July 29, 2016

TIP OF THE WEEK: **For applicants who have started services and who have received a positive funding commitment, you can file your FCC Form 486 if you are ready to do so.** To start, log in to your organization's EPC account and click the "FCC Form 486" link at the top of your landing page.

Craig Davis to Lead Schools and Libraries Program

USAC is pleased to announce that Craig Davis will assume the role of Vice President of the Schools and Libraries (E-rate) Program. After a full search process with strong internal and external candidates, we are confident that Craig's background and experience will enable him to successfully lead the program and deliver upon its inspired mission.

Craig has an extensive track record of demonstrating stakeholder-driven success in his current role as Vice President of USAC's Rural Health Care Program (RHC). During the past two years with RHC, Craig and his team have seen dramatic increases in productivity, stakeholder engagement and satisfaction, and have reduced the number of appeals to single digits.

The similar structure of the E-rate and RHC programs gives Craig the benefit of operational familiarity, while still bringing a fresh perspective and a need and desire to learn from E-rate stakeholders about the opportunities to further improve USAC's delivery of the program.

Craig also understands and has managed the implementation of large-scale production level systems, which will be a much-needed asset as we continue to roll out and improve the performance of the EPC system and begin the process of considering more significant changes to fully achieve our shared goals for the applicant and service provider experience.

Before joining USAC in 2002, Craig worked for a variety of telecommunications companies, including a dark fiber provider, a wireless competitive local exchange carrier, and an operator services provider. Craig holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from George Washington University and a Juris Doctor from Syracuse University College of Law.

Craig will officially become the Vice President of the Schools and Libraries Program on August 1. Current Vice President Mel Blackwell will remain as an advisor to USAC and the program through the end of the year.

We look forward to working with all of you as we continue our efforts to realize the vision and grow the impact of the Schools and Libraries Program.

Commitments for Funding Years 2016 and 2015

Funding Year 2016. USAC released Funding Year (FY) 2016 Wave 6 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) on July 29. This wave includes commitments for approved applications for all service types and at all discount levels. As of July 29, FY2016 commitments total over $150.4 million.

On the date the FCDLs are issued, you can access your FCDL notification from the **Notifications** section of your landing page in the E-rate Productivity Center (EPC).

Funding Year 2015. USAC will release FY2015 Wave 59 FCDLs on August 2. This wave includes commitments for approved requests for all service types and at all discount levels. As of July 29, FY2015 commitments total over $3.31 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. FCDLs for FY2015 will continue to be printed and mailed to applicants and service providers, and emailed to service providers who have signed up to receive electronic notifications.

FY2016 Invoice Processing Begins Mid-August

There will be a small delay for applicants and service providers who are ready to invoice USAC for FY2016 services. USAC will begin processing invoicing forms and issuing payments the week of August 8, 2016.

The delay affects applicants and service providers differently:

Applicants: The FCC Form 472, Billed Entity Applicant Reimbursement (BEAR) Form, used for direct reimbursements to applicants, will be available in the legacy system the week of August 8.

Even though the system currently has a link to the form, it is not ready to use. At this time users cannot complete or submit a BEAR Form, and will encounter an error message if they attempt to do so. Remember to obtain a 498 ID in advance, which is required before USAC can process a BEAR Form.

Service Providers: The FCC Form 474, Service Provider Invoice (SPI) Form, used for payments to service providers, is available in the legacy system.

USAC started accepting SPI Forms for FY2016 on July 1, but will not begin processing the forms or issuing payments until the week of August 8.

Submitting SPIN Changes and Service Substitutions for FY2016

In some cases, applicants need to update certain information on the funding requests they filed on FCC Form 471. Below we discuss how to file two of these change requests for FY2016 – Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN) changes and service substitutions.

USAC is developing intake modules in the E-rate Productivity Center (EPC) to accept SPIN change and service substitution requests. Until the modules are available, you may submit FY2016 requests for SPIN changes and service substitutions in EPC by opening a customer service case (see below). If you file these requests for FY2016 using Submit a Question, the Client Service Bureau (CSB) will have to create a customer service case in EPC and move or copy the information you provide to that case. This will delay the processing of your request and make it more difficult for you to track its progress.

