

**E-rate Information Memorandum for E-rate Year 17
(School year 2013-2014, Federal fiscal year 2013)**

The E-rate application process for funding year 2014 (SY 2013-2014) is upon us.

USAC has now enabled online filing for Funding Year (FY) 2014 for the FCC Form 470, Description of Services Requested and Certification Form. (As a reminder, the first day of FY2014 is July 1, 2014) Applicants must file a new Form 470 for any existing month-to-month services (telephone, cell phone, Internet Access, etc.) and for new request for contracted services.

Applicants are encouraged to file immediately to avoid congestion commonly associated with last minute filers. Additionally, those applicants seeking assistance from the IAIT E-rate team should request help as soon as possible. The IAIT E-rate team has limited availability.

The Form 471 application-filing window for Funding Year 2014 has not been announced yet, but will likely begin near the middle of February 2014 and end in middle March 2014. During last year's funding window, it opened February 14, 2013 and ended on March 14, 2013.

In July, President Obama announced the ConnectED initiative aimed at connecting all schools to the digital age. The ConnectED initiative seeks to connect schools and libraries serving 99 percent of students to next-generation high-capacity broadband (with speeds of no less than 100 Mbps and a target speed of 1 Gbps) and to provide high-capacity wireless connectivity within those schools and libraries within five years. President Obama has called on the Commission to modernize and leverage the E-rate program to help meet those targets.

On July 23, 2013, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) seeking comment on ways to comprehensively modernize E-rate, including improving the efficiency and administration of the program through three goals:

1. Ensuring schools and libraries have affordable access to 21st Century broadband that supports digital learning
2. Maximizing the cost-effectiveness of E-rate funds
3. Streamlining the administration of the E-rate program.

The BIA E-rate team is reviewing this document and will provide comment to the FCC by September 16, 2013. It is apparent this NPRM will require changes to some E-rate process and eligible services.

Note: Schools wishing more information are welcomed to visit the link on the FCC website at <http://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-launches-update-e-rate-broadband-schools-libraries>.

Meanwhile, keep the following in mind:

- You can and should file your FCC Form 470(s) now if you are ready to do so
- File your Form 470 and all forms online—this is one of the initiatives inside the NPRMT. Do not use the method of filling out paper forms and mailing them in.
- You must wait 28 days after the FCC Form 470 is POSTED to the USAC website before you can close your competitive bidding process, select a service provider, sign a contract (if applicable), and submit an FCC Form 471.
- You must wait 28 days after the FCC Form 470 is POSTED to the USAC website before filing your Form 471 for current month-to-month services (telephone, cell phone, Internet Access, etc.).
- If you fill your Form 470 out now (early), you can fill out your Form 471—but must wait until the first filing day to do so.
- Item 21 attachments to the FCC Form 471 **must be submitted** by the close of the filing window – have them ready to file when you file the Form 471.
- You can find additional program guidance documents in the [Reference Area](#) of the USAC website.

Traditionally, a high percentage of Forms 471 arrive at USAC during the final week that the window is open. The Schools and Libraries Division (SLD) urges you to file early so that:

- You have an opportunity to review your work and make corrections if necessary.
- You can re-file your form if an error you made cannot be corrected.
- USAC/SLD has your information and can start reviewing your application.

The SLD also urges applicant to file online because:

- The system notifies you of possible errors and allows you to correct them.
- The system does your calculations for you.
- You can review your information online before you submit it.
- Your information is submitted to us quickly and correctly.
- Applications are reviewed and approved in logical order; last minute filers receive are usually approved last.

Overview of Changes or Updates

1. Technology Plan Information

- **BIE Operated Schools** – The BIE and all BIE Operated Schools use the BIE Master Technology Plan for purposes of E-rate. This plan and approval documents are available for those who wish a copy by emailing the E-rate Team

at erate@bia.gov. BIE Operated Schools do not need to have a technology plan for the purposes of E-rate but need to maintain a school IT Assessment and inventory.

- **New Technology Plan Rules** – Technology plans are required for all Tribal/Contract/Grant schools who are applying for Priority 2 Services only for E-rate Year 14 and beyond. Priority 2 Service includes Basic Maintenance of Internal Connections and Internal Connections. See the SLD website for more information on service types at <http://www.usac.org/sl/applicants/step06/eligible-services-framework.aspx>. Submit technology plans through the BIE E-rate team at erate@bia.gov in MS Word Format only. Templates are available through the E-rate team.
 - Budget is no longer tech plan element.
 - A written tech plan is needed prior to posting Form 470, if Priority 2 services are not addressed in the existing tech plan (e.g., requesting servers, routers).
 - A revised tech plan is not needed prior to posting Form 470, if an existing approved tech plan is in place which covers a portion of the upcoming funding year.
 - Must have approved tech plan prior to the start of service or when the Form 486 is submitted whichever is earlier.

