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October 10, 2014

Please continue to check the [E-rate Modernization Order web page](#) for links to additional information.

**TIP OF THE WEEK:** If you have submitted an FCC Form 472 (BEAR Form) online, let your service provider know that your form is ready for his or her review. Your service provider does not need to wait for an email notification from USAC before logging in to the [E-file System](#) to review and approve a BEAR Form.

### Commitments for Funding Years 2014, 2013, and 2012

**Funding Year 2014.** USAC will release Funding Year (FY) 2014 Wave 23 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) on October 16. This wave includes commitments for approved Priority 1 (Telecommunications Services and Internet Access) requests at all discount levels. As of October 10, FY2014 commitments total over \$2.01 billion.

**Funding Year 2013.** USAC will release FY2013 Wave 69 FCDLs on October 17. This wave includes commitments for approved Priority 1 requests at all discount levels. As of October 10, FY2013 commitments total just under \$2.12 billion.

**Funding Year 2012.** USAC will release FY2012 Wave 94 FCDLs on October 15. This wave includes commitments for approved Priority 2 (Internal Connections and Basic Maintenance) requests at 90 percent and denials at 89 percent and below. As of October 10, FY2012 commitments total over \$2.12 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.

### Applicants: Preparing for FY2015

Although we are a few months away from the opening of the FY2015 application filing window, applicants and service providers should be working on cleaning up any remaining issues from earlier funding years. Below are some tips for applicants; in the near future we will provide tips for service providers.

#### Review the *E-rate Modernization Order* and related materials.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted the [E-rate Modernization Order](#) on July 11, 2014. The Order takes major steps to modernize and streamline the E-rate program and focuses on expanding funding for Wi-Fi networks in eligible elementary and secondary schools and libraries across America.

The Order puts a number of program changes in place for FY2015. We strongly suggest that you start by reviewing the materials on the [E-rate Modernization Order web page](#) on the USAC website. Pay special attention to changes in the following for FY2015:

- Program forms, form submission, and deadlines
- Competitive bidding and contracts
- Determination of urban or rural status
- Discount calculations, including the Community Eligibility Provision of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
- Definitions of Category One and Category Two
- Applicant budgets for Category Two services
- Eligible services
- Filing appeals
- Invoicing and invoice deadline extension requests

### **Finish filing BEAR Forms for FY2013 recurring services.**

The invoicing deadline for FY2013 recurring services is October 28, 2014 – less than three weeks from today. Here are some tips to help you finish invoicing for FY2013:

- **File invoices online if possible.** Applicants with a Personal Identification Number (PIN) can [file a BEAR Form online](#). Service providers with a User 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 at 1-888-641-8722 and select the "FCC 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 your form 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 that have filed BEAR Forms online can contact their service providers to let them know there are online BEAR Forms awaiting approval.
- **Read the [BEAR Form instructions](#).** Most of the common mistakes on BEAR Forms can be avoided by reviewing and following the instructions. Again, if you file online, the system populates some related fields for you and provides warning messages if some required fields are empty.
- **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 July 2013 version. THE SERVICE PROVIDER SIGNATURE PAGE (PAGE 4) MUST ALSO BE THE JULY 2013 VERSION.**
- **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.
- **Provide 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 rejected 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 non-recurring services with a service delivery deadline of September 30, 2014.**

September 30 following the funding year is generally the deadline for delivery and installation of non-recurring services. Although September 30, 2014 was the deadline for FY2013 non-recurring services if no extension was granted, it can also be the deadline for services from earlier funding years for which you have received an extension.

Again, here are some tips:

- **If the applicant did not request a service delivery extension on the FCC Form 500, Funding Commitment Adjustment Request Form, on or before September 30, you must request a waiver from the FCC.** USAC cannot process these deadline extension requests if they are received or postmarked after the service delivery deadline.
- **Check the expiration date on your contract and, if necessary, extend your contract and notify USAC of the new contract expiration date using an FCC 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. Remember also that your contract must allow for an extension.
- **If September 30, 2014 was the last date to receive non-recurring services, then January 28, 2015 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.

#### **File an FCC Form 500 to return unused funds to USAC.**

If you have completed invoicing USAC for the services delivered on an FRN and your properly completed invoices have been paid, check to see if any funds remain on the FRN. If so, reduce the committed amount on the FRN to the exact amount you actually used. This action, which you can accomplish by filing an [FCC Form 500](#), returns those unused funds to USAC and makes them available for commitments to other applicants.

- Before you file an FCC Form 500, verify that you or your service provider has invoiced for all appropriate services, that all of the invoices have been processed, and that USAC has paid the correct total amount on the FRN. Verify also that you enter the correct FRN on the FCC Form 500, as reducing a commitment is an irrevocable action.
- Note that you can also file an FCC Form 500 to cancel an FRN. If you received a commitment from USAC on an FRN and you now know that you will not be receiving services under that FRN, you can cancel that FRN by filing an FCC Form 500. Again, because this action is irrevocable, be sure that you identify the correct FRN on the form.
- Always use the current version of the FCC Form 500, which is dated December 2013 in the lower right-hand corner. Note that FCC Form 500 is not available online.

#### **Submit and certify your FY2014 FCC Form 486 if you have not already done so.**

In general, if committed FRNs are featured on an FCDL dated on or before July 1 and the service start date on those FRNs is July 1, the deadline to file an FCC Form 486, Receipt of Service Confirmation and Children's Internet Protection Act and Technology Plan Certification Form, featuring those FRNs is October 29. Applicants that wait until the last minute to file an FCC Form 486 may cause delays in processing and review at USAC, and may result in an adjustment to your reported service start date.

Another possible consequence of waiting until the last minute is confusion over the [FCC Form 486 Urgent Reminder Letter](#). USAC sends out reminder letters to applicants that miss the FCC Form 486 deadline because they either:

- failed to file an FCC Form 486 by the deadline, or
- filed an FCC Form 486 online and then failed to certify it (online or on paper) on or before the deadline.

USAC uses (1) the service start date reported in Item 19 of the FCC 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 FCC Form 486 filing deadline date so that they can quickly file their forms without

penalty. 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 certification.

Remember that you can always check the status of a form or certification by using [Submit a Question](#) or calling the Client Service Bureau at 1-888-203-8100.

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USAC | 2000 L Street NW | Suite 200 | Washington, DC 20036

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