**Universal Service Administrative Co.**

# Schools and Libraries Program News Brief

**December 11, 2020**

> **TIP OF THE WEEK:** Remember to register for our webinar on invoicing at 2:00 p.m. EST on **Wednesday, December 16.** For those of you who are unable to attend the live webinar, a recording will be posted to the Webinars page on the USAC website.

## Commitments for Funding Year (FY) 2020 and FY2019

**FY2020.** USAC released FY2020 Wave 33 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) on December 10. As of December 11, FY2020 commitments total over $2.01 billion.

**FY2019.** USAC released FY2019 Wave 79 FCDLs on December 9. As of December 11, FY2019 commitments total over $2.42 billion.

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

## FCC Amends E-rate Invoicing Rules

On December 10, 2020, the FCC released an Order (FCC 20-178) that amends E-rate Program invoicing rules for revised funding commitments issued as a result of an approved post-commitment request or an appeal that has been granted. For detailed information, please refer to the Order.

## PQA Requests for Information Are Going Out

The 2021 Payment Quality Assurance (PQA) assessment program is underway. PQA is a program that assesses E-rate payments made on invoices submitted during the past 12 months to verify that the payments were properly made – in other words, that all program rules were followed correctly when the payment was authorized and disbursed.

For disbursements made each month, a certain number of payments will be chosen, and applicants will be asked to provide specific documentation – for example, customer bills that support invoices submitted to USAC – to verify that those payments were made correctly. It is important that you maintain proper documentation in order to be able to respond correctly and completely to PQA requests.

The email requests notifying applicants whose payments have been selected for PQA review were issued beginning the third week of November from the sender **PQA@USACcms.i-sight.com**. Please check your email and respond promptly if you receive an email from USAC's PQA Program. Also check your spam

folder or junk email folder to see if it contains an email from this domain. This will help expedite your review.

- Do not hesitate to contact your reviewer if you have questions. Contact information is provided in the email.
- Also, contact your PQA reviewer if you are unable to respond by the deadline.

## Usability Modifications to the USAC Website

Based on usability testing conducted earlier this year, USAC has modified a few of the features on its website to improve the navigation experience.

**Clicking replaces hovering.** Before this week, a user hovered over the term "E-rate" on the USAC homepage to access the megamenu (the expanded list of available topics), moved without clicking to the topic they wanted to access, and then clicked that topic. If the user clicked the term "E-rate," they were taken to the E-rate main page.

Now, the user clicks the term "E-rate" to open the megamenu, and clicks the topic "E-rate Home" to go to the E-rate main page.

**Arrows indicate menus.** A downward pointing arrow to the right of a topic indicates that there is a menu of options that provide more detailed information. Clicking on the topic or arrow expands the menu.

An upward pointing arrow to the right of a topic indicates that the menu is already open, and clicking on that topic or arrow collapses the menu.

## Additional Information and Corrections to Recent FAQs

This week we are including some additional information and a correction to the answers we provided in the November 20 and December 4 SL News Briefs to three of the questions from the November 5 and 6 training presentations.

**E-rate Pre-Commitment Process** (from November 5 training presentation)

**Q. What factors do I need to consider if I am signing an addendum to my original contract with my service provider?**

A. In general, your contract and contract addendum must be signed before you submit your FCC Form 471.

If you signed a multi-year contract with your service provider, and you want to sign an addendum to request a higher bandwidth, for example, you must have included the option for increasing your bandwidth in your FCC Form 470 and/or RFP documents so that other service providers also had a chance to submit responsive bids. Even so, we recommend that you sign your addendum before you submit your FCC Form 471 for the upcoming funding year.

**Additional information:** Here are some additional reminders about signing an addendum to a contract:

- Be sure to include the higher bandwidth options you requested on your FCC Form 470 and RFP documents – including pricing – in your original contract.

- Contracts cannot be open-ended; they must be for a set number of years. You can sign a contract with one or more voluntary extensions, but when the original term of the contract is set to expire, you must exercise a voluntary extension before certifying your FCC Form 471 if you and your service provider agree to continue service.
- Verify that any changes that the addendum makes to the original contract are within the scope of the original FCC Form 470 and RFP documents.

**Eligible Services** (from November 6 training presentation)

**Q. My service provider wants to finish installation of the equipment necessary to provide my Category One service and turn on the recurring service on May 1 preceding the funding year for testing purposes. Is this allowable?**

A. Yes, as long as the advance installation meets E-rate Program requirements. However, the applicant is responsible for the full cost of the recurring services delivered before the funding year begins (i.e., before July 1).

**Additional information:** If the funding request is for leased lit fiber, leased dark fiber, self-provisioned fiber, or an equivalent technology for which special construction is requested, USAC will not pay discounts on the special construction charges if the recurring service is turned on before July 1 of the funding year. The Commission rules provide that the actual start date for a recurring service that includes construction services must begin on or after the start date of the funding year (July 1).

**EPC Administrative Window** (from November 6 training presentation)

**Q. What do I enter in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Base Year field?**

**Correction:** The bullet for a school that participates in CEP should read as follows:

- For a school that participates in CEP, enter the **Total Number of Students** and choose the "Yes" radio button to the left of the "Community Eligibility Provision?" text on the school's EPC profile page, then provide the appropriate entries in the **CEP Percentage** and **CEP Base Year** fields. EPC will use this information to calculate the appropriate entry for the **Total Number of Students Eligible for NSLP** field.

We have corrected the answer for this question in the archived version of the SL News Brief.

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