Back

header

Schools and Libraries News Brief

September 26, 2008

TIP OF THE WEEK: If you are submitting paper forms to USAC, please do not staple the pages together. Paper clips, rubber bands, or binder clips work just as well and do not carry the same risk of damage to pages as staples do.

Commitments for Funding Years 2008 and 2007

Funding Year 2008. USAC will release FY2008 Wave 25 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) September 30. This wave will include commitments for approved Internal Connections and Basic Maintenance requests at 90% and denials at 79% and below. As of September 26, FY2008 commitments total over $1.28 billion.

Funding Year 2007. USAC will release FY2007 Wave 66 FCDLs October 1. 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 26, FY2007 commitments total over $2.49 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.

Application Process: Technology Planning

The first document prepared by recipients of service under the E-rate program is usually a 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, 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 technology plan. Your technology 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 technology plan written before the Form 470 filing is not necessarily the final version of your technology 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 technology plan must cover the entire year.

If your current technology plan expires before the end of the funding year for which you are applying, you must write a new technology plan that covers the remainder of the funding year. As above, that new technology 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 technology 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 technology 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 technology plans using the Technology 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 on the webpage or Submit a Question (choose Topic Inquiry "Technology Planning" and Specific Inquiry "I can't find my Tech Plan Approver on your website") to ask USAC to help you locate an approver.

The technology 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 technology plan must be approved before the Form 486 filing if the Form 486 is filed before services have started.

The technology plan should not 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 technology 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, we recommend that technology plans under these exceptions that cover more than three years 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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[Back](#)