



**ISSUE: #15-01**  
**DATED: 01/23/2015**

## **SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES 2015 E-RATE FUNDING YEAR BIDDING PROCESS**

USAC has opened the Schools and Libraries E-rate Program Form 471 filing window allowing applicants to continue the process of obtaining funding commitment decisions from USAC for the 2015 Schools and Libraries funding year beginning July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016. The Form 471 funding window closes at midnight on March 26, 2015.

GVNW believes that it is important that Telecommunications Service Providers understand the bidding process for the E-rate Program in order to review requests for competitive bids for services by Schools and Libraries in their service area and submit competitive bids for these requested services. In addition, the Federal Communications Commission has new rules that have modernized the E-rate program and now requires all High- Cost Support recipients to bid on contracts for services that they are able to provide to Schools and Libraries in their service territory if they are not already doing so. An overview of the E-rate Program's modernization reforms and new guidelines can be viewed at <http://www.usac.org/sl/tools/modernization-order/default.aspx>.

### **How the Funding Cycle and Bidding Process work**

As in the past, applicants for Schools and Libraries funding have or will post a Form 470 to the USAC Schools and Libraries website stating what services they are seeking competitive bids for service for the upcoming funding year.

- Service Providers then have at least 28 days after the Form 470 has been posted to view the competitive request for services, and then submit bids for new services to the Schools and Libraries utilizing the contact information and specifications outlined on the Form 470. Form 470 Applications can be found using the search tool provided at [http://www.slforms.universalservice.org/Form470Expert/Search\\_FundYear\\_Select.aspx](http://www.slforms.universalservice.org/Form470Expert/Search_FundYear_Select.aspx).
- After a Service Provider's bid has been reviewed, the School or Library (the "Applicant") will notify the Service Provider that their bid has been accepted and then will file the Form 471 with USAC.
- The Form 471 notifies USAC a Service Provider has been selected for each service

outlined on the Form 470, and what the cost of the service will be in order for USAC to award funding to the applicant. After the Form 471 has been approved the Service Provider will receive a Notice of Approved Funding Letter in the mail and, thereafter, it can continue with finalizing contracts and the installation of the new service.

### **The Bidding Process**

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Because of changes to the Form 471 due to the modernization, many applicants are creating their own bidding template that needs to be used by service providers when submitting bids to offer new services to a School or Library applicant. In addition, Telecommunications Service Providers should note the following:

- If you are already providing service to an applicant and no changes occur to the services you provide, many applicants opt to post the Form 470 as a formality and automatically populate their Form 471 with your information as the provider for that line item. Therefore, a bid is not required for these services.
- If a bid is required it is important to contact the applicant via the information listed on their Form 470 to find out if they have a bid template they wish you to use.
- If no template is required, it is best, and recommended by USAC, that service Providers format their bids in a way that follows the Form 470 and Form 471 line items which will easily allow the applicant to fill in the Form 471. This will aid in the speedy processing of the form so applicants and service providers can continue on with the funding cycle application requirements.
- To help you formulate a bid USAC has provided a recommended bidding matrix <http://www.usac.org/res/documents/sl/pdf/samples/Bid-Evaluation-Matrix.pdf>.

If your company has not already done so, now is a good opportunity to reach out to the Schools and Libraries in your service area or to review the posted Form 470 Applications to ensure that your company reviews any request for competitive bids for service in your service area and submits bids on them. GVNW can assist your company by reviewing posted Form 470 Applications in your service area and by assisting you in making competitive bids on any services requested by a School or Library.

For any assistance relating to the E-rate bidding process, please contact your consultant or Ashlea Kenalty at (830) 895-7240, [akenalty@gvnw.com](mailto:akenalty@gvnw.com).