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Schools and Libraries News Brief - Online BEAR

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BREAKING NEWS: The Billed Entity Application Reimbursement (BEAR) Form is now available online. We are issuing this special edition of the News Brief to announce this new feature and provide guidance on its use.

Access to the Online BEAR

Access for Applicants

Applicants who already have a Personal Identification Number (PIN) can use that PIN to log in to the online BEAR system and file and certify a BEAR Form. USAC automatically issues a PIN to an authorized person who files a Form 470, 471, or 486 for the first time for a particular Billed Entity.

USAC also generated and mailed over 2,800 PINs to anyone who certified a BEAR Form on or after September 2005 but who did not already have a PIN. The PIN mailer clearly indicates whether the PIN can be used for all program forms or only for BEAR Forms.

USAC will continue to issue both types of PINs as new paper forms are filed. However, you cannot access the online BEAR system if you do not have a PIN.

If you have questions about PINs, please use [Submit a Question](#) or contact the Client Service Bureau at 1-888-203-8100.

Access for Service Providers

Service providers who already have a User ID and password can log in to the E-file system to access and certify a BEAR Form. USAC issues a User ID and sets up an account after successfully processing a service provider's paper Form 498 (Service Provider Identification Number form).

Service providers with a User ID can use the E-File system to set up additional users with access to the online BEAR system. For more information on this process or on how to file or update a Form 498, see the [E-file User's Guide](#) or call the Customer Support Group at 1-888-641-8722.

Online BEAR System Description

Applicants will be able to both file and certify a BEAR Form in a single step using the online BEAR system. The service provider whose Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN) is featured on that BEAR Form can then access, review, and certify the form – all in one step. The entire process occurs electronically, including email notices to applicants and service providers of the certification status of each form filed online.

Let's review the process from both applicant and service provider perspectives:

Applicants

To file and certify a BEAR Form online, applicants need the following:

- a PIN, [and](#)
- a valid email address

An email address is associated with each PIN. Applicants should be sure that the email address on file with USAC is valid.

Here are the steps an **applicant** will follow to file and certify a BEAR Form online:

- Log in to the [online BEAR](#) system using the correct Billed Entity Number (BEN), PIN, email address, and the last name of the authorized person.
- Use the "New BEAR Form" link to create a new BEAR Form.
- Provide or correct the appropriate contact information.
- Complete at least one line of the BEAR Form, including Form 471 Application Number, Funding Request Number (FRN), date of service, and total (undiscounted) amount. The system will calculate the discounted amount based on the discount level associated with the FRN.
- Check the box to the left of each certification.
- Check the signature box to certify the form. (You will need to accept the Applicant Terms and Conditions the first time you use your PIN.)
- Provide the authorized person's contact information.
- Include any message you have for your service provider – including your billing account number or other information requested by your service provider – in the text field at the bottom of the form.
- When you have reviewed and verified all of the information on the form, click the "Certify and Submit " button at the bottom of the form.

Once your form has been certified, your service provider will receive an email notification that your form is available to be reviewed and certified. USAC will send you a copy of that notification.

If your service provider does not certify your form within seven days, USAC will send the service provider a reminder by email and a copy of the reminder to you.

If your service provider does not certify your form within 15 days, USAC will cancel your BEAR Form and send a notice of cancellation by email to both you and the service provider.

You cannot restart a canceled form. You must file a new BEAR Form to request reimbursement. Keep the following in mind:

- You do not need to appeal USAC's decision about a canceled BEAR form – you can just file a new BEAR Form.
- If your service provider has certified some – but not all – of the individual lines on your BEAR Form, you must file a new BEAR Form for the lines that were not certified. (Your service provider has the option of certifying the entire BEAR Form or just certifying certain lines on that form.)
- Don't wait until the last minute to certify your BEAR Form. Your service provider may need to review your form or ask for certain information before certifying your form. You can find your deadline for filing a BEAR Form by using the [Deadlines Tool](#) on the USAC website.
- If the deadline for filing an invoice has passed, you must file and receive approval for an [invoice deadline extension request](#) before you can file a new BEAR Form.

Service Providers

To certify a BEAR Form online, service providers need the following:

- A User ID. The valid email address you provide when you file or update your Form 498 becomes your User ID once USAC successfully processes your form and sets up your account. You can then set up one or more additional User IDs with access to specific functions — such as certifying BEAR Forms online — for others who will use your account. See the [E-file User's Guide](#) or call the Customer Support Group at 1-888-641-8722 if you have questions.
- A password.

Here are the steps a **service provider** will follow to certify a BEAR Form online:

- Log in to the [E-File system](#) using your User ID and password.

- Use the "472 Online BEAR" link on the left side panel to access the online BEAR system.
- Use the "Certify BEAR" link to search for the BEARs that are awaiting your review.
- Specify the range of BEAR Forms you would like to review. You can specify date ranges, dollar ranges, or a specific BEN.
- From your search results, choose a BEAR Form to review.
- If you are willing to certify the entire form, check the appropriate box. If you would like to choose which lines of the form to certify, check the box to the right of each line that you are willing to certify.
- Check the signature box to certify the form.
- Provide the authorized person's contact information.
- When you have reviewed and verified all of the information on the form, click the "Certify" button at the bottom of the form.

If you do not certify the form within seven days, USAC will send you a reminder by email and will send a copy of the reminder message to the applicant.

If you do not certify the form within 15 days, USAC will cancel the BEAR Form and send a notice of cancellation by email to both you and the applicant.

Keep the following in mind:

- You will receive an email message each time an applicant certifies a BEAR Form that features your SPIN.
- The service provider area includes Bulk Download and Bulk Upload features. Service providers with large numbers of BEAR Forms to approve can use these features to review and certify BEAR Forms more quickly.
- Because the search feature allows access to invoice forms that have already been filed, service providers can retrieve historical invoice information in addition to reviewing and certifying BEAR Forms.
- You cannot edit a BEAR Form. If you believe the information in a line on a BEAR Form is incorrect, your only option is not to certify that line. It would be helpful to contact the applicant and explain why you have not certified one or more lines so that the applicant can file a new BEAR Form correctly and supply you with any missing information.

We hope that applicants and service providers will take advantage of this online system to reduce errors and send information to USAC more quickly for efficient processing.

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