Back

header

header

April 13, 2012

> **TIP OF THE WEEK:** Monitor the preferred mode of contact you indicated in Item 6 of your FCC Form 471 in case USAC has questions about your application. PIA review of your application can proceed much more quickly with your prompt response to our questions.

Commitments for Funding Years 2011 and 2010

Funding Year 2011. USAC will release FY2011 Wave 43 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) April 17. This wave includes commitments for approved Priority 2 (Internal Connections and Basic Maintenance) requests at 90% and denials at 79% and below. As of April 13, FY2011 commitments total over $2.14 billion.

Funding Year 2010. USAC will release FY2010 Wave 94 FCDLs April 18. This wave can include commitments for approved Priority 2 services at all discount levels. As of April 13, FY2010 commitments total just over $3.05 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.

Network Maintenance Update

The USAC website will be taken down for maintenance from 8:00 am EDT on Friday, April 20 to 8:00 am EDT on Monday, April 23. Both the static pages and the Apply Online and search functions will be unavailable. Users should plan to finish any online activities on Thursday, April 19 or wait until Monday, April 23 to start them.

We apologize in advance for any inconvenience.

Service Provider Training Reminder

The service provider training session in Atlanta is full; we have started a waiting list and will admit additional attendees from that list as spaces become available. If you find that you cannot attend this session, please cancel your registration by sending USAC an email. This will allow us to open a space for someone else.

There is still space available in Los Angeles and we continue to confirm registrations for that session.

To register for a training session and/or to find information on hotel reservations, refer to the Training Sessions and Presentations page on the USAC website.

Overview of the PIA Review Process

Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) is the process used by USAC to review applications for compliance with program rules and policies. During this process, USAC reviews the information on your FCC Form 471 and may contact you with additional questions on specific items.

The review process has two components:

- Initial Review
- Final Review, a quality assurance review process on the work done during Initial Review

Initial Review

After your FCC Form 471 has been assigned to an initial reviewer, the initial reviewer prepares the questions that USAC must ask based on the information you provided (or did not provide) on your application. The questions can cover a wide range of issues on your application, including but not limited to:

- the eligibility of the schools and libraries listed on your application
- the eligibility of the products and services listed on your Item 21 attachment
- the discount rate on your Block 4 worksheet(s)
- your competitive bidding process, including your adherence to the 28-day posting requirement
- discrepancies between the funding request and the Item 21 attachment and/or supporting documentation.

The information on the FCC Form 471 may be sufficient to complete the review without applicant contact. If not, USAC must request more information.

Once the appropriate questions have been prepared, the initial reviewer contacts you using your preferred mode of contact.

- If your preferred mode of contact is email or fax, the initial reviewer's first contact is the email message or fax containing the list of questions that require a response.
- If your preferred mode is telephone, the initial reviewer will call you and ask for your email address or fax number, and will then email or fax you the list of questions.
- In all cases, USAC provides written questions and asks for written responses to those questions.

In general, you have 15 days from the date of the email or fax to provide responses to USAC's questions. (For more information on the specific summer and winter periods when this procedure is modified, refer to the Deadlines for Information Requests guidance on the USAC website.)

- If USAC has not received a response – or receives only a partial response – after seven days, USAC sends you a reminder and forwards a copy of the reminder to your state school or library E-rate coordinator.
- If USAC does not receive a response after 15 days, USAC will continue to process your application with the information on hand, which may lead to a modification or denial of funding.

During all review processes, you always have the following options:

- **You can ask for clarification.** If you don't understand one or more questions, ask your initial reviewer what the question means or what information USAC expects in your response.
- **You can ask for more time to respond.** USAC can grant a limited extension of time to respond to questions. However, if you ask for more time, your initial reviewer will set aside your application and start other reviews while you work on your response, so he or she may not be able to return to your application quickly once you provide the information.
- **You can ask to speak with a manager.** If you feel that you are not communicating successfully with your initial reviewer, please ask to speak to a manager. You will not be penalized if you make this request, and the manager can help you understand the questions USAC is asking and the responses USAC expects to receive.

Initial Review modifications and denials

Once Initial Review has been completed, the initial reviewer may recommend that a funding request be modified or denied based on the information supplied during the review. Some examples of modifications are:

- Removal of ineligible products and services
- Removal of ineligible recipients of service
- Addition of eligible recipients of service
- Reduction in number of months of service
- Reduction in amount of funding based on additional documentation you provided
- Changing contract start or end dates
- Changing from month-to-month services to contracted services
- Changing the establishing Form 470 application number
- Changing category of service.

If the initial reviewer concludes that a funding request should be modified or denied, you will be contacted before USAC issues your FCDL. The initial reviewer will inform you of the result of the review

and give you an opportunity to provide additional information if you disagree with the conclusion. (If you agree with the initial reviewer's determination, you do not have to provide a response.) USAC will review any additional information provided.

Final Review

Final Review is a review by USAC of the work done during Initial Review. Each step of the Initial Review process is itself reviewed by a final reviewer to verify that the correct procedures were followed, the appropriate questions were asked, and complete answers were received. If the final reviewer has a concern about any part of the Initial Review process, the application is returned to the initial reviewer for follow-up work.

The result of this process is that you may be contacted after your Initial Review with what may appear to be additional or repetitive questions. If the questions you are being asked seem new or repetitive, it is likely that USAC needs additional information that was not gathered during Initial Review. Make sure you understand what information is being requested and provide the information as quickly and accurately as possible.

Some applications go through a third level of review called **Quality Assurance (QA)**. Quality Assurance is an additional check to verify that all parts of the review were done correctly. As with Final Review, applications may be returned to the initial reviewer for follow-up.

It is important to understand that the review process is not linear. At any point during the process, an application can be returned to an earlier stage because of work that was not completed correctly or information that is missing. If you are following the progress of your application using the Form 471 Application Status Tool, do not be alarmed if your application seems to move "backward" – that is, to an earlier status. If you do see such a movement, monitor your preferred mode of contact carefully in case an initial reviewer attempts to contact you.

In summary, to be prepared for PIA review, be sure to do the following:

- Check your FCC Form 471 and your Receipt Acknowledgment Letter (RAL) to make sure all of your entries are correct. If you find a mistake, submit a RAL correction by following the instructions in the RAL. (If your review has already started, submit your corrections directly to your reviewer using the reviewer's contact information provided on the PIA fax/email.)
- Organize all of the documentation related to your application and have it readily available to assist you in answering any questions.
- Monitor your preferred mode of contact so that you will know when PIA attempts to contact you.
- Answer all questions promptly and completely.
- Ask for more time to respond if you need it.
- If you are having problems, ask to speak to a manager.

Back