**Technology Plan Questions**

1. **What is the technology plan?**
The technology plan documents the library service strategy or the school improvement purpose of requested telecommunications services or Internet access under the universal service Program for Schools and Libraries (Program). Technology planning must not be treated as a separate exercise dealing primarily with networks and telecommunication infrastructure. Approved technology plans must establish the connections between the information technology and the professional development strategies, curriculum initiatives, and library objectives that will lead to improved education and library services.

2. **What are the criteria for an approved technology plan?**
The following criteria that are core elements of successful school and library technology initiatives:
   - The plan must establish clear goals and a realistic strategy for using telecommunications and information technology to improve education or library services;
   - The plan must have a professional development strategy to ensure that staff know how to use these new technologies to improve education or library services;
   - The plan must include an assessment of the telecommunication services, hardware, software, and other services that will be needed to improve education or library services; and
   - The plan must be included and evaluation process that enables the school or library to monitor progress toward the specified goals and make mid-course corrections in response to new developments and opportunities and they arise
   - [Beginning in FY2011, this element is not required.] The plan must provide a sufficient budget to acquire and support the non-discounted elements of the plan: the hardware, software, professional development and other services that will be needed to implement the strategy.

3. **What if my plan does not contain all required elements?**
The plan should be updated to include the missing elements.

4. **What discount services require a technology plan?**
Beginning with FY2011, a technology plan is required only for Internal Connections or Basic Maintenance of Internal Connections.

5. **How many years should be covered by the technology plan?**
Approved technology plans should cover a period of not more than three years. Long-range planning is important of the effective use of information technology in schools and libraries. This may be particularly important in the case of some lease-purchase arrangements or very large capital investments that require extended commitments. However, in view of the rapid development cycle of new technologies and services, schools and libraries should approach long-term commitments with caution. There may be cases in which an approved plan is longer than three years to conform to federal, state or local requirements. Whenever an approved plan is longer than three years, there should be a significant review of progress during the third year.

6. **How detailed does the plan have to be?**
The approved plan should include a sufficient level of detail and information to justify and validate the products and services being requested under the Program funding request. Technology planning is the
appropriate method for researching and planning your technology needs. Your technology plan does not have to include the specific details and information called for on FCC Forms 470, 471, 486, and 500.

7. **Once I have an approved plan, am I locked into what has been approved?**

No. All approved plans should include provisions for evaluating progress toward the plan's goals, and ideally these assessments should occur on an annual basis. A technology plan should be responsive to new and emerging opportunities, open to review and not a static document. If you find that your technology needs change and you want to order services beyond the scope of your existing plan, you must prepare and timely submit a new plan for approval.

8. **How do I get my plan approved? Who approves my plan?**

To ensure that technology plans are based on the reasonable needs and resources of the applicant, and they are compatible with the goals of the Program, the FCC requires independent approval of an applicant's technology plan (FCC Order 97-157, released 5/8/97; updated 6/4/97). To accommodate the diversity of institutions in the schools and libraries communities, there will be a variety of approvers for technology plans.

**State Education Agency, Local Education Agency, and Public Schools**

The sole approver for State Education Agency (SEA) technology plans is the U.S. Department of Education. An SEA with an approved plan under the Technology Literacy Challenge (TLCF) or the Enhancing Education Through Technology program (EETT) has an approved plan for purposes of the Program. Although these plans cover a period of more than three years, they include provisions for periodic progress evaluations, and USAC will ask the U.S. Department of Education, for progress reports under these plans during their third year.

SEAs are the preferred approvers for K-12 public school plans. A school, school district, or education service agency that has developed a plan approved under a TLCF or EETT when accompanied by a current year operating budget, has an approved plan for purposes of the Program. Many states also have established their own state-wide technology planning initiatives, and schools, school districts, or education service agencies may develop technology plans for state approval by participating in such initiatives. School districts that have not developed approved technology plans under one of these national or state initiatives may have their own district-level plans approved by their SEA. In the case of Local Education Agency (LEA) plans that were approved for the US Department of Education's "Enhancing Education Through Technology" (EETT) program satisfy the requirements for technology plans as long as they are accompanied by a current operating budget.

- **School District technology plan:** Any school within a district that has an approved technology plan is considered to have an approved plan, if that district-wide plan supports and validates the use of the requested services for educational purposes in that school in a manner consistent with the criteria and standards outlined in the USAC Technology Plan web pages.
- **Individual School technology plan:** If an individual public school develops its own site-based, or building level technology plan, it should seek approval for that plan at the district level following the criteria and standards in the USAC Technology Plan web pages.
- **Charter School technology plan:** Charter schools may have their technology plans approved through the same institution that granted their charter, if that agency is a USAC-Certified Technology Plan Approver.
Nonpublic Schools Plans
In states where nonpublic schools are not required by applicable law to obtain state approval for technology plans and telecommunications expenditures, or where state education agencies have indicated that they will not be able to establish a technology plan approval procedures for nonpublic schools. USAC will authorize an alternative approval process administered by appropriate entities. USAC will certify approval entities for nonpublic school plans. These entities may include:

- regional accreditation associations
- national, state, regional, and local private school associations,
- national, state and regional parochial school associations

SEAs may also work with nonpublic schools to establish an appropriate third party approval process for nonpublic school technology plans. In the absence of any of these alternatives, USAC may consult directly with the SEA and the nonpublic schools in a state or region to certify appropriate approval procedures. USAC will maintain a directory of technology plan approvers that it has certified to approve nonpublic school plans, and it will facilitate nonpublic school access to these approvers.

