



E-Rate Funding—Guaranteed

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Form 470 Best Practices

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Introduction

On-Tech is a technology consulting firm focused on managing the E-Rate process for schools and libraries. We provide a full range of E-Rate services for applicants, including: handling the entire application process; consulting on construction projects to ensure maximum E-Rate funding; and reviewing proposals to ensure E-Rate compliance. In addition, On-Tech obtains E-Rate funding for school and library construction projects. On-Tech is not associated with any service provider.

Dan Riordan has been involved with the E-Rate since 1997, when he was trained by the New Jersey Department of Education to offer assistance to school districts in completing the application. Since then, he has worked on the E-Rate as a trainer, a district technology coordinator, and now a consultant.

General thoughts

What is this?

Keep in mind that the Form 470 is a public request for proposals. You are required to supply enough information to allow service providers to bid, and you must consider all bids that come in for at least 28 days after the form is published.

When to File

Now. The deadline to file for 2013-2014 is February 14, 2013, but if you wait until that day, you might have a miserable day on March 14th, when you will have to evaluate all bids, select vendors, sign contracts (if necessary), and file the Form 471, all on the same day.

If you will be applying for Priority Two services, you will need a technology plan. Make sure that you have a written technology plan covering all of Funding Year 2013-2014 before filing the Form 470.

Online or Paper?

Online. If you would be more comfortable filing on paper, find someone to help you file online. There are two compelling reasons to file online:

1. When you click “Submit” on the online form, the 28 days start. If you file on paper, the 28 days start whenever your form is data-entered by the company that gets your paper form. Allow at least two weeks for that to happen, and hope there are no typos.
2. The online form catches some (but not all errors). If you file on paper, there is a chance that your form will be returned to you because some box wasn’t checked, which means

you have to fix it and resubmit, and then wait until it is data-entered before the 28 days start.

Where is the Form?

<http://www.slforms.universalservice.org/Form470Expert/criteria.aspx>

Item by Item

Block 1:

Item 1:

The “applicant” is the organization making purchasing decisions. If your library has its own budget and its own purchase orders, the library is the applicant. If the municipality makes the telecommunications purchases, then the municipality is the applicant. If you are in a situation where some services are purchased from the library, but other services are provided by the municipality, you will need two Forms 470.

Item 5a:

If your library is listed as the applicant in Item 1, check “Library.” If your municipality is listed in Item 1, then check “Consortium.”

Item 5b:

Check “Public.”

Item 5c:

This is the number of locations you will be seeking services for. Include branches, administrative offices, bookmobiles.

Item 6a:

Some considerations when choosing the contact person:

1. This person **cannot** be associated with any service provider
2. This person will get all the questions about the services requested. This person should be the most knowledgeable about telecommunications and Internet at the library, not necessarily the person approving the purchase orders.
3. The information provided is very public. Anyone with access to the Internet can collect the name and contact info for the person listed on the form. Forever.

Item 6c:

Consider creating a throwaway email address to put on this form for two reasons:

1. It makes it easy to collect all correspondence with bidders.
2. Unscrupulous companies do harvest email addresses from the Form 470 and send out spam unrelated to what you posted on the 470. This email address is publicly available on the Web and by download. Forever.

Be sure to check that email address frequently for at least the first 28 days after filing the 470. After that, once you close the bidding and select a vendor, you can ignore any mail to that box.

Item 7:

Put On-Tech Consulting in here. Even if you manage to complete the form without our help, better safe than sorry. Since “consultant” is not well defined, even this Webinar is potentially makes us a consultant.

Block 2:**Item 8 or Item 9?**

It doesn't matter any more. The FCC has removed the distinction between Telecommunications Services and Internet Access, so you can use either item, or both if you prefer.

Item 8a and 8b:

If you plan to release more detailed information on your requirements, check 8a, otherwise check 8b. Note that in the E-Rate program, any information beyond what is on the 470 is an “RFP,” and must be provided to all potential bidders.

Services

Make sure to give enough information for service providers to make a bid. For example, listing “Internet service” under Service and “for entire library system” under Quantity is not sufficient. Include how many connections and what bandwidth you will need.

Item 12:

Why would you want another person spammed? The most knowledgeable person should be in Item 6.

Item 13:

I have not heard of any application being denied for this item, but it would be safer to check the first box and say “All purchases must comply with Colorado state law.”

Item 15:

This is a list of Billed Entities, not locations, not organizations. Only entities that will be writing checks to pay for services should fill this out. Depending on what you checked in Item 5a, this item may not appear in the online form.

Item 16:

Check B.

Item 17:

Unless you are applying for Priority Two services, you should check the second box.

Items 18-24:

Check all the boxes.

Item 27:**Who should certify?**

The form should be certified by the person who will eventually sign the purchase order and the checks. Note that the information in Item 27 is **not** published on the Web, so feel free to use real email addresses.

Paper or online certification?

If you already have a PIN, then certify online if you like. If not, don't worry. The 28-day bidding period starts when you click "Submit"; the certification page does not have to be submitted until the Form 471 is submitted.

If you don't have a PIN, click on paper certification button, print the pages, sign and date them, and mail them in. There is no hurry (unless you waited until the last minute to submit). After the certification page is received, you will automatically be issued a PIN, which you can certify later forms online. Keep the PIN; it's a good thing to have for filing the later forms.

Whose PIN is it?

The PIN you receive is like your signature, you cannot share it with anyone else, or let someone else borrow it. It is also unique to the current BEN. So if you move to a new library, you will need a new PIN.

After you File**Save all Emails**

You may be asked to provide copies of any correspondence between you and any service providers who contact you about your Form 470. Save those emails, or print and file them.

Save all Bids

If you are audited, which could take place any time in the next 5 years, you will be asked to provide copies of all bids, including losing bids.

Answer Questions

Be careful with this one. You shouldn't have to answer any questions, since the Form 470 should include enough information for bidders. But you should respond to any reasonable requests for information. **Be sure** that any answers to questions are provided to **all** potential bidders, not just the bidder that asked the question. For this reason, I only answer written questions, and I only answer in writing.

Save your Evaluation

You should save documentation about the evaluation process you used. The best practice is to create a matrix of weighted criteria, like the one at:

<http://www.universalservice.org/res/documents/sl/pdf/samples/Bid-Evaluation-Matrix.pdf>

If you received only one bid, write a memo to the file stating that you only received one bid.

More Resources

On-Tech

www.on-tech.com/erate

This handout and other E-Rate information and links are available at our Web site.

blog.on-tech.com

For a more informal discussion of the E-Rate, visit our blog. You can search for a topic of interest to you and get an insider's view.

If you have specific questions, contact us.

Email: info@on-tech.com

Phone: 732-530-5435

Schools & Libraries Division (SLD)

www.usac.org/sl

This Web site is a wealth of information, and the information is official. Start by pointing at the light blue "Schools and Library Applicants" button, and selecting the relevant step.

File online at: <http://www.sl.universalservice.org/menu.asp>

Download paper forms at: <http://www.universalservice.org/sl/tools/required-forms.aspx>