However, please continue to use Submit a Question if your SPIN change request or service substitution request applies to FY2015 or an earlier funding year.

Below we discuss the two types of SPIN changes – corrective and operational – and service substitutions, and describe the submission process for FY2016.

Corrective SPIN changes

A corrective SPIN change usually does not change the actual service provider, but may be due for example to a typographical error or confusion if the service provider has multiple SPINs.

- If USAC has not yet issued an FCDL for the affected funding request(s), the applicant can submit a Receipt Acknowledgment Letter (RAL) modification.
- If USAC has issued an FCDL for the affected funding request(s), the applicant must follow the procedure for submitting an operational SPIN change (see below) or file an appeal with USAC.

For more information on:

- corrective SPIN changes, refer to the corrective SPIN change guidance document on the USAC website.
- submitting a RAL modification, refer to the April 29 SL News Brief.
- filing an appeal with USAC, refer to the appeals guidance document on the USAC website.

Operational SPIN changes

An operational SPIN change is an actual change to the service provider of record for an FRN. Starting with FY2011, operational SPIN change requests must meet certain criteria for USAC to approve them. For more information, refer to the operational SPIN change guidance document on the USAC website.

Service substitutions

A service substitution is a change to the products and/or services specified on a funding request. Service substitution requests must meet certain criteria for USAC to approve them. For more information, refer to the service substitution guidance document on the USAC website.

Submitting SPIN changes and service substitutions for FY2016 in EPC

Create a customer service case in EPC by logging in to your organization's EPC account and choosing "Contact Us" from the **Actions** tab.

- At the beginning of the Nickname field, enter "FY2016 Spin Change Request" for an operational SPIN change or "FY2016 Service Substitution Request" for a service substitution.
- Add a detailed description of your request in the Description field.
- Choose "Post Commitment Changes" from the Topic dropdown menu.
- Review the appropriate guidance document. If supporting documentation is required, prepare the appropriate file or files and upload them to the case.
- In the Case Contact field, choose or identify the person we should contact if we have any questions. We suggest that you choose a contact that is already a user on your account.
- When you are finished, click "Submit."

Submitting Window Waivers

Some applicants have had to wait until after the application filing window closed to complete and certify their FCC Forms 471, for example, due to a late-filed FCC Form 470 or a contract signed after the filing window closed.

These applications are not considered for funding if they remain in an out-of-window status. For USAC to move these applications in-window, the applicant must request – and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) must grant – a waiver of the filing window deadline.

To file a window waiver request:

- First, make sure you have followed all program rules. For example, you must still wait at least 28 days after you certified your FCC Form 470 before you choose a service provider, sign a contract (if applicable), and certify your FCC Form 471.
- File and certify your FCC Form 471 in EPC. You will then receive an out-of-window message.
- File a window waiver request with the FCC. USAC cannot approve appeals or waiver requests that ask for a waiver from program rules.

For guidance on filing waiver requests with the FCC, go to the section titled "To File an Appeal with the FCC" in the appeals guidance document on the USAC website. Note that you can file your appeal electronically using the FCC's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS).

To file online:

- Go to the ECFS "Submit a FILING" page.
- Enter "02-6" in the "Proceeding" field.
- Provide the information requested. (There are certain fields that are not applicable, such as the "Report Number" or "Bureau ID Number.") Be sure to choose "WAIVER" from the dropdown menu in the "Type of Filing" field.
- Click the text in the "Upload Documents" field to open an upload window and attach your appeal and any supporting documentation. You can also drag and drop your file(s) into the "Upload Documents" field.
- Review your work, make any necessary changes, and then submit your waiver request.

Last Week in "File Along with Me":

"File Along with Me" is a blog that covers the E-rate Program application process step-by-step, and serves as a schedule you can follow to manage your application. Ready to join us? Read the Blog

Back