

New Mexico K-12 Connectivity Initiative 2016 Checklist

This checklist is intended for use by K-12 district level staff in New Mexico to help them navigate the process of leveraging E-rate funding to upgrade their networks to support digital learning. If you have specific questions about the E-rate process, please contact John Chadwick of the Public Education Department (PED) at john.chadwick@state.nm.us

PLANNING

July - August

- Participate in pre-project informational webinar with the New Mexico K-12 Connectivity Initiative which includes PSFA, PED, DoIT and EducationSuperHighway.
- Sign-up for an introductory call with EducationSuperHighway's New Mexico team of experts to explore your current connectivity challenges and possible solutions.
- Finalize the plan/design of consortium with assistance from members of the New Mexico K-12 Connectivity Initiative group (specifically with PED) if district is participating with other districts/agencies in a consortium application.

Sign up for an introductory call with EducationSuperHighway:
<http://tinyurl.com/nmteam>

Introductory aka "Kick-Off Calls" with PSFA and EducationSuperHighway allow for the members of the New Mexico K-12 Connectivity Initiative group to gain a clear understanding of your unique network structure, challenges and goals. Coming out of these Kick-Off Calls, EducationSuperHighway will design solutions to help you meet your goals and find providers to supply you with affordable and sustainable broadband solutions.

August

- Create E-rate Productivity Center (EPC) account

The E-rate Productivity Center (EPC) is the account and application management portal for the Schools and Libraries (E-rate) Program. Applicants, consultants, and service providers participating in the E-rate Program will use this tool to manage program processes and to submit questions. Form 470 and all other E-rate forms are submitted via EPC

Before you begin: <http://www.usac.org/sl/applicants/beforeyoubegin/default.aspx>

Link to create/log into EPC: <http://www.usac.org/sl/tools/e-rate-productivity-center/default.aspx>

Sample letter of agency: <http://www.usac.org/sl/tools/samples.aspx>

E-rate glossary of terms: http://www.usac.org/_res/documents/sl/pdf/handouts/SL-Glossary-of-Terms.pdf

Questions or challenges in creating your district's EPC account?
Contact John Chadwick at PED. John.Chadwick@state.nm.us

New Mexico K-12 Connectivity Initiative 2016 Checklist

RFP PREPARATION

August

- Review contract end date:** Check existing lit service contract end date and contract early termination clauses. A high termination fee could make changing service financially unfeasible.
- Consortium planning:** Finalize consortium if your district is participating with other districts in a consortium application e.g., identify which district/agency will take the lead and file for the group.
- BEAR Form:** Submit an FCC Form 472, Billed Entity Applicant Reimbursement (BEAR) Form, to request direct reimbursement of discount amounts.
- Service Provider and Billed Entity Identification Number and Contact Information Form:** Submit an FCC Form 498, Service Provider and Billed Entity Identification Number and Contact Information Form to provide USAC with banking account information so that USAC can electronically deposit funds. Done via EPC.
- Research**
 - Determine and document projected bandwidth needs over 5 years
 - Determine service locations/network design for a potential RFP (to be shared with providers via RFP, FCC form 470 and pre-RFP/ Form 470 release communications).
 - Determine end points of fiber runs/fiber builds and measure most expedient distances (usually along streets, roads, highways or other rights of way) in cases where special construction is potentially an attractive option e.g. when there are no lit fiber options in your area.
- Outreach**
 - Contact current provider(s) to determine portability of contract to new service.
 - Contact new providers to see if what service (at what cost and at what bandwidth) they would be able to provide to you. Inform them that quotes can be informal and will be used to inform school technology budgets and drafting of a potential RFP.
- Cost Analysis**
 - Based on quotes received, determine if dark fiber or self-provisioned fiber options should be pursued considering a long-term total cost of ownership comparison to lit fiber

Link for description on how to prepare for the Billed Entity Applicant Reimbursement Form:
<http://www.usac.org/sl/tools/news-briefs/preview.aspx?id=650>

EducationSuperHighway will perform this work on behalf of your district if you conduct a Kick-Off call with their team and provide information and documentation on your connectivity and sites.

Or consider using EducationSuperHighway's "Fiber Build vs. Buy" calculator to determine bandwidth needs and to estimate total costs of ownership for potential solutions received from providers during provider research and outreach.
<http://fibertoolkit.educationsuperhighway.org/toolkit/build-vs-buy-comparison-tools>

Use the National Broadband Map to look for broadband providers in your area (using the zip code for the physical location of the school).
<http://www.broadbandmap.com/>

Use Broadband Now to look for additional broadband providers in the area.
<http://broadbandnow.com/>

Use the WISP directory to find wireless providers
<http://wispdirectory.com/>

New Mexico K-12 Connectivity Initiative 2016 Checklist

RFP DRAFT CREATION

August - September

- Draft lit vs. dark fiber RFP:**
 - Include all State and Applicant procurement regulations
 - Include other important clauses regarding liability, confidentiality, cure for technical and non-technical breaches in contract
 - Include deadline for questions and (optional) bidders conference

- Document build-out depth:**
 - Create a list or a map that logs any railroad crossings, bridge crossings, potential lake or pond crossings, rocky soil issues, any areas where boring depths for fiber builds would need to be below 36" (some municipalities have boring requirements to lessen impacts to roads. Attach to RFP.

