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Schools and Libraries News Brief

October 12, 2007

TIP OF THE WEEK: Applicants – don't wait until the last minute to file your BEAR Form 472– [online](#) or [on paper](#) – for FY2006 recurring services. Your service provider may need time to review and approve your form, whether online or on paper, before the October 29 deadline.

Commitments for Funding Year 2007

Funding Year 2007. USAC will release FY2007 Wave 24 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) October 17. This wave will include commitments for approved Internal Connections and Basic Maintenance requests at 83% and above. As of October 12, FY2007 commitments total just under \$1.54 billion.

On the day after the FCDLs are mailed, you can check to see if you have a commitment by using USAC's [Automated Search of Commitments](#) tool.

Application Process: Technology Planning

The first document prepared by participants in the E-rate process is usually the technology plan. A technology plan is a written document that describes the technologies and associated resources, both existing and planned, that will assist a school to provide educational services or a library to provide library services.

Technology plans are required for all discounted services other than [basic telephone service](#). So, for example, if you are requesting discounts on a PBX or a T-1 or DSL line – or if you are applying for any services in the Internet Access, Internal Connections, or Basic Maintenance categories of service – you have more than basic telephone service and you will need a technology plan.

Here are the basic requirements of a technology plan:

- It must be created (written) before the Form 470 is filed.
- It must cover all 12 months of the funding year for which you are applying.
- It must contain all five required elements (see below).
- It must be approved by a USAC-certified Technology Plan Approver (TPA) before the Form 486 is filed or services start, whichever is earlier.
- In general, it cannot cover more than three years.

Let's look at each of these requirements in turn.

The technology plan must be created before the Form 470 is filed.

Your technology plan will form the basis for the services you are seeking on your Form 470 and the services you then order on your Form 471. The services you request on your Form 470 must therefore be consistent with your plan. Your plan should be specific enough to allow you to reach your goals and strategies for providing educational or library services, but flexible enough that you can consider different available technologies to attain those goals.

Note that the plan written before the Form 470 filing is not necessarily the final version of your plan, nor the version that eventually is approved by your TPA. It should, however, be far enough along in its development that it can reasonably support your requests for discounted services.

The technology plan must cover all 12 months of the funding year.

Services beyond basic telephone service that are received during the funding year must be covered by the technology plan. In most cases, services are received during the entire funding year, so the plan must cover the entire year.

If your current plan expires before the end of the funding year for which you are applying, you must write a new plan that covers the remainder of the funding year. As above, that new plan must be written before the Form 470 is filed and approved before the Form 486 is filed so that your services for the entire year are covered by approved plans.

The technology plan must contain the five required elements.

Those elements are:

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

Your technology plan should address each of these elements at a level of detail appropriate to the size of your entity. For example, the technology plan for a one-room rural library with dial-up Internet access would be much shorter and simpler than the technology plan for a large urban library with 50 branches and high-speed Internet access in all of the branches.

The technology plan must be approved by a USAC-certified Technology Plan Approver (TPA).

USAC certifies certain entities to approve technology plans. In general, state departments of education and state libraries can approve plans. Other agencies can approve plans for non-public and other entities, such as diocesan schools or special libraries.

You can access a list of agencies that are certified to approve plans using the [Tech Plan Approver Locator tool](#) in the [Search Tools](#) section of the website. If you cannot find an appropriate approver for your state or entity type, use the email link in the text that precedes the tool itself to ask USAC to help you locate an approver.

The plan must be approved before services start. However, because some applicants are eligible to file a Form 486 early if they meet certain requirements, the plan must be approved before the Form 486 filing if the Form 486 is filed before services have started.

The technology plan cannot cover more than three years.

New technologies and services develop and change rapidly. Funding can be reduced or increased. Staff changes can lead to modifications of organizational goals. For these and other reasons, technology plans can become out-of-date in a relatively short period of time. Consequently, with two exceptions, your plan should not cover more than three years.

The exceptions are:

- State five-year plans required by the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) meet E-rate requirements for state library agencies applying for discounts.
- School five-year plans required by the U.S. Department of Education's Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) program meet E-rate requirements if they are accompanied by information on the school's operating budget.

However, plans under these exceptions that cover more than three years should be updated after three years.

For more information on all aspects of technology planning, you can refer to the following guidance documents:

[Develop a Technology Plan](#)
[Technology Planning](#)
[Questions to Consider in Technology Planning](#)
[Frequently Asked Questions about Technology Planning](#)
[Basic Telephone Service](#)
[Tech Plan Approver Locator tool description](#)
[Sample Technology Plan Approval Letter](#)

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