BIE Consortium Applications – Each year, the BIE E-rate team applies for high level funding to support the BIE Verizon Global Circuit contract. The BIE Data Circuit consortium has allowed increased bandwidth for schools during a period of declining budgets. School participation is the key factor determining the level of discount and amount of reimbursement for schools. These consortium applications are not individual school applications but include schools that use a **BIE provided circuit**.

BIE-operated schools are automatically part of this consortium. BIE Contract / Grant schools using a BIE (ENAN) circuit must grant the BIA E-rate team permission to include them on the consortium. BIE Contract / Grant schools using a third-party circuit and a BIE circuit for Internet access are not allowed to be on the consortium because E-rate does not allow applicants to be on circuits under two or more contracts. School participation is the key factor determining the level of discount and amount of reimbursement for schools. Participation in this consortium is necessary for a Contract / Grant school to receive additional bandwidth through ENAN.

To reduce costs to the BIE, each school is required to support the consortium by providing information upon request. This information may include:

- National School and Lunch Free and Reduced data (NSLP). This includes the number of school total enrollment and the number of students receiving free or reduced lunches from total enrollment. This data is only valid if obtained through the state NSLP sponsor or other approved government method. In most cases, the

E-rate team will already have your data through working with the state education departments.

- Select Schools will be requested to sign a Letter of Agency and Child Internet Protection Act acknowledging their participation in the BIE Consortium Application for Internet Circuit discounts and CIPA.
- Schools that do not have a BIE provided circuit do not need to participate in this process.
- Schools with a BIE circuit are required to participate in this process or face the chance of losing their BIE Circuit.
- A request for these documents is forthcoming.

Applicant Checklist

Pre-Application Process:

- Please make sure your school's contact information is correct. The phone number for the SLD Client Service Bureau is 1-888-203-8100.
- Make sure your technology plan covers the complete upcoming funding Year 2014-2015 (1 July 2014 through 30 June 2015). This is referred to as E-rate Year 17 because it is the 17th year the FCC has provided funding through E-rate.
- Verify that your technology plan has the required elements, was written, and includes the names of the authors and required dates. Contact the E-rate team for a template of current technology plan documents.
- Please note that the technology plan must be written before you file your Form 470 and anything you include on your Form 470 must be reflected in the technology plan.

Form 470 and Competitive Bidding:

- Do not permit a service provider who wants to bid on your services to fill out the Form 470. In fact, schools are not permitted to talk with service providers about the bid assessment process in any way.
- File your Form 470 as early as possible; do not wait until the Form 471 window opens to file the Form 470.
- Certify your Form 470 prior to the close of the Form 471 application window (theoretically mid-February).
- Ensure that a fair and open competitive bidding process occurs. All service providers must be treated equally and cannot be given biased or privileged knowledge of the bid.
 - "Open" means that there are no secrets in the process and that all bidders have equal access to the same information.
 - "Fair" means that all bidders are treated the same and that no bidder has privileged knowledge of the contents of the Request for Proposal (RFP) or the Form 470.
- Select the most cost-effective service provider that meets your specifications. Price must be the primary factor in the decision-making process.

- Keep all records relating to the bid evaluation process (winning and losing bids, worksheets, evaluation criteria and contract). Note in a letter to the record if one (or no) bids are received.
- Do not sign a contract until after the Form 470 has been posted for a minimum of 28 days. However, contracts must be signed and dated by both parties before filing the Form 471 and on or after the Allowable Contract Date.
- BIE – Operated Schools are required to use the BID Assessment and Evaluation document provided by the BIE E-rate Team.

Form 471:

- Verify that services ordered match the category requested on the correct Form 470.
- File separate Form 471 applications for Priority 1 services and Priority 2 services; see the www.universalservice.org web site for details and explanation of the types of services.
- Complete the Item 21 Attachment (include the pre-discount prices of the required services) and file it no later than the Form 471 deadline. Late Item 21 attachments push everything back for your school and can result in denied funding.
- Split out requests for items that have questionable eligibility. Items of questionable eligibility should be split out into separate Funding Request Numbers (FRNs).
- Check the math; the Form 471 and the Item 21 attachment total should match.
- File electronically and certify online before the close of the Form 471 window (Date TBD).
- Keep a record of the postmark or electronic submission.

For additional information, please use the USAC resources listed below:

- Form 470 questions: <http://www.usac.org/sl/applicants/step03/form470-filing-information.aspx>
- Calculating discount levels: <http://www.usac.org/sl/applicants/step05>
- Form 471 questions: <http://www.usac.org/sl/applicants/step07>

Questions should be directed to the E-rate Team at erate@bia.gov