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Schools and Libraries News Brief

October 16, 2009

TIP OF THE WEEK: If you are filing an invoice (BEAR Form 472 or SPI Form 474) on paper, be sure ALL pages of the form are dated April 2007 in the lower right-hand corner. Better yet, file online. For most applicants and service providers, the deadline to invoice USAC for FY2008 recurring services is October 28, 2009.

Commitments for Funding Years 2009 and 2008

Funding Year 2009. USAC will release FY2009 Wave 24 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) October 20. This wave includes commitments for approved Priority 2 requests (Internal Connections and Basic Maintenance of Internal Connections) at 85% and above. As of October 16, FY2009 commitments total over \$1.11 billion.

Funding Year 2008. USAC will release FY2008 Wave 70 FCDLs October 21. This wave includes commitments for approved Priority 2 requests at 88% and above and denials at 86% and below. As of October 16, FY2008 commitments total just under \$2.35 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 should be 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](#). 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 of Internal Connections 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 must form the basis for the products and services you are seeking on your Form 470 and the products and services you subsequently order on your Form 471. The products and 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 achieve 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 will eventually be approved by your TPA. It should, however, be far enough along in its development that it can reasonably support your requests for discounted products and/or services. In addition, we recommend that you document the date that you created your technology plan since this information may be

requested during review of your Form 486. The creation date is defined as the date your technology plan first contained the five required elements in sufficient detail to support the products or services requested on your Form 470.

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 funding 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 20 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. Please keep in mind that you should not submit your plan to an approver who is not certified by USAC to approve plans for your state or entity type. If you cannot find an appropriate approver for your state or entity type, use the email link on the web page 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 for help in locating 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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