A school within a Diocesan school district, or a comparable entity, with an approved plan is considered to have an approved plan in its own right, if that approved district-wide technology plan supports and validates the use of the telecommunications services for educational purposes in that school in a manner consistent with the criteria and standards outlined in Elements of a Technology Plan and Technology Plan Scope and Timeframe in Technology Planning.

Approval of Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) Plans, BIE School Plans and Plans of Districts and Territories
The District of Columbia, Hawaii and the Territories will have their plans approved under the U.S. Department of Education’s EETT program because the SEA also functions as the LEA in these jurisdictions.

The Department of Interior’s Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) is preferred approver for BIE contract and grant school plans, and it will use the criteria and standards outlined in Elements of a Technology Plan and Technology Plan Scope and Timeframe in Technology Planning to approve individual BIE school plans. BIE-operated schools can be covered by a plan written by the BIE and approved by the U.S. Department of Education. Any BIE school with an approved technology plan under the EETT program has an approved technology plan if that plan is accompanied by a current year operating budget.

An individual BIE contract or grant school, with a BIE approved plan has an approved plan in its own right. Such a school may choose to participate in the USF independently of the BIE in its own right, if the BIE approved plan supports and validates the use of the requested services for educational purposes in that school in a manner consistent with the criteria and standards outlined in Elements of a Technology Plan and Technology Plan Scope and Timeframe in Technology Planning. If an individual BIE school, or any other school or system serving Indian students, develops a technology plan that is not approved by BIE, USAC will consult with appropriate approvers to establish an alternative approval procedure.

Approval of State Library Agency and Library Plans
State Library Agencies may have their plans approved through several mechanisms. The Institute of
Museum and Library Services (IMLS) has approved a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Plan for every state. These plans are similar in purpose and scope to EETT plans for SEAs, and they constitute approved technology plans for the purposes of the Program. Alternatively, a State Library Agency may choose to use a technology plan approved by an appropriate body within the state (e.g., the legislature, state department of telecommunications, state department of information technology, etc.). Since LSTA Plans, and many alternative state agency plans, cover a period of more than three years, USAC will ask the IMLS, or the state agencies, for a progress report under these plans during their third year. State Library Agencies, in turn are the preferred approvers for the technology plans of library systems and libraries in their states. USAC will consult with State Library Agencies and will certify their approval process if they affirm the application of the criteria and standards outlined in Elements of a Technology Plan and Technology Plan Scope and Timeframe in Technology Planning.

9. Do I have to have my plan approved before I apply?
No. A technology plan must be written before the FCC Form 470 is filed. Currently approved plans that cover at least part of the upcoming funding year and support the services that will be requested on the FCC Form 471 meet this requirement. Also, an applicant that purchases services from a state master contract and cites the associated state-filed FCC Form 470 on the funding request is not required to have a written technology plan before the state filed its FCC Form 470.

The technology plan must be approved before the start of service or the filing of the FCC Form 486, whichever is earlier. Applicants are required to formally certify on the FCC Form 486 that the technology plans on which they based their purchases were approved before they began to receive service.

10. How will USAC know that I have an approved plan?
In the Block 5 of the FCC Form 470 and Block 6 of the FCC Form 471, the applicant must indicate the current status of their technology plan. While the technology plan must be written at the time of filing of these forms, it does not have to be approved at this stage.

To indicate that the school or library is receiving or planning to receive services, the entity must file an FCC Form 486, and technology plan must be approved by the time the services start or the filing of the FCC Form 486, whichever is earlier. The FCC Form 486 requires the applicant to certify that the plan approval has been obtained. The approving entity is required to provide the applicant with a Certification of Technology Plan approval or similar document. Applicants must retain and be prepared to provide USAC with a copy of this approval document.

11. Should I send my technology plan to USAC?
No. Do not send your technology plan to USAC. Sending your plan to USAC will only delay your approval process. If you believe your state does not serve your type of school or library, call the Schools and Libraries Client Service Bureau toll-free at (888) 203-8100.

12. Should I attach my technology plan to the FCC Forms 470 or 471?
No. Do not attach your technology plan to a form. Your plan will be approved by local, regional or state level education or library organizations. There is no provision for plan approval through the FCC Forms 470 and 471 application process. On those forms you must certify that you have or will have an approved plan, but you should not attach the plan to the forms. A copy of the technology plan and/or the plan approval document may be requested by USAC during the program integrity review process.
13. How do I obtain certification if I'd like to become a USAC-Certified Technology Plan Approver?
To correspond with USAC about becoming a USAC-certified technology plan approver via email you may use: TPA@usac.org

To correspond with USAC via U.S.P.S. mail or other carrier you may use:
Coordinator of Technology Planning
Schools and Libraries Division
2000 L Street NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036