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January 25, 2016

Announcement

Dates of the E-rate Funding Year 2016 Application Filing Window

The window for filing E-rate applications for Funding Year (FY) 2016 will open February 3 at noon EST and close April 29 at 11:59:59 PM EDT – a window of 87 days, which is approximately two weeks longer than our usual window.

As you know, we are in the process of migrating the E-rate information technology system and forms to a whole new system using technology from Appian. Those of you who have begun entering data into your user profiles and filed requests for bids (FCC Forms 470) have already begun to interact with the new system.

The extended application window for FY2016 reflects the reality that this is an initial launch of a new system, which will, despite our best efforts, likely present many opportunities for learning and improvement as users begin filing their applications. Historically, relatively few applications have been filed in the first few weeks after the opening of the filing window. Last year, for example, slightly more than 500 applications were filed during the first two weeks of the window, and less than 2,400 had been filed by the end of four weeks. This year, we ask that early filers provide us with robust feedback on their experience and where improvements can be made. The best avenues for that feedback are our call center at (888) 203-8100, or at EPCfeedback@usac.org. We will also continue to work on additional usability features and functionality informed by our user testing. Our ability to add these features will depend on how well the system performs initially and the resulting demand on our development resources. We must ensure the system is stable, and we will work with our development partners at Appian to immediately address any critical issues that arise. We will also provide weekly communications based on our observations and any planned changes or improvements.

Whether you plan to file early, or wait until we've dealt with any potential initial performance issues, the best way to support your successful filing of your E-rate application is to start now with your account and user information. You can set up your account in the USAC Portal, assign user rights and establish or update your profile. For more information on how to complete the tasks mentioned above, [visit our website](#), or if you have questions and want to speak with someone who can help, call us at (888) 203-8100.

While this new system brings a number of benefits in 2016, such as hover text, on-screen help, error alerts, some prepopulating, and will bring even more robust benefits in 2017, the changes we are making and the new environment will also bring challenges. We understand this and are putting in place an unprecedented level of support for applicants. Most importantly, this will include significantly increased call center support, as well as education through a variety of channels. We will provide further detail on our plans prior to the window opening.

Thank you in advance for working with us to make this year of transition a successful and positive experience and for your understanding regarding the challenges associated with this level of change.

Sincerely,

Mel Blackwell
Vice President, Schools and Libraries Division

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