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Schools and Libraries News Brief

January 21, 2011

FY2011 WINDOW COUNTDOWN

Days to window close	62
Forms 470 filed to date	22,635
Forms 471 filed to date	848

TIP OF THE WEEK: **Be sure to set time aside to work on your Form 471 Item 21 attachments; they must be submitted before the close of the filing window.** We encourage you to file them online, but you can also submit them by email, by fax to (973) 599-6511, or by delivery service or mail to the address for paper Forms 471.

Commitments for Funding Years 2010 and 2009

Funding Year 2010. USAC will release FY2010 Wave 35 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) January 25. This wave includes commitments for approved Priority 2 requests (Internal Connections and Basic Maintenance of Internal Connections) at 81% and above and denials at 79% and below. As of January 21, FY2010 commitments total over $2.13 billion.

Funding Year 2009. USAC will release FY2009 Wave 79 FCDLs January 26. This wave includes commitments for approved Priority 2 requests (Internal Connections and Basic Maintenance of Internal Connections) at 77% and above and denials at 76% and below. As of January 21, FY2009 commitments total over $2.79 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

For many applicants, the first document prepared under the E-rate program will be 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.

Beginning with FY2011, technology plans are required only for Priority 2 services – i.e., Internal Connections and/or Basic Maintenance of Internal Connections.

- Under certain limited conditions, equipment may be eligible as Priority 1. However, if USAC must move a funding request for such equipment from Priority 1 to Priority 2 Internal Connections during application review because it doesn't meet all of those conditions, a technology plan is required. Please refer to the website guidance document On-premise Priority 1 Equipment for more information.)

The basic requirements of a technology plan are listed below. Note that service providers should not write or assist in the writing 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 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.

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 all of the required elements in sufficient detail to support the products or services requested on your Form 470.

NOTE: Currently approved plans that cover at least part of the upcoming funding year and support the services that will be requested on the Form 471 meet this requirement. Also, an applicant that purchases services from a state master contract and cites the associated state-filed Form 470 on the funding request is not required to have a written technology plan before the state filed its Form 470.

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

Internal Connections and Basic Maintenance of Internal Connections products and services that are received during the funding year must be covered by the technology plan. Because services are usually received during the entire funding year, 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 have a written and approved 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 all of the 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
- An ongoing evaluation process
- Budget resources [Beginning with FY2011, this element is not required.]

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 a single router would be much shorter and simpler than the technology plan for a large urban library with 20 branches and the internal connections equipment required to provide service to 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 TPA locator 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.

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
Tech Plan Approver Locator tool description

Erratum

In last week's SL News Brief, the number of Forms 470 filed to date was erroneously reported as 2,156. The correct number is 21,356. The archived copy of the SL News Brief on the SL News Briefs page has been corrected.

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