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Schools and Libraries News Brief

November 2, 2007

TIP OF THE WEEK: If you missed the filing deadline for either FY2006 recurring services invoices or your FY2007 Form 486, start taking the necessary next steps to complete your submissions. File an invoicing deadline extension request if you missed the invoicing deadline. File your Form 486 within 20 days of the date on USAC's reminder letter notification if you missed the Form 486 deadline.

Commitments for Funding Year 2007

Funding Year 2007. USAC will release FY2007 Wave 27 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) November 6. This wave will include commitments for approved Internal Connections and Basic Maintenance requests at 83% and above. As of November 2, FY2007 commitments total just under $1.66 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.

FY2008 Window Dates Set; Website Maintenance This Weekend

The Form 471 application filing window for Funding Year 2008 will open at noon EST on Wednesday, **November 7, 2007** and will close at 11:59 p.m. EST on Thursday, **February 7, 2008**. The filing window will be open for 93 days.

Please review the FY2008 Eligible Services List carefully for details on the products and services that will be eligible for discounts for FY2008 applications.

To prepare for the window opening, USAC will perform its customary pre-window system reboot this weekend. This means that the search tools, the online forms, and the Submit a Question function will not be available on Saturday, November 3, between 12:01 a.m. EDT and 6:00 a.m. EST. Please plan accordingly.

Helping Applicants To Succeed (HATS) Program Update

Since 2005, USAC has conducted site visits at schools and libraries as part of the Site Visit Outreach Initiative. These visits allow USAC:

- To see Universal Service Fund support in use
- To assess USAC's outreach and education efforts
- To observe best practices in the field, and
- To ensure that Schools and Libraries Program (Program) funds are being used in compliance with regulatory requirements.

Through site visits, audits, and other activities, USAC understands that a number of applicants are having difficulty with Program applications, procedures, and rules. As a result, USAC developed the Helping Applicants To Succeed (HATS) Initiative to respond to these needs.

What is the purpose of HATS visits?

HATS visits help applicants who have experienced difficulty applying with the Program in the past to understand the application process and other policies and procedures.

What are the goals of the HATS Initiative?

- Helping you to understand the causes for funding denials.
- Providing you with resources that may eliminate application errors or Program compliance issues in the future.

- Helping you make sure that the students or library patrons receive the most value from the Program.

What is the selection process for a HATS visit?

USAC identifies potential applicants based on a sampling of entities who have repeatedly been subject to PIA Selective Reviews and/or USAC funding denials.

You can also request a HATS visit (see below). If you request a visit, USAC reviews your request to make sure you meet the criteria to receive a HATS visit.

If you are selected, BearingPoint (the vendor selected by USAC to conduct site visits and HATS visits) will contact you to schedule a visit.

What should I expect during a HATS visit?

The Site Reviewer will conduct a structured two-way interview using a checklist guide to take a closer look at particular issues that led to the PIA Selective Review, funding denial, or any other repeated difficulties you have had with the Program. Throughout the discussion, the Site Reviewer will highlight common errors and misconceptions, discuss recent Program changes and new regulations, and provide new tools to help you avoid common pitfalls. The Site Reviewer will not ask to see any of your forms, Program documentation, or equipment purchased with Universal Service Fund support. Please note that you don't need to do any advance preparation for the visit.

During a HATS visit, you can ask questions, make observations, and provide suggestions to improve the Program. The feedback we gather will help us provide targeted training to improve the Program and help you and other applicants become more successful in the future.

The HATS site visit process may include a "walk-through" of the USAC website. Site Reviewers may also refer you to Tip Sheets that target areas of the Program you may have had difficulty understanding in the past. The Tip Sheets include useful Program information and best practices.

How is a HATS visit different from a Site Visit?

In a HATS visit, the Site Reviewer will discuss difficulties you have had with the application and funding process and help you understand how to avoid these difficulties in the future. No advance preparation is required.

During a Site Visit, the Site Reviewer will review the application process as it relates to a single invoice (Form 472 from you or Form 474 from your service provider) submitted to and paid by USAC. You will be required to have documentation available that supports the request for payment and demonstrates your compliance with Program rules.

What should I prepare for a HATS visit?

NOTHING. The Site Reviewer will not require any documentation or access to classrooms, equipment or administrative files.

How long is a HATS visit?

Visits will typically last four hours. The exact length of the visit will depend on your understanding of the application process and your willingness and ability to provide feedback.

What happens at the end of a HATS visit?

The Site Reviewer will collect feedback from you and you will be asked to evaluate the visit by completing a survey. USAC continually analyzes applicant feedback to develop targeted outreach and new guidance.

You do not "pass" or "fail" a HATS visit, so USAC does not issue a follow-up letter after a HATS visit. Please note that USAC and BearingPoint must report any instances of potential noncompliance with FCC rules.

Can I request a HATS visit?

Yes, you can contact the Client Service Bureau (CSB) at 1-888-203-8100 to request a visit. You will be asked for the following information:

- Contact person name
- Contact person phone number
- Contact person email address
- Contact who completes the application paperwork (if different from contact above)
- Billed Entity Name (or Names if you apply for multiple Billed Entities)
- Billed Entity Number (or Numbers if you apply for multiple Billed Entities)
- Reason for the HATS request such as: Prior denials, reduction in funding, Commitment Adjustment (COMAD), Recovery of Improperly Disbursed Funds (RIDF) and appeals.

The CSB will forward your request to USAC to determine your eligibility for a HATS visit.

You may download and print copies of Schools and Libraries News Briefs on USAC's website. You may subscribe to or unsubscribe from this news brief. For program information, please visit the Schools and Libraries area of the USAC website, submit a question to USAC, or call us toll-free at 1-888-203-8100. Feel free to forward this news brief to any interested parties.

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