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Schools and Libraries News Brief

September 22, 2006

> **BREAKING NEWS:** **Gather your records so you can prepare to invoice USAC for the remainder of any FY2005 recurring services.** Generally, the invoicing deadline for these services – whether you are an applicant or a service provider – is October 30, 2006.

Commitments for Funding Years 2006 and 2005

Funding Year 2006. USAC will release FY2006 Wave 23 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) September 26. As of September 22, FY2006 commitments total just under $868 million for approved Priority 1 requests (Telecommunications Services and Internet Access).

Funding Year 2005. USAC will release FY2005 Wave 58 FCDLs September 27. This wave will include commitments for approved Internal Connections and Basic Maintenance funding requests at 81% and above. As of September 22, FY2005 commitments total just under $1.85 billion.

USAC will continue to issue weekly funding commitment waves. After noon on the date that the FCDLs are mailed, you can check to see if you have a commitment by using USAC's Automated Search of Commitments tool.

Getting Started on Technology Planning

Applicants should know the basic requirements of a Technology Plan:

- You must have an approved Technology Plan if you are applying for more than basic telephone service.

- Your Technology Plan must address the five required elements:

    1. goals and strategies for using telecommunications and information technology;
    2. a professional development strategy;
    3. an assessment of telecommunications services, hardware, software, and other services needed;
    4. budget resources; and
    5. an ongoing evaluation process.

- Your Technology Plan must cover the entire funding year or the entire period during which you will receive discounted services.

- Your Technology Plan must be created (written) before you file your Form 470.

- Your Technology Plan must be approved by a USAC-certified Technology Plan Approver (TPA) before you start to receive discounted services or before you file your Form 486, whichever is earlier.

Let's look at some technology planning issues in a bit more detail:

What is basic telephone service?

Basic telephone service is defined as wireline or wireless single-line voice service (e.g., local, cellular, and/or long distance) as well as mandatory fees associated with such service (e.g., federal and state taxes, universal service fees, etc.). If you have a PBX (private branch

exchange), Centrex service, or a T-1 or DSL line, you have more than basic telephone service and you need to have a Technology Plan.

Also, basic telephone service must be provided by a telecommunications carrier to be eligible for discounts. To be a telecommunications carrier, a service provider must provide telecommunications service on a common carrier basis. That is, the telecommunications carrier must (1) allow the customer to transmit intelligence of its own design and choosing, and (2) provide the service to the general public for a fee.

If you request Telecommunications Services from a service provider that does not provide telecommunications services on a common carrier basis, your request for such services will be denied. You can verify a service provider's status by using the SPIN Contact Search tool. A "Y" will appear in the Eligible Telecomm Provider column (telecommunications carriers are also referred to as "Eligible Telecommunications Providers") if the service provider can provide discounted telecommunications services.

What if I am already required to have a Technology Plan for another program, such as EETT?

Technology Plans prepared for other programs – such as the U.S. Department of Education's Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) program – can be used under the Schools and Libraries program as long as they address the five required elements listed above. For example, if your existing Technology Plan does not contain a needs assessment because the program you prepared it for does not require one, you must conduct a needs assessment and include it in your plan to meet the requirements of the Schools and Libraries program.

What "budget resources" must I be able to demonstrate?

You must be able to show that you have budgeted for:

- Your non-discount share: that is, the amount you must contribute toward the cost of the eligible services. For example, if your discount level is 78%, you must pay 22% of the cost of your eligible services.
- The non-discounted elements of your plan that you need to use the discounted services effectively. These include the hardware, software, professional development, and other services that are not eligible for discounts under the program but that you must have to implement your technology strategy for providing educational or library services.

In many cases, final budgets have not yet been approved when the Form 471 must be filed. In those cases, applicants can provide alternative documentation of sufficient budgetary resources to meet these requirements.

Why does my Technology Plan have to be approved before I file my Form 470?

Your plan does not have to be approved by a USAC-certified Technology Plan Approver until you file Form 486 or until you start receiving discounted services, whichever is earlier.

Nevertheless, your plan must be **created or written** before you file your Form 470. This is because the products and services you request on your Form 470 must be consistent with your plan. Your plan should be specific enough to reach the goals and strategies for providing educational or library services, but you also can consider different available technologies to attain those goals.

How can I find a USAC-certified Technology Plan approver to approve my plan?

The Tech Plan Approver Locator tool on the USAC website is your best source of information on Technology Plan Approvers (TPAs). You can include search criteria such as state, school or library, and other affiliations to perform a search for a TPA that can approve your plan.

Most, if not all, public schools and libraries can go to their state departments of education or their state libraries for approval. If you are not a public school or library, the search tool can give you information on TPAs that are certified to approve your plan. If you still cannot find a TPA, email or call USAC using the information provided on the Tech Plan Approver Locator tool description and request assistance.

TPAs may have additional requirements above and beyond the five elements required by the Schools and Libraries program. It is helpful to check with the TPA you will be using to find out what those other requirements are before you begin your planning process.

Again, here are some helpful documents to review:

- Develop a Technology Plan
- Technology Planning
- Frequently Asked Questions about Technology Planning
- Basic Telephone Service
- Tech Plan Approver Locator tool description

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