brief

March 24, 2006

Funding Year 2005 Waves

USAC will release Wave 41 funding commitment letters on March 29. This wave will include commitments for approved Internal Connections and Basic Maintenance funding requests at 88% and above. As of March 24, FY2005 commitments total just under $1.45 billion. See Automated Search of Commitments for more information.

PIA and the Application Review Process

USAC reviews all funding requests on certified Forms 471 to ensure that only eligible products and services are funded, and that those products and services are used by eligible entities at eligible locations. This review process is commonly known as Program Integrity Assurance (PIA). Essentially, PIA review is an opportunity for applicants to clarify the information provided on the Form 471 and Item 21 Attachment(s) before USAC makes funding decisions. You can expect a PIA reviewer to contact you for more information on (1) your entity's discount and eligibility, (2) your competitive bidding and contract process, and/or (3) eligibility of your product or service and its use. The following tips will help you with questions that a PIA reviewer might ask

Time-Saving Tips to Speed Up PIA Review

If your PIA reviewer can quickly obtain the information needed to review your application, the review process runs much more smoothly. Here are some helpful tips:

- Store all documents used to prepare your Form 470 and Form 471 (competitive bidding documents, contracts, Item 21 Attachments, budget, technology plan, etc.) in one location. Make sure that everyone in your organization who responds to PIA questions knows the location of these documents and can respond to questions about them.

- Register for an FCC Registration Number (FCC RN) for your Block 1 entity if you do not already have one. If USAC does not have your FCC RN on file, your PIA reviewer will ask for it. Remember that you are not required to have an FCC RN for every entity listed in a Form 471 Block 4 worksheet, but you MUST have one for your Block 1 entity.

- Complete and submit your Item 21 Attachment online. If you file online, your Item 21 Attachment will be in our system and easy for your PIA reviewer to locate. If you can't use the online system, you can submit your attachment by e-mail, by fax or on paper. Remember that it will take us longer to process a paper submission.

- Any document you send to USAC, whether on paper or by e-mail or fax, should include your Form 471 application number and Funding Request Number (FRN) at the top of the first page. This ensures that your information will be matched to the correct application.

- Provide complete responses to PIA questions. Incomplete or vague responses may require PIA reviewers to ask repeat questions and can delay the process.

- Inform the PIA reviewer if you have already provided similar documentation to another reviewer, in this funding year or (for multi-year contracts, for example) in a previous funding year. PIA tries to assign all applications submitted by a school or library to the same reviewer, but sometimes that is not possible. If you have already provided the requested documentation, tell your reviewer the type of document provided and the Form 471 application number and the FRN for the previous submission.

- Verify that your Form 471 contact information and preferred mode of contact are accurate. If they have changed, request a change of contact information. Remember

that contact information is specific to each form. In other words, if you file five Forms 471 and designate a different contact person with different information on each form, you must tell USAC which information to change on each of the five forms. Also, changing your entity's contact information will not automatically change the information on all the forms you have submitted. Funding decisions are delayed when contact information is no longer valid.

- Notify your PIA reviewer if you want to cancel a Form 471 or an FRN.

Helpful Hints to Move Through PIA Review

- Verify the Form 470 application number you cited for each FRN (Form 471, Item 12). If you made a mistake on your Form 471, you can submit a Receipt Acknowledgment Letter (RAL) correction. If the RAL correction time period has passed, you can also inform your PIA reviewer that you want to correct your Form 470 application number.

- Remember the "Two-in-Five" Rule for Internal Connections. If USAC issues a positive commitment on an Internal Connections FRN, every entity listed on the associated Block 4 worksheet is considered to have used one of its years under the "Two-in-Five" Rule. So, if an entity receives funding for Internal Connections in Funding Years 2005 and 2006, that entity will not be eligible to receive Internal Connections discounts again until 2010. Double-check Block 4 to ensure you correctly identified the eligible entities that would receive discounted services for Internal Connections. If you want to remove an entity, you can submit a RAL correction. If the RAL correction time period has passed, you can also inform your PIA reviewer that you want to remove an entity from Block 4.

- Remember that tariffed services can be provided under a contract. If you signed a contract for tariffed services, USAC considers your services to be contractual. Notify the PIA reviewer if you need to indicate that your funding request is for services provided under a contract and ensure that your contract meets program rules. See Contract Guidance on USAC's website for more information about contract requirements.

- Clearly identify ineligible products and/or services on your Item 21 Attachment and remove ineligible product and/or services from your funding request. Remember the "30% Rule" — if you include 30 percent or more ineligible services and/or entities in your funding request (that is, if 30 percent or more of the cost identified in Block 5, Item 23K is ineligible), your FRN will be denied.

- Specify the planned physical location and the recipients of service for Internal Connections components on your Item 21 Attachment(s). Ensure that the Internal Connections components will serve the entities you identified on the associated Block 4 worksheet.

- For Telecommunications Services, make sure you have selected a telecommunications carrier as your service provider. You can verify your service provider's eligibility to provide Telecommunications Services using the Service Provider Search; check for a "Y" in the eligibility column.

- Review your Item 21 Attachment to make sure it supports the products and/or services requested on your FRN.

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate with Your PIA Reviewe

- If you indicated on your Form 471 that you prefer to be contacted by fax or e-mail, your PIA reviewer will send questions by the mode you indicated. However, if your preferred mode of contact is telephone, your PIA reviewer will call you, ask for your fax number or e-mail address, and send questions using the mode of contact you

supply. If you have not received questions by the close of the following day, please contact your PIA reviewer.

- If you don't understand a question, please ask your PIA reviewer for clarification. Understanding the question will help you to provide an accurate and complete response.

- If you are able to respond to the request by the response deadline date, confirm that fact with your PIA reviewer. If you will not be able to respond to the request by the given deadline, work with your PIA reviewer to establish a reasonable deadline. Keep in mind that PIA cannot grant multiple extensions.

Tip: Respond Promptly to Information Requests

USAC may have questions about forms and submissions outside of PIA review. For example, we may need information in order to process or correct a paper form or to process an invoice. Remember that if you don't respond promptly, USAC will have to continue processing your form or submission with the information on hand. See Deadline for Information Requests for more information.

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Back