- Contact PSFA for a review of your RFP:**
 - The New Mexico K-12 Connectivity Initiative wants to provide as much support as possible to applicants interested in exploring special construction options. This engagement carries through to the review process.

- Contact PSFA for E-rate consultant Engagement:**
 - PSFA has contracted with an e-rate consultant for E-rate support and review of the RFP. Also training and help in filing the Form 470 and 471, along with any other forms as needed.

Contact PSFA for state approved RFP templates

USAC instructions on "Competitive Bidding": <http://www.usac.org/sl/applicants/step01/default.aspx>

Questions and requests for assistance on the drafting of your district's RFP can be directed to Eric Moores at emoores@nmpsfa.org

It is highly likely that the fiber projects being procured as part of the Broadband Deficiencies Correction Program (BDCCP) will NOT be completed by July 1, 2017. Accordingly, you will need to file E-rate funding for your existing services until the construction can be completed. We suggest you be conservative in your planning and factor in potential delays to ensure you receive the maximum E-rate discount and reduce your out of pocket expense.

Please remember that the continuation of your existing connectivity services must meet all E-rate rules including the competitive bidding requirements. We, therefore, strongly suggest that you file a Form 470 requesting bids for your existing services, if you do not have a contract that will run through the anticipated completion date of the fiber project.

RFP POSTING/OPENING OF COMPETITIVE BIDDING PROCESS

October

- Issue RFP**
- Issue Form 470**
 - There should be a single Form 470 posted for each service type. Avoid having multiple Form 470s (confusing for providers) for the same service sought by amending a single Form 470. If you accidentally create more than one Form 470 for a service type you have the ability to delete it on EPC.

- Alert providers to Form 470 posting:**
 - Contact providers contacted during previous months during pre-RFP provider outreach and research phase to let them know that form 470 has been posted. Remember that E-rate discourages Best And Final Offer (BAFO) and Negotiation processes. Vendors should be reminded that bid submissions are expected to be best and final

"Responding to Bids" USAC training for providers at

<http://www.usac.org/sl/service-providers/step02/default.aspx>

Link to search for submitted FCC Form 470s at <https://data.usac.org/publicreports/Form470Rfp/index>

New Mexico K-12 Connectivity Initiative 2016 Checklist

CLOSING OF COMPETITIVE BID PROCESS (28 DAYS AFTER RFP ISSUE DATE)

December - January

- Understand your ACD:** When you post an FCC Form 470 to the USAC website, the system calculates your Allowable Vendor Selection/Contract Date (ACD) as the date 28 days (minimum number of days but it is recommended that RFPs remain open for as long as possible to allow more time for providers to provide quality responses. The ACD is the earliest date that you can select a service provider, sign a contract (if applicable), and sign and submit your FCC Form 471.

- Designate RFP evaluation team:** Remember that roles of applicant, procurer and service provider must be separated—(Note: There can be no bidder/service provider assistance in preparation of the RFP).

- Prepare scoring criteria for RFP evaluation:** According to E-rate rules, cost must be the primary factor (the highest weighted but not necessarily the majority)

- Bid verification** - Collect bids and certify that deadline is met for each bid
 - Save digital copies of each bid received.
 - Notify Eric Moores at PSFA that your competitive bid period has closed.
 - Eric Moores will facilitate the transfer of files from the school to PSFA

Submit your FCC Form 471 : <http://www.usac.org/sl/applicants/step03/form-471.aspx>

Sample Bid Evaluation Matrix at http://www.usac.org/_res/documents/sl/pdf/samples/Bid-Evaluation-Matrix.pdf

Remember that if you receive only one bid – or no bids – after your 28-day waiting period, you can keep your competitive bidding process open and contact service providers to solicit bids.

While 28 days is the minimum number of days for a competitive bid process, it is advisable to leave bids open for 6 weeks or longer to allow time for more thoughtful responses from providers (particularly for more complicated RFPs)

Email emoores@nmpsfa.org to inform them that all bids have been received.

REVIEW RFP RESPONSES AND SELECT VENDOR(S)/DECIDE SOLUTION

January

- Evaluate RFP responses from vendors/solutions proposed in response to RFP by vendors

- Select vendor(s)/decide solution
If consortia, communicate decisions to consortia members

- Submit request for PSCOC funding from Eric Moores at PSFA to qualify for additional e-rate dollars

- Take the winning bid or contract to school board for approval.

