



E-Rate Funding—Guaranteed

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Form 471 Questions and Answers

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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.

Changes in the Form 471

The FCC made several changes to the Form 471 for last funding year.

1. Block 1:
 - a. Item 3b added: FCC Registration Number
 - b. Item 5:
 - i. “Statewide application” added as an application type.
 - ii. 5b added: for libraries, check “Public”
 - c. Item 6e: Must enter email address twice; copy-and-paste doesn’t work.
 - d. Item 7: Consultant information required. For libraries on this call, enter Consultant Registration Number (CRN): 16043646, click “Search, then select “DAN RIORDAN” from drop-down, then click “Retrieve.”
2. Block 2:
 - a. No “Before” and “After”; only after
 - b. Library information moved from Block 3
 - c. More bands of Internet bandwidth
3. Block 3:
 - a. Deleted
 - b. Information requested moved to Block 2
4. Block 4:
 - a. Libraries must provide enrollment, NSLP and Urban/Rural information
 - b. Checkboxes for “New construction” and “Administrative entity” added
 - c. Checkboxes added for Pre-K, Head Start, Adult Ed, Juvenile Justice, Educational Service Agency, Dormitory; do not apply to libraries
5. Block 5: No changes
6. Block 6:
 - a. Item 26: Technology plan certifications simplified, updated to reflect new rule that tech plans are not required for Priority One services.
 - b. Item 40: Checkbox if consultant is authorizing person.
 - c. Item 42d: Must enter email address twice; copy-and-paste doesn’t work.

Application Tips

Here are a few tips to avoid common reasons for denial and to maximize funding.

Document compliance with competitive bidding rules

If you received any bids in response to your Form 470, you must consider them. In selecting a service provider, price must be the primary factor, but doesn't have to be the only factor. You can use as many factors as you like; price must be weighted more heavily than any other single factor. So you could set up evaluation criteria like this:

Criterion	Weight	Score	Weighted Score
Price	30%		
Prior experience	25%		
Personnel qualifications	20%		
Management capability	15%		
Environmental objectives	10%		
Total			

Once you have scored the applicants, put the evaluation sheets in the file and keep them for five years. Also, keep copies of all bids, winning and losing.

If you receive no bids in response to a 470, write a memo to the file saying no bids were received, that you find the current service to be cost-effective, and that you have selected your current vendor.

File online

Several common errors are caught by the online application system as you complete the form, so the chance of losing funding due to clerical errors is reduced. In addition, you cannot fail the "minimum processing standards," which means that your application will be accepted. If you file on paper, there is a risk that your entire application will be rejected because you forgot to put a zero in one of the blanks.

Plan to complete the form in several sittings.

Just as you wouldn't submit the first draft of a major report, don't try to complete and submit the form in one sitting. Complete the form, then come back another day to review and submit it.

Have others review your Form

Once you have completed the form, but before you submit it, have it reviewed by your technology and accounts payable personnel, to see that nothing has been left out, and that the amounts are correct.

Do the Item 21 Attachments before submitting the Form 471

At the heart of the Form 471 are the “Item 21 Attachments,” which are detailed descriptions of the services requested and the costs. If you prepare these attachments before you file, you will be less likely to make mistakes on the Form 471.

Make your FRNs big

If you get several bills from the same vendor each month, consider combining them into one funding request. This will simplify your bookkeeping when you file the BEAR. More importantly, it makes the funding more flexible. If your costs decline on one bill, but increase on another, they will offset each other.

PIA Tips

Once your Form 471 is filed, it will be reviewed by Program Integrity Assurance (PIA). Here are a few tips for dealing with PIA.

Your PIA reviewer is your friend

Almost every PIA reviewer I’ve worked with has been very helpful. Remember, her or his goal is the same as yours: to move your application out of review. Reviewers have a strange set of rules to follow, and their processes are supposed to remain secret, but within the confines of those rules, they’re generally very helpful.

Respond to requests from PIA

Look back at the reasons for denial: not responding to PIA requests is a frequent cause for denial. If you don’t have the information at your fingertips, say so, and ask for an extension if necessary.

Beware repetitive requests from PIA

If you send a piece of information, and your reviewer requests the same information again, the probable reason is that the answer you gave the first time was wrong or insufficient, and you’re about to lose funding. Reviewers won’t tell you if there is a problem with your application, but they will frequently request the information again, just to confirm. If a request seems repetitive, check your answer and check the rules again.

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.

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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>