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Schools and Libraries News Brief

September 5, 2008

TIP OF THE WEEK: **Respond promptly to Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) requests for information.** The summer deferral period ends today and, beginning Monday, September 8, PIA will start its 15-day response clock and may reduce or deny your funding request if you do not provide answers within that timeframe.

SL News Brief Starts Its Fourth Year

Welcome to the fourth year of the Schools and Libraries News Brief. We will continue to provide you with up-to-the-minute news on developments in the Schools and Libraries program along with guidance materials that will help both applicants and service providers through the application process.

We email SL News Briefs to subscribers on Fridays. If you are not receiving your own copy of the News Brief, we encourage you to subscribe. You can also download a copy of any issues you miss from the Schools and Libraries News Brief page, which you can view by topic or by date.

Commitments for Funding Years 2008 and 2007

Funding Year 2008. USAC will release FY2008 Wave 22 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) September 8. This wave will include commitments for approved Internal Connections and Basic Maintenance requests at 90% and denials at 79% and below. As of September 5, FY2008 commitments total over $1.17 billion.

Funding Year 2007. USAC will release FY2007 Wave 63 FCDLs September 10. This wave will include commitments for approved Internal Connections and Basic Maintenance requests at 81% and above and denials at 80% and below. As of September 5, FY2007 commitments total over $2.46 billion.

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

Fall Training Update

The training sessions in Newark and Seattle still have space available; the other five training sessions are now full. We will accept registrants from training session waiting lists as we receive cancellations. If your plans change and you are unable to attend a training session, please be sure to cancel your registration.

The hotel cutoff dates are listed below. We suggest that you make your hotel reservations as soon as possible to take advantage of the negotiated conference room rate.

Please note that the beginners session starts at 8:30 a.m. local time on the first day but the advanced session starts at 9:00 a.m.

The information below was current as of September 4 at 4:00 p.m. EDT:

City	Dates	Cutoff Date
Washington, DC	September 11-12	Closed*
Seattle, WA	September 16-17	Some rooms available

Denver, CO	September 23-24	Closed
Chicago, IL	October 2-3	Some rooms available
Newark, NJ	October 6-7	September 12
Los Angeles, CA	October 15-16	September 16
Atlanta, GA	October 21-22	September 19

*Rooms may still be available but at a higher rate. You should email USAC Training if you have difficulty making a reservation. You can also call 1-877-883-1786 ext. 408.

For registration and hotel information, go to the Training Information page on the USAC website.

APPLICANTS: Get Ready for FY2009

Although we are a few months away from the FY2009 application filing window, applicants and service providers should be working on any remaining issues from previous funding years and preparing for the next application cycle. Following are some tips for applicants; next week we will provide tips for service providers.

Finish filing BEAR Forms for FY2007 recurring services.

The invoicing deadline for FY2007 recurring services is October 28, 2008 – less than two months from now. We generally receive a large number of both Billed Entity Applicant Reimbursement (BEAR) Forms 472 and Service Provider Invoice (SPI) Forms 474 close to the invoicing deadline, which results in longer processing times and may necessitate filing an invoice deadline extension request if an invoice is rejected.

Here are some tips to help you clean up invoicing for FY2007:

- **File invoices online if possible.** Applicants with a Personal Identification Number can file a BEAR Form online. Service providers with an E-cert ID and a password can approve a BEAR Form online. If your service providers do not know how to log in to the E-file System, suggest that they call USAC's Billing, Collections, and Disbursement Department at 1-888-641-8722 and select the "Form 498" option.
- **Prepare BEAR Forms in plenty of time for service provider review and approval.** If you wait until late October to file a BEAR Form online or on paper, your service providers may not have time to review and approve the forms before the deadline. Applicants should ask their service providers how much lead time they need to review forms, and service providers should remind applicants of their required lead time as well. Applicants filing BEAR Forms online for the first time should also contact their service providers to let them know there are online BEAR Forms awaiting approval.
- **Read the form instructions.** Most of the common mistakes on invoices can be avoided if you follow the instructions. Again, if you file online, the system populates some related fields and usually provides a warning message if you skip required fields or enter inconsistent information.
- **If you file on paper, use the current forms.** If you are filing a BEAR Form on paper, you must print and fill out **the April 2007 version. THIS INCLUDES THE SERVICE PROVIDER SIGNATURE PAGE (PAGE 4).** Using the old form will significantly delay the processing of your form.
- **Verify the amount of funding remaining on your Funding Request Number (FRN).** If you have invoiced USAC for the entire amount of your FRN, USAC will not pay discounts for any additional services received.
- **Use your current contact information.** If USAC has questions about your invoice, we will use the contact information on the invoice to get in touch with you. If we can't get answers to our questions, your invoice may be denied and you will have to resubmit it.
- **Don't file duplicate invoices or line items.** First review your customer bills (the bills sent by the service provider to the applicant) and any previous invoices so that you invoice USAC only for amounts that have not yet been invoiced.

Check the status of FY2007 non-recurring services.

September 30 following the funding year is generally the deadline for delivery and installation of non-recurring services. Although September 30, 2008 is the deadline for most FY2007 non-recurring services, it can also be the extended deadline for services from other funding years.

Again, here are some tips:

- **Request a service delivery extension no later than September 30 if you need one.** Applicants can request an extension for the delivery and installation of non-recurring services. If September 30, 2008 is your service delivery deadline and you already know that you and your service provider will need more time, you can submit a [service delivery extension request](#) as long as it is received by USAC or postmarked on or before the September 30 deadline. Requests received or postmarked after this deadline cannot be processed.
- **Check the expiration date on your contract and, if necessary, extend your contract and notify USAC of the new contract expiration date using a Form 500.** USAC will not pay for services delivered after the contract expiration date on file or after the original (or extended) service delivery deadline.
- **If September 30, 2008 is the last date to receive non-recurring services, then January 28, 2009 is the last day to invoice USAC for those services.** Don't wait until the last minute to gather customer bills and prepare your invoices.

Submit your FY2008 Form 486 if you have not already done so.

If your FY2008 FCDL is dated on or before July 1, 2008, your deadline to file Form 486 is probably October 28, 2008. (About two-thirds of the FRNs for a funding year feature July 1 as the service start date.) Applicants that wait until the last minute to file Form 486 may cause delays in processing and review at USAC.

Applicants that wait until the last minute are also likely to get confused by USAC's Form 486 Reminder Letter. USAC now sends out reminder letters to applicants that miss the Form 486 deadline because they either:

- fail to file a Form 486 by the deadline, or
- file a Form 486 online and then fail to certify it by the deadline.

USAC uses (1) the service start date reported in Item 19 of the Form 471 and (2) the FCDL date to determine when a reminder letter should be sent. USAC tries to identify late filers as soon as possible after the calculated Form 486 filing deadline date so that Forms 486 can be filed or certified promptly. This means that applicants that wait until the last minute to file or certify a form will probably receive one of these letters and become concerned that USAC has not received their form or their certification.

Once you have covered or resolved any remaining issues for previous funding years, it will be time to start thinking about FY2009. Future News Briefs will walk you through the application process from start to finish.

Erratum

In the [August 22, 2008 SL News Brief](#), the article titled "Online BEAR Form Filing Tips" began with the sentence, "The deadline for filing an invoice for FY2008 recurring services is October 28, 2008." The sentence has been corrected to read "FY2007 recurring services" in the copy on the USAC website.

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