September 11, 2015

> **TIP OF THE WEEK: If you have been away for the summer, start checking your email regularly for questions from Program Integrity Assurance (PIA).** If PIA could not make a successful contact with you on or after May 22 to get answers to questions, they will start trying again as early as Monday, September 14 (see below).

Commitments for Funding Year 2015

Funding Year 2015. USAC will release Funding Year (FY) 2015 Wave 17 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) on September 18. This wave includes commitments for approved requests for all service types and at all discount levels. As of September 11, FY2015 commitments total over $1.65 billion.

Funding Year 2014. USAC will release Wave 65 FCDLs on September 16. This wave includes commitments for approved Priority 1 (Telecommunications Services and Internet Access) requests at all discount levels. As of September 11, FY2014 commitments total over $2.27 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.

SL News Brief Starts Its Eleventh Year

Welcome to the eleventh year of the Schools and Libraries News Brief. We will continue to provide you with up-to-the-minute news on developments in the Schools and Libraries program along with guidance materials that will help both applicants and service providers through the application process.

We email SL News Briefs to subscribers on Fridays. If you are not receiving your own copy of the SL News Brief, we encourage you to subscribe. You can view previous issues by topic or by date on the Weekly News Brief web page, and print a copy of any issue you missed.

Introduction to the E-rate Productivity Center

On June 24, 2015, USAC started rolling out the first phase of the E-rate Productivity Center or EPC (pronounced "epic") – a customer portal for applicants, service providers, consultants, and other program participants. This portal will eventually be the point of entry for all transactions with USAC, and once fully operational will provide a host of new features and better customer service.

For those of you who have not seen the announcements we have made over the summer, here is a summary of the basic information about the portal:

Advantages of a portal

We are moving to a portal to improve your customer experience and streamline the application process. Among the advantages you will notice are:

- All of your forms, submitted documentation, and requests will be in one location online and easily accessible.

- Users will soon be able to access the portal from any device (*e.g.*, desktop computer, laptop computer, tablet, smartphone) and any browser.
- School districts and library systems can update and store address information and other data on their individual schools and libraries. This information can then be uploaded into online forms so that you do not have to re-enter it every year.
- Consortia and statewide applicants will have a complete list of their members, and service providers and consultants will have a complete list of their clients.
- Applicants will no longer need a Personal Identification Number (PIN) to certify forms.
- Account administrators can create as many account users as they wish, and decide which activities the users can perform (*i.e.*, set their permissions or user rights).

Accounts

We have created accounts for school districts, library systems, independent schools, independent libraries, consortia and statewide applicants, and consultants that filed or appeared on FCC Forms 471 for FY2015. These organization accounts contain contact information for the organization.

- School district accounts also contain details on the individual schools that are part of the school district.
- Library system accounts also contain details on the individual library outlets/branches that are part of the library system.

Each organization account must have an account administrator. We started by assigning the authorized person on the FY2015 FCC Form 471 as the account administrator. The account administrator can create other users within the organization and assign them rights, update entity information, and also designate someone else to be the account administrator.

How to get more guidance

If you would like an introduction to how to use the portal – how to log in, create other users, associate a consultant with your account – we suggest that you watch the recorded webinar "Introduction to EPC" posted on the USAC website.

By clicking the graphic labeled "E-rate Productivity Center (EPC)" in the lower left-hand corner of any Schools and Libraries web page, you can access the EPC webpage. This webpage provides links to short instructional videos, user guides for applicants and service providers, a glossary of terms, and a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

If you are not sure whether USAC has set up an account and an account administrator for your organization, you can call the Client Service Bureau (CSB) at (888) 283-8100. CSB can answer questions and provide you with any additional assistance you may need.

FCC Form 470

Starting with FY2016, program forms will be filed in the portal. The FCC Form 470 for FY2016 is available and can be filed after you have successfully logged in to your portal.

You can get more information on filing the FCC Form 470 by clicking the following links:

- FCC Form 470 Filing Guide - a printable guide that walks through the entire form
- FCC Form 470 Video Series - five videos that cover the individual sections of the form

You can also review the SL News Briefs that cover the individual sections of the form:

- July 31 – Basic Information
- August 7 – Category One Service Requests
- August 14 – Category Two Service Requests
- August 21 – Technical Contact and Procurement
- September 4 – Review and Certify

You can view FCC Forms 470 that have already been filed for FY2016 in the portal, or you can view individual forms or download information on all filed forms from the Search Tools page on the USAC website.

Summer Contact Procedure Ends Today

USAC has procedures to contact applicants and service providers if more information is necessary to process or review a form. We realize that, during a summer period and a winter period each year, many applicants are unavailable due to extended holiday and break schedules.

If USAC was unable to contact you during the summer deferral period, we put your form on hold and will resume our attempts to contact you starting Monday.

- Our summer deferral period is defined as the Friday before Memorial Day through the Friday after Labor Day. This year, the dates of the summer period are May 22, 2015 through September 11, 2015.

In general, there are two situations when USAC requests additional information:

- **Problem Resolution.** If USAC cannot complete data entry for a paper form or certification because information is missing or inconsistent, Problem Resolution will attempt to reach the contact person listed on the form (or in our database, if no contact information is provided on the form) to obtain the necessary information.
- **Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) review.** If USAC needs more information from an applicant to complete the review of an application, a PIA initial reviewer will use the contact email address provided on the form both to send questions and to inform the applicant of any correctable errors discovered on the form during review.

For PIA review questions, USAC's customary procedure is as follows:

- USAC uses the contact email address to send questions and to request responses.
- If we have not heard from you after seven days from our first attempt to contact you, we will attempt to contact you again by email and we will also inform your state E-rate coordinator that we are attempting to contact you.
- If we have not heard from you after 15 days from our first attempt to contact you, we will use the information we have to complete our processing. For an FCC Form 471, this may mean that the funding you requested will be reduced or denied.

If our first attempt to reach you was on or after May 22, and we could not confirm by telephone that you were available to respond to our questions, we put your form on hold and will resume Problem Resolution or PIA review starting as early as Monday. However, if we made a successful contact with you before May 22, your 15-day response clock started and we may have acted on the information we had on hand if we did not hear from you by the response deadline.

If you designated someone to answer questions in your absence, please review any communications between that person and USAC that occurred while you were away. Also, check to see if USAC has issued you an FCDL or if PIA questions are still pending.

To see if your application has been put on hold, you can use the FCC Form 471 Application Status Tool. If the status of your application is "Deferred," that form is on hold, most likely for summer deferral.

If the review of your application is still in process, remember that you can ask for more time to respond if you cannot meet the customary 15-day deadline.

Back