FCC INITIATIVES UPDATE

ECF, EBB/ACP & E-RATE

Working Together for a Better Tomorrow

PASBO

67th PASBO ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXHIBITS
March 8-11, 2022 • HERSHEY Lodge

PASBO 67th Annual Conference and Exhibits

EMERGENCY CONNECTIVITY FUND (ECF)

- $7.17 billion one-time pandemic initiative

- Provided 100% funding for laptops/tablets (up to $400 each) and internet access/hotspots for students and teachers with unmet needs while not on school campus

- 274 PA schools/libraries applied in FY 2021
  - Requested $132m/$76.6m committed so far
  - 241,000 laptops and 65,000 internet plans requested

ECF CHALLENGES

- **Invoicing**
  - Must submit vendor invoice, proof of payment, and proof of shipping or receipt
  - Most BEAR reimbursement requests are missing data

- **Unmet Needs Certifications**
  - Must collect these from beneficiaries of equipment/services
  - ECF audits underway and these will be requested
  - http://e-ratepa.org/?p=33555 for samples

FUTURE OF ECF

- Due to processing delays and supply chain challenges, the FCC recently amended rules to extend FY 2021 funding year so applicants have until June 30, 2023 to:
  - Receive laptops/tablets
  - Utilize full recurring services' commitments, up to 12 months
  - Does not extend network buildout timeline
- Window 3 for FY 2022 (7/1/2022 – 6/30/2023)?
  - $700 million remains. Likely another $500 million will be unused
  - Another window is likely, although rules of priority could be adjusted

EMERGENCY BROADBAND BENEFIT (EBB)

- On January 1, 2022, temporary EBB became permanent <u>Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)</u>

- Provides $30/month subsidies for internet to low-income homes
  - There is also a one-time $100 subsidy for a connected device w/small copayment

- Families with at least one student attending a CEP school automatically qualify for ACP benefits, even if the household doesn't meet the income requirements

- <u>Toolkit</u> available with helpful flyers and marketing materials

E-RATE UPDATE

- FY 2022 Form 471 application window closes March 22
  - 973 FRNs submitted as of 3/9 – 67% in 'wave ready' status
  - Wave 1 expected mid-April
  - Use the <u>Helpful Documents</u> on <u>www.e-ratepa.org</u> website
- Category 2 equipment can be purchased as early as April 1
  - Cannot seek reimbursement until July 1
- C2 supply chain issues from FY 2021? Request SDDE for extra year
- Category 2 budget cycle = FY 2021 – 2025
  - C2 budget tool - <u>https://opendata.usac.org/E-rate/E-Rate-C2-Budget-Tool-FY2021-/8z69-hkn7</u>

FCC BIDDING PORTAL PROPOSAL

- FCC proposing nationwide E-rate bidding portal beginning with FY 2024

- **Mandated Bidding Portal**: Service providers will be required to submit bids to a USAC portal and would be prohibited from submitting bids directly to schools/libraries or other parties

  - Bids would be withheld from schools/libraries until the Form 470 Allowable Contract Date (29 days after the Form 470 is posted) and then released to the applicant for bid evaluation

- **Public, Restricted Vendor Communication**: All correspondence with bidders will be done (anonymously and publicly) in the portal

  - No other vendor communication will be permitted

- **Required Documentation Submission to USAC**: Applicants will be required to upload the following into the bidding portal before submitting the Form 471:

  - ✓ Completed bid evaluation worksheets or matrices;
  - ✓ Explanation for any disqualified bids;
  - ✓ List of people who evaluated the bids
  - ✓ Memos, board minutes, or similar documents related to the service provider selection/award;
  - ✓ Any correspondence with the service providers prior to and during the competitive bidding, evaluation, and award phase of the process

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COMMENTING TO THE FCC

- More details at: http://e-ratepa.org/?p=34040
- Strongly encourage school officials to file comments with the FCC
  - Even brief comments will be helpful
- https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/filings
  - Use 21-455 as proceeding
- Comments:
  - Conflict with state/local bidding policies/laws
  - Added burden on school officials
  - Anti-collusion, bid protest processes already in place
- Comments due March 28, but 30-day extension has been requested

STAYING CURRENT…

- If you are not on Julie's E-rate listserve, subscribe now:
  - Send e-mail to jtschell@comcast.net
  - Even if you use a consulting firm to handle your E-rate work
  - I send E-rate, ECF, and ACP updates, along with lists of who has forms due
- E-rate Data Tools:

  https://opendata.usac.org/stories/s/E-rate-Tools/bneq-mh8b/

Questions?