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November 6, 2015

**TIP OF THE WEEK:** If you are preparing to file your FCC Form 486, we suggest that you [file online](#) and, if you have a PIN, certify online as well. Filing and certifying online reduces errors and speeds processing time.

## Commitments for Funding Year 2015

**Funding Year 2015.** USAC will release Funding Year (FY) 2015 Wave 25 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) on November 16. This wave includes commitments for approved requests for all service types and at all discount levels. As of November 6, FY2015 commitments total over \$2.51 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.

## Using the Form Navigation Buttons in EPC

Applicants filing program forms in the [E-rate Productivity Center \(EPC\)](#) generally see four buttons at the bottom of each page of the form – Back, Discard Form, Save & Share, and Save & Continue. DO NOT use your browser's navigation buttons to move through a form. This can cause data loss or other errors in your form. Please review the guidance below to better understand the function of each of these buttons.

### Back

The Back button appears on every form page after the first page and up until the certification page. When you click the Back button, you move back one screen in the form. This button is most helpful in the review process – that is, when you have requested the system to generate a PDF copy of your form – and you realize you want to correct one or more entries before your form is certified. You can also use the back button at any point in the process to review entries that you have already provided.

Remember that if the information you want to correct is populated from your organization's profile, you will have to return to the profile to make your corrections. Examples of profile information include your organization's contact information, your contact person's contact information, and the number of entities for which services are being requested.

You can also use the Back button to move through the pages of a form you have already certified in a view-only mode.

### Discard Form

The Discard Form button will remove your form from the database. Because this action is irrevocable, you will receive a warning message when you click this button to verify that you truly wish to discard this form. If you click "Yes" in the warning message, your form will be discarded and cannot be retrieved.

This button is generally used when the applicant wants to abandon a form that has not yet been certified. Once a form has been certified, it cannot be discarded.

### **Save & Share**

The Save & Share button allows any other full- or partial-rights user on your organization's account to access and make changes to your form before it has been certified.

After you click this button, the form moves out of your Task queue, and it moves into the Task queue of the user on your organization's account that picks it up. That user then receives a task in his or her Tasks tab showing that the form is there.

Unfortunately, there is no way for other users to know who has control of the form. If you would like someone else to look at your form while you are still working on it, we suggest one of the following:

- Work with another user on your organization's account in real time, so that you can pass the form back and forth and you know where it is.
- Use a screen-sharing software program rather than the Save & Share button to look at the form together.

### **Save & Continue**

The Save and Continue button saves the work on the current page and allows you to move on to the next page. If this button is "grayed out" and, therefore, disabled, it means that one or more fields on the current page is missing an entry.

## **Posting the FCC Form 470**

In [last week's SL News Brief](#) we discussed the FCC Form 470, which applicants file to open a competitive bidding process for the services they are seeking. In this issue, we are providing additional information about posting the FCC Form 470; in the near future we will include guidance on receiving responses from bidders.

Remember that the applicant is responsible for ensuring an [open and fair](#) competitive bidding process. Only applicants can determine the types of services sought and prepare, complete, sign, certify and submit FCC Forms 470. It is a violation of program rules for service providers to undertake or assist the applicant with any of these actions.

### **Posting for Category One and Category Two services**

Applicants can post for Category One services, Category Two services, or both on a single FCC Form 470. You can also file separate forms for different groups of services if you wish.

If you are not sure if your services fall under Category One or Category Two, you should post for those services in both categories.

### **State or local requirements and E-rate Program requirements**

Applicants posting FCC Forms 470 must comply not only with E-rate Program requirements but also with all applicable state and local competitive bidding requirements. In general, when E-rate Program

requirements and state and/or local requirements differ, you should comply with the requirements that are more stringent to make sure you are in compliance with both.

### ***Bona fide* requests**

The FCC Form 470 – and RFP, if one is issued – must contain *bona fide* requests for services, which means that you list the specific services for which you anticipate seeking funding support. The FCC Form 470 and/or RFP must provide clear and complete descriptions of the project to be undertaken or the services desired, in sufficient detail for a service provider to be able to formulate bids. An applicant may, in certain circumstances, list multiple services on its FCC Form 470, knowing that it intends to choose one over another. However, all products and services listed on the FCC Form 470 must be linked in a reasonable way and not be duplicative in nature.

Applicants cannot simply include "laundry lists" of services (i.e., entering all services eligible for funding under the E-rate Program) or generic descriptions of services (e.g., "broadband connections"). If you anticipate the need for growth of broadband connections during the term of the contract that would result from the competitive bidding process, you should indicate the required speed as well as the higher potential speeds desired.

### **Manufacturer or brand names**

Applicants cannot include the name of a specific manufacturer, brand, product, or service on an FCC Form 470 or RFP unless they also use the words "or equivalent" in their description of the products and services desired. In fact, the online form already includes the appropriate wording in its dropdown menus. Moreover, the applicants must then carefully consider all bids received, including any equivalent offerings, before choosing the most cost effective bid.

NOTE: Applicants may require service providers to provide services that are *compatible* with one kind of system over another (e.g., "Brand X compatible").

### **Breaking existing contracts**

If the applicant is breaking an existing contract, the new service provider cannot pay any associated contract termination charges. The applicant cannot include a request or requirement to pay those associated termination charges in either the FCC Form 470 or the RFP.

### **Restrictions imposed by state or local laws or regulations, and reasons for disqualification**

On the FCC Form 470, the applicant indicates for potential bidders any applicable restrictions imposed by state or local laws or regulations. The applicant can also set out specific requirements and disqualify bids that do not meet those requirements. However, note that these [disqualification factors](#) must be clearly spelled out on the FCC Form 470 and/or the RFP so that they are available to all potential bidders.

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