New Mexico K-12 Connectivity Initiative 2016 Checklist

STATE MATCHING FUND APPROVAL THROUGH PSFA

February

- School Board Approval:** Inform John Chadwick at PED and Eric Moores at PSFA that you have secured school board approval of a bid via email.
 - In your email clearly state the vendor, solution type and connection speed of the winning bid.
 - Save a digital copy of your evaluation of all bids and email a copy to both John Chadwick at PED and Eric Moores at PSFA.

Email John.Chadwick@state.nm.us and emoores@nmopsfa.org to inform them that you have secured school board approval.

Complete the PSCOC application letter (Attachment A) found at <http://nmopsfa.org/it/bdcp.htm> and send to PSFA, attention Eric Moores at emoores@nmopsfa.org

FILE FCC FORM 471(S)

March

- Contract signature** (by both selected provider and school district).
- File FCC Form 471(s)**
 - Deadline end of March (can typically be submitted starting as early as mid-January)
 - Prepare total cost of ownership (TCO) narrative and financial analysis if dark or self-provisioned fiber was chosen instead of a lit fiber solution. Submit as part of 471.
 - Remember to cost allocate for any strands of fiber above and beyond 12 strands that are being used by an entity other than the district e.g. local library or city government buildings.
 - If necessary, consortia members operate mini-bids and file their own 471 forms or file a single consortia 471 form

Other forms and deadlines are summarized at <http://www.usac.org/sl/tools/deadlines/default.aspx>

Submit a copy of your Form 471 to Eric Moores at emoores@nmopsfa.org. Following the PSCOC award, an acceptance letter and memorandum of understanding (MOU) will be sent to the District. The District has 30 days to execute the acceptance letter and MOU and return it to PSFA, attention Eric Moores at emoores@nmopsfa.org

New Mexico K-12 Connectivity Initiative 2016 Checklist

SOLUTION IMPLEMENTATION: CONTRACT SIGNATURE AND RESPONSE TO ANY PIA QUESTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

April

- Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) review:** Respond to any questions and clarifications from USAC's E-rate Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) review. Must be done within 15 days of receipt of questions and clarifications from PIA.

Tip: Request 2-3 year contracts with providers to allow flexibility to switch providers and/or more aggressively re-negotiate with your current provider and avoid contract early termination fees as your bandwidth needs change and advances in technology occur that affect industry prices.

USAC overview of the Form 471 Review Process
<http://www.usac.org/sl/applicants/step04/default.aspx>

SOLUTION IMPLEMENTATION: RECEIPT OF FUNDING COMMITMENT DECISION LETTER (FCDL)

May

- Determine project timeline:** Meet/communicate with selected provider to create a project timeline for solution deployment
 - Category One service cannot have a service start date prior to July 1 of the funding year
- Funding commitment letters start going out** (continues through summer and fall)

Tip: See if the provider can provide a low or no cost back-up stop gap measure so there is no break in service in case there are delays in FCC E-rate funding releases in the Summer.

SOLUTION IMPLEMENTATION

June

- Communicate with Provider:** Continue to communicate with selected provider to ensure that project timeline is realized
- File an FCC Form 486.**
 - Form 486 is filed after the provider receives their Funding Commitment Decision Letter (FCDL) and the delivery of services has started
 - The FCC Form 486 must be certified no later than 120 days after the Service Start Date or 120 days after the date of the FCDL, whichever is later.

Make sure that all FCC forms are filed such as FCC Form 472, Billed Entity Applicant Reimbursement (BEAR) Form, to request direct reimbursement of their discount amounts and FCC Form 498. Also make sure your provider has filed all necessary forms on their side such as the FCC Form 473, Service Provider Annual Certification (SPAC) Form.

Share the following training/reference page with your chosen provider:
<http://usac.org/sl/service-providers/step03/default.aspx>

New Mexico K-12 Connectivity Initiative 2016 Checklist

SOLUTION DEPLOYMENT

July

- FCC releases E-rate funds
Implement E-rate funded project and Invoice FCC for reimbursement**
 - After USAC has processed your FCC Form 486, you or your service provider can begin the process of invoicing USAC for the discount share of the approved eligible services.
 - There are two methods that can be used to invoice USAC.
 1. Applicants file FCC Form 472
 2. Service providers file FCC Form 474, the Service Provider Invoice (SPI) Form
 - Once USAC processes an invoice for a funding request, the method of invoicing used for that particular funding request cannot change for the remainder of the invoicing process.
 - No invoices can be dated prior to July 1 of the funding year

- Project closeout and funding reimbursement request should be sent to Eric Moores at PSFA for PSCOC state matching funds.**

- Test network and complete E-rate funded project**

FCC overview of Invoicing process: <http://www.usac.org/sl/applicants/step06/default.aspx>

Tip: It is best to wait until your new Internet solution is in place and fully operational before scheduling the termination and removal of your previous Internet solution