

Instructions for Technology Plan Approval Process For Universal Service Fund E-Rate Discounts

Overview

Schools participating in the Universal Service Fund E-Rate Program must have an approved technology plan in order to receive the discounts. State education agencies are the preferred entity to approve these technology plans. Guidelines have been released by the Schools and Libraries Corporation (SLC) regarding the technology plan policies and procedures. To qualify as an approved Technology Plan for a Universal Service Program discount, the plan must meet the following five criteria that are core elements of successful school technology initiatives:

1. the plan must establish clear goals and a realistic strategy for using telecommunications and information technology to improve education;
2. the plan must have a professional development strategy to ensure that staff know how to use these new technologies to improve education;
3. the plan must include an assessment of the telecommunication services, hardware, software, and other services that will be needed to improve education;
4. the plan must provide for a sufficient budget to acquire and maintain the hardware, software, professional development, and other services that will be needed to implement the strategy; and,
5. the plan must include an evaluation process that enables the school to monitor progress toward the specified goals and make mid-course corrections in response to new developments and opportunities as they arise.

Guidelines for Texas Schools

The State Board of Education adopted the new *Long-Range Plan for Technology, 1996-2010* that provides guidelines and recommendations for Texas schools. In addition, campus and district improvement plans are required to include the integration of technology in instructional and administrative programs (TEC 11.252). Districts may have a separate technology plan that links to the District Improvement Plan and the *Long-Range Plan for Technology*. In 1992, districts were required to submit their technology plan to TEA in order to be eligible for the Technology Allotment. Since that time, legislation changed that submission and approval process to allow for local flexibility and decision making to meet district technology needs. There currently is not an approval process in place for district technology plans. However, this document and related forms describe the new approval process TEA will use to ensure that Texas schools can have an approved technology plan for participation in the Universal Service Fund E-Rate discount program.

Texas school districts have been involved in technology planning for a number of years. Many districts may have prepared similar planning documents when applying for Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund (TIF) grants or Technology Assessment Readiness Grants for Technology Applications Readiness Grants for Empowering Texas (TARGET grants. In general, there is no need to write or develop a specific Universal Service Program or E-Rate technology plan. In most cases, a district technology plan should provide the overarching framework for the use of telecommunications and information technologies.