

## SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES PROGRAM

# NEWS BRIEF

May 6, 2016

**TIP OF THE WEEK:** Currently, the busiest times at the Client Service Bureau (CSB) are from 11:00 am – 12:30 pm EDT and 2:30 pm – 4:00 pm EDT. Calling outside of these windows will speed up your time to response. CSB is open from 8:00 am – 10:00 pm EDT on weekdays and from 10:00 am – 4:00 pm EDT on weekends. To reach CSB, call (888) 203-8100 or submit a customer service case through EPC.

### Overview of the Invoicing Process that Starts July 1, 2016

Starting July 1, 2016, the invoicing process for the E-rate Program will be conducted entirely online. To prepare for this, we are providing an overview of how the invoicing process will work. As additional details become available, we will continue to provide updates on specific aspects of the process.

Unless specifically referred to by form name, when we use the word "invoices" below, it applies to both the FCC Form 472, Billed Entity Applicant Reimbursement (BEAR) Form and the FCC Form 474, Service Provider Invoice (SPI) Form.

At a high level, here are the main features of the invoicing process. Note that some of these features carry over from the past and continue to be in effect:

- **New:** All invoices for all funding years will be submitted online. USAC will no longer accept paper invoice forms.
- However, electronic invoicing for service providers – that is, invoice data submitted in bulk using a comma-delimited file – will continue to be available.
- USAC must have an FCC Form 473, Service Provider Annual Certification (SPAC) Form, on file for a funding year before invoices will be paid for that funding year.
- **New:** Service providers will no longer receive approved BEAR funds and then pass them on to the applicant. Applicants who file BEAR Forms will be paid directly into their bank accounts via the ACH payment method. Service providers will no longer review and approve BEAR Forms.
- **New:** Applicants must file an FCC Form 498, Service Provider and Billed Entity Identification Number and Contact Information Form, with USAC in order for USAC to be able to make direct payments to them.

### FCC Form 498

Applicants who intend to use the direct BEAR payment process must file FCC Form 498 through the E-rate Productivity Center (EPC) to obtain a 498 ID. The 498 ID is a separate number from the Billed Entity Number (BEN). This form provides the banking information necessary to electronically transfer the approved funds to the applicant. USAC must have an FCC Form 498 that has been reviewed, approved, and on file before a direct BEAR payment can be made.

Applicants who file BEAR Forms on or after July 1 will receive a remittance statement, detailing the amount requested on the BEAR Form and the amount approved for payment by USAC. The remittance statement will replace the BEAR Notification Letter. Remember that USAC cannot process a payment if a service provider has not filed an FCC Form 473 or the applicant has not filed an FCC Form 498.

### SPAC Form

The SPAC Form for service providers will be available through the [E-file System](#), not through EPC. Service providers can log in to this system as usual, and they will see "SPAC Forms" as an option.

Note that USAC will not process any paper SPAC Forms for FY2016. After the SPAC Form is available in the E-file System, paper SPAC Forms will not be processed for any funding year, and service providers will have all funding years available in the funding year dropdown options when they file SPAC Forms online.

The current [Search for SPIN Information tool](#) will include "2016" as an entry in the "SPAC Filed" column after the online form becomes available for FY2016, and will appear for each SPIN that has a SPAC on file with USAC for FY2016.

### **BEAR Form**

Starting July 1, applicants will file BEAR Forms online for all funding years without the requirement for service provider review and approval. Paper forms postmarked on or after July 1 will not be processed. Applicants will still need a Personal Identification Number (PIN) to file a BEAR Form as they do currently. If you have a PIN now, you can use that PIN. If not, you can obtain a PIN by filing a paper BEAR Form on or before June 30, 2016.

BEAR Forms filed either online or on paper before July 1 will continue to be processed as they are currently – paper BEAR Forms must include page 4 completed by the service provider, and BEAR Forms filed online must be reviewed and approved by the service provider. Online BEAR Forms that are in the system and have not been approved by the service provider on or before June 30 will be canceled.

We encourage applicants who haven't filed their BEAR Forms by June 1 to wait until July 1 to file. Under the current process, service providers must wait at least 14 days for funds to be transferred after USAC provides the approval notification, and they then have 20 business days to forward those funds to the applicant. This will add unnecessary administrative complexity for applicants, and the process will be simpler after July 1.

### **SPI Form**

Starting July 1, service providers will no longer have the option of filing SPI Forms on paper. The processes for filing SPI Forms online and for invoicing USAC electronically will remain essentially the same.

### **Electronic notifications**

In the past, service providers have had the option to receive notifications from USAC on paper, electronically, or both. Starting with the Receipt Acknowledgment Letter (RAL), service providers will receive most notifications through EPC. **Beginning with FY2016, letters will no longer be printed and mailed. Instead, letters will appear in the service provider's News feed, and the information formerly provided electronically will be available in EPC.** However, remittance statements will continue to be issued as they are currently.

Below is a description of the RAL process in EPC for service providers.

Service provider RALs in EPC are generally issued once a week, and only if one or more FCC Forms 471 featuring the service provider's SPIN are certified by applicants in that week. The RAL appears in the service provider's **News** tab.

**TIP:** Rather than combing through the items in the **News** tab, service providers can go first to their EPC profile and choose the "News" item from the left-hand menu. This news feed is limited to postings specifically for that SPIN.

To access the RAL information that in the past was pushed out to the service providers, follow these steps:

- Log in to EPC.
- Click the **Actions** tab, then choose "Search and Export Certified FCC Form 471 Funding Request(s)."
- Enter your SPIN in the "Service Provider (SPIN)" field and click the green "Submit" button.
- Scroll to the bottom of the screen and click the green "Export Search Results" button.
- The system will prepare your file and send you an email when it is ready.
- After you receive the email, click on the **Tasks** menu.
- You can then download your file in .CSV format.

We will post additional information on service provider notifications on our website shortly.

### Last Week in "File Along with Me":

- How to view your C2 budget in EPC. [Read More](#)
- Complete, review, and certify your FCC Form 471. [Read More](#)

"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](#)

### Commitments for Funding Years 2015 and 2014

**Funding Year 2015.** USAC will release Funding Year (FY) 2015 Wave 49 on May 12. This wave includes commitments for approved requests for all service types and at all discount levels. As of May 6, FY2015 commitments total over \$3.26 billion.

**Funding Year 2014.** USAC will release FY2014 Wave 81 FCDLs on May 11. This wave includes commitments for approved Priority 1 (Telecommunications Services and Internet Access) requests at all discount levels. As of May 6, FY2014 commitments total over \$2.28 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.

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