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Schools and Libraries News Brief

February 16, 2007

TIP OF THE WEEK: If you have corrections to submit using your RAL, follow the instructions carefully and then submit your corrections by the deadline in your letter. RAL corrections must be received by USAC or postmarked no later than 20 days after the date of the RAL.

Commitments for Funding Year 2006

USAC will release FY2006 Wave 44 FCDLs February 21. This wave will include commitments for approved Internal Connections and Basic Maintenance funding requests at 87% and above. As of February 16, FY2006 commitments total just under \$1.77 billion.

USAC will continue to issue weekly funding commitment waves for FY2006. 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.

Important Information on the RAL Process

In the [February 9 News Brief](#), we included a short description of the Form 471 Receipt Acknowledgment Letter and a description of the RAL correction process that you can use to correct [ministerial and clerical errors](#) on your application. This week we want to bring several issues to your attention and provide some more details on the RAL process.

Opportunities to correct errors on your application

In the [Bishop Perry order](#) (FCC 06-54, released on May 19, 2006), the FCC directed USAC to provide an opportunity to correct certain errors on their applications. In fact, three such opportunities now exist for each applicant:

- 1. Your own pre-submission review.** Before you submit your application online, USAC reminds you to review your application for errors. If you are filing online, you can use the Print Preview function to view your application on-screen or print out a copy of your application so you can perform a final error check before you push the "Submit" button. If you file online, the system:
 - o Warns you of errors it detects that result from inconsistencies with other entered data.
 - o Alerts you to some common mistakes when you enter or leave the part of the application where those mistakes can occur.
 - o Calculates some values for you based on the data you enter, such as discount percentages and total pre-discount costs.
 - o Performs a final error check and informs you of any additional errors that need to be corrected before you push the "Submit" button to submit your application.
- 2. The RAL correction process.** After a Form 471 is certified – either online or on paper – USAC issues a Receipt Acknowledgment Letter (RAL). The RAL consists of a short set of reminders and next steps and a Funding Requests Report that summarizes much of the data you provided on your form. The report is formatted to make it easy for you to inform USAC of allowable corrections that you would like to make on your form.
 - o To submit corrections by mail or delivery service, send them to

RAL Corrections
Schools and Libraries Division – Correspondence Unit
100 South Jefferson Road
P.O. Box 902

Whippany, NJ 07981

- o To submit corrections by fax, send them to
(973) 599-6526

Remember to include all the information requested at the top of the report in case we need to contact you:

- o Signature
- o Date
- o Name
- o Title
- o Email, fax or phone

- 3. The PIA review process.** During Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) review, the system will present the PIA reviewer with a list of possible ministerial and clerical errors on your application. In the past, PIA reviewers did notify applicants of certain errors and allow corrections. Now, PIA reviewers will routinely notify the applicant of these system-identified potential errors and provide the applicant an opportunity to correct those errors. In addition, applicants that notice errors that PIA cannot detect (such as including 47 schools in a Block 4 worksheet when only 43 will be receiving the associated service) can make those corrections at the same time.

Deadlines for making corrections

Generally, applicants have 15 days from a notification from USAC to provide a response. This includes notifications for submitting corrections for ministerial and clerical errors. If the notification is by letter (rather than email or fax), applicants have 20 days – 15 days plus an additional five days to allow for mail receipt.

- **Discounts and dollars.** This is the first funding year in which you can increase the amount of your funding request and/or increase your discount through the RAL correction process. However, USAC will not process increases submitted after the allowable period for making corrections. This includes changes to the Block 4 worksheet entries that would increase the discount percentage and changes in the dollar amounts in Item 23 of a funding request that would increase the dollars requested. Changes in these numbers can, however, still occur during application review. For example, an applicant can remove entities from a Block 4 worksheet because of possible violations of the Two-in-Five Rule or PIA can remove ineligible services if they comprise less than 30% of a funding request.
- **Other corrections.** PIA will have access to any RAL changes submitted after the deadline, so applicants can refer to those submissions during PIA review. In addition, as mentioned above, PIA reviewers give applicants yet another chance to make most allowable corrections.

RAL programming error and revised RALs

Due to a programming error, the first batch of RALs for FY2007 contained incorrect information. As a result, USAC will issue revised RALs to all of the affected applicants and reset their 20-day deadline for correcting errors using the RAL process.

The incorrect information appeared in Item 23g (Ineligible non-recurring charges). The incorrect information did **not** affect the calculation for the value in Item 23h (Eligible pre-discount amount for non-recurring charges).

This problem affected just over 8,000 RALs and [just over 19,000 FRNs](#). The programming error was corrected before USAC issued the second batch of RALs. USAC will begin issuing the revised RALs for the affected applicants today and finish early next week.

“Contact PIA” comment for Item 20b

An incorrect entry in the field Item 20b (Contract Expiration Date) on your Form 471 is not considered a ministerial or clerical error. It can only be changed under limited circumstances and

only in consultation with your PIA reviewer.

In the Funding Requests Report attached to the RAL, the field "Contract Expiration Date" is marked "Contact PIA" in the area of the report where corrections can be written in. **This is not a request to contact PIA.**

If you feel you have made an error in this field, make a note of the correction you wish to make and then wait for your PIA reviewer to contact you. USAC cannot process requests in advance of that review, so please do not attempt to contact PIA now.

Form 471 No Certification Letters Mailed Next Week

On February 20, USAC will mail about 5,000 letters to applicants that filed a Form 471 online but did not certify the form by the close of the filing window. If these applicants want their Forms 471 to be considered in-window, they must postmark paper Form 471 certifications for those forms on or before March 12.

If an applicant certifies a Form 471 after March 12, that application will be considered out-of-window.

Problem Resolution and 15-Day Deadline

Some forms and certifications submitted to USAC on paper cannot be data entered into our system. Generally this is because data are either missing or inconsistent. Problem Resolution (PR) is the process we use to resolve these issues. In these situations, a PR representative will attempt to contact the contact person to get the information necessary to data enter the form. At the end of the PR process, if the form or certification cannot be data entered, it will be returned to the applicant for failure to provide the necessary information.

- Forms submitted on paper can exhibit one or both of these issues — missing data or inconsistencies in the data provided.
- Certifications submitted on paper generally go to PR if the applicant did not print and sign the certification page offered at the end of the online application process. If the applicant prints out a blank certification page and attempts to duplicate the information that was provided online, one or more inconsistencies usually result.
- Paper Item 21 attachments don't enter PR; USAC simply images them. The PIA reviewer finds the attachment because it is tagged with the appropriate Form 471 application number. However, USAC does reach out if an Item 21 attachment comes in without that identifying number.

If USAC contacts you and asks for missing information or corrections to existing information, you have 15 days to respond. USAC will attempt to contact you using your preferred mode of contact and then follow up the same day with either a fax or an email notification. Midway through this 15-day period, USAC will remind you that your deadline is approaching and also notify your state coordinator that you have not yet responded. If, during the course of this process, you notice one or more errors on your form or certification, you can correct them as part of the PR process if they are included in the [list of ministerial and clerical errors](#).

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