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April 15, 2016

E-rate Application Window Extension Notice for FY2016

I would like to once again acknowledge the challenges many applicants have faced in completing their E-rate applications (FCC Form 471) for the upcoming funding year. We recognize the delays applicants have encountered due to unexpected complications with the implementation of USAC's new IT system. We appreciate the assistance E-rate applicants have provided by alerting us to these issues and helping us to resolve them. As a result of these challenges, USAC and the FCC have received a number of requests for an extension of the application window.

Based on applicant and other stakeholder input, we are providing a two-part extension for E-rate applicants. We believe this approach will provide enough time for us to assist all filers in addressing their specific issues and complete the application process. **First, we are extending the window for all applicants by four weeks with a new closing date of May 26, 2016.** With the recent deployment of bulk upload templates and additional updates and solutions coming over the next few weeks, we believe that the IT systems will be sufficiently stable to allow most applicants, and all schools and school districts, sufficient time to file their applications by May 26.

Over the next few weeks, we expect to roll out additional updates to the application. An explanation of the additional changes we expect to make to the application can be found at: <http://www.usac.org/res/documents/sl/pdf/tools/epc/EPC-Notes.pdf>.

With this extension, applicants should have sufficient time to file their applications in a fully functioning system, albeit one that still falls far short of our goals for the future application experience. Throughout the filing period, we will continue to support all applicants to make sure they are able to file successfully.

Second, when the window closes on May 26, we will open a second filing window for consortia and libraries, which will close on July 21, 2016. We recognize that consortia and libraries are unable to complete their applications until their member/related school district(s) finalize their discount rates in the system. Based on conversations we have had with these communities, we believe most such filers will require no more than two to three weeks to complete their applications once their related entity data is complete. However, some larger consortia may need considerably more time. While we expect to receive the majority of applications for this community sooner, the second filing window will ensure these consortia have the time they need to complete their applications by July 21.

The opening of the second window will not delay application review or funding decisions for applications submitted during the first window. We will begin application review next week, and will estimate demand as soon as the first window closes. Libraries and consortia will enter the review pool as soon as their applications are submitted. Our analysis shows that there should be sufficient funding for all plausible demand scenarios for FY2016, so filers should not be worried about losing funding as a result of this second window.

Moving forward, we will continue to provide updates on our IT systems. We expect that the improvements we plan, including further improvements to the bulk upload feature and resolution of other issues (detailed here: <http://www.usac.org/res/documents/sl/pdf/tools/epc/EPC-Notes.pdf>) will be completed within the next few weeks.

In addition to extending the application filing deadlines, we have greatly ramped up our customer service capabilities. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the Client Services Bureau at 1 (888) 203-8100, should you need assistance with an application.

Please let us know if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Mel Blackwell
Vice President of the Schools & Libraries Program
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