Schools and Libraries
NEWS BRIEF

TIP OF THE WEEK: If you have not yet filed your FCC Form 486 for FY2013, you should do so promptly. Remember, however, that before you can file this form, you must have received an FCDL with a positive funding commitment, your services must have started, and you must be able to accurately make all of the certifications on the form.

Commitments for Funding Years 2013, 2012, and 2011

Funding Year 2013. USAC will release Funding Year (FY) 2013 Wave 27 Funding Commitment Decision Letters (FCDLs) November 20. This wave includes commitments for approved Priority 1 (Telecommunications Services and Internet Access) requests at all discount levels. As of November 15, FY2013 commitments total over $1.33 billion and encompass 29,393 of FY2013 applications.

Funding Year 2012. USAC will release FY2012 Wave 69 FCDLs November 21. This wave includes commitments for approved Priority 2 (Internal Connections and Basic Maintenance) requests at 90 percent and denials at 89 percent and below. As of November 15, FY2012 commitments total over $2.81 billion.

Funding Year 2011. USAC will release FY2011 Wave 104 FCDLs November 19. This wave includes commitments for approved Priority 2 (Internal Connections and Basic Maintenance) requests at 88 percent and denials at 87 percent and below. As of November 15, FY2012 commitments total just under $2.64 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.

APPLICATION PROCESS: Technology Planning

A technology plan is a written document that describes the technologies and associated resources, both existing and planned, that will assist a school to provide educational services or a library to provide library services.

Beginning with FY2011, technology plans are required only for Priority 2 services – i.e., Internal Connections and/or Basic Maintenance of Internal Connections.

- Under certain limited conditions, equipment may be eligible as Priority 1. However, if USAC must move a funding request for such equipment from Priority 1 to Priority 2 Internal Connections during application review because it doesn't meet all of those conditions, a technology plan is required. Please refer to the website guidance document On-premise Priority 1 Equipment for more information.

The basic requirements of a technology plan are listed below. Note that service providers should not write or assist in the writing of a technology plan.

- It must be created (written) before the FCC Form 470 is filed.
- It must cover all 12 months of the funding year for which you are applying or cover at least part of the upcoming funding year and be revised before it expires.
- It must contain all required elements (see below).

- It must be approved by a USAC-certified Technology Plan Approver (TPA) before the FCC Form 486 is filed or services start, whichever is earlier.
- We recommend that it not cover more than three years.

Let's look at each of these in turn.

The technology plan must be created before the FCC Form 470 is filed.

Your technology plan must form the basis for the products and services you are seeking on your FCC Form 470 and the products and services you subsequently order on your FCC Form 471. The products and services you request on your FCC Form 470 must therefore be consistent with your technology plan. Your technology plan should be specific enough to allow you to achieve your goals and strategies for providing educational or library services, but flexible enough that you can consider different available technologies to attain those goals.

The technology plan written before the FCC Form 470 filing is not necessarily the final version of your technology plan, nor the version that will eventually be approved by your TPA. It should, however, be far enough along in its development that it can reasonably support your requests for discounted products and/or services. In addition, we recommend that you document the date that you created your technology plan since this information may be requested during review of your FCC Form 486. The creation date is defined as the date your technology plan first contained all of the required elements in sufficient detail to support the products or services requested on your FCC Form 470.

NOTE: Currently approved plans that cover at least part of the upcoming funding year and support the services that will be requested on the FCC Form 471 meet this requirement. Also, an applicant that purchases services from a state master contract and cites the associated state-filed FCC Form 470 on the funding request is not required to have a written technology plan before the state filed its FCC Form 470.

The technology plan must cover all 12 months of the funding year.

Internal Connections and Basic Maintenance of Internal Connections products and services that are received during the funding year must be covered by the technology plan. Because services are usually received during the entire funding year, the technology plan must cover the entire funding year.

If your current technology plan expires before the end of the funding year for which you are applying, you can still obtain services under that existing technology plan if it covers part of the upcoming funding year, but you must revise the plan before it expires.

The technology plan must contain all of the required elements.

The required elements are:

- Goals and strategies for using telecommunications and information technology
- A professional development strategy
- An assessment of telecommunications services, hardware, software, and other services needed
- An ongoing evaluation process
- Budget resources [Beginning with FY2011, this element is not required.]

Your technology plan should address each of these elements at a level of detail appropriate to the size of your entity. For example, the technology plan for a one-room rural library with a single router would be much shorter and simpler than the technology plan for a large urban library with 20 branches and the internal connections equipment required to provide service to all of the branches.

The technology plan must be approved by a USAC-certified Technology Plan Approver (TPA).

USAC certifies certain entities to approve technology plans. In general, state departments of education and state libraries can approve plans. Other agencies can approve technology plans for non-public and other entities, such as diocesan schools or special libraries.

You can access a list of agencies that are certified to approve technology plans using the Technology Plan Approver Locator tool in the Search Tools section of the USAC website. You should not submit your plan to an approver who is not certified by USAC to approve plans for your state or entity type. If you cannot find an appropriate approver for your state or entity type, use the email link on the TPA locator web page or Submit a Question (choose "Technology Planning" from the Topic Inquiry menu and then "I can't find my Tech Plan Approver on your website") to ask USAC for help in locating an approver.

The technology plan must be approved before services start. However, because some applicants are eligible to file an FCC Form 486 early if they meet certain requirements, the technology plan must be approved before the FCC Form 486 filing if that form is filed before services have started.

The technology plan should not cover more than three years.

New technologies and services develop and change rapidly. Funding can be reduced or increased. Staff changes can lead to modifications of organizational goals. For these and other reasons, technology plans can become out-of-date in a relatively short period of time. Consequently, we recommend that your technology plan not cover more than three years. However, we recognize that in certain situations a technology plan may be in effect for longer than three years, such as:

- State five-year plans required by the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) meet E-rate requirements for state library agencies applying for discounts.
- School five-year plans required by the U.S. Department of Education's Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) program meet E-rate requirements.

For more information on all aspects of technology planning, start with Step 1: Technology Planning on the USAC website.