

Year 11 Form 471 Filing Window Closes February 7, 2008

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First, congratulations to the entities that have already submitted and certified their Year 11 Form 471!

Way to go!!!!

For those of you not part this group, this is a reminder that the Year 10 Form 471 Filing Window closes on **February 7th, 10:59pm** -- that's only 8 days away. **No, there is no way to request an extension.** Please don't wait until the last day of the window to file your application because traffic is usually extremely heavy which makes the website slow. (3pm-5pm seems to be the peak period on the SLD web site as data entry slows way down. It seems that 8am-11am or 5pm-8pm are better times to work on the site during this time of the year.) Also, file your Form 471 online.

Below are some helpful hints for each section of the Form 471, and below that are FAQs that also should help you complete this form. Please be sure to read them all. If you have further questions, check the Form 471 Instructions first (they're very good) at http://www.universalservice.org/res/documents/sl/pdf/471i_fy05.pdf. If you don't find your answer there, call the SLD's Client Service Bureau at 888-203-8100 (hit '0' to reach a live person). If they can't answer your question, then please e-mail me at erate@esc12.net.

1) Block 2 and 3: You are not required to answer all of these questions; answer in the best way that you can. The SLD does not spend a lot of time in these sections.

2) Block 4

This section has 2 purposes -- to calculate your discounts, and to tell the SLD which entities are receiving discounted services.

A. All buildings receiving service must be listed, including buildings that don't educate students (such as bus barns, administration offices, etc). These are called Non-Instructional Facilities (NIFs) and if you don't already have E-Rate entity numbers for these buildings, you must contact the SLD at 888-203-8100 and request them. For these buildings, you should then list 0 students enrolled and 0 students eligible for NSLP. SLD guidance on NIFs can be found at: <http://www.universalservice.org/sl/applicants/step05/non-instructional-facilities.aspx>.

B. If you have some buildings/schools that are receiving a service, but not all buildings in the District, you must create a separate worksheet that just lists those buildings actually receiving the service. (The easiest way to do this is to "copy" a previously created worksheet and the online system will prompt you how to do this.) Then in Block 5, Item 22, you will select the appropriate worksheet which shows the schools that are receiving that particular service.

C. Block 4 also asks if a particular building contains pre-K, adult Ed or juvenile justice students. Answer honestly; all Adult Education facilities are not eligible in Texas (see <http://www.universalservice.org/sl/applicants/step01/non-traditional-K-12/k-12-eligibility-table.aspx>).

D. NCES Codes: If a school has an NCES code, enter it. If it's a NIF or a school that doesn't have an NCES code, leave it blank. The system will remind you that you left it blank; just continue to the next section and it won't prompt you again. NCES codes are available at: <http://tpesc.esc12.net/erate/yrlyresources.html>. You can also look up your NCES number on the NCES website (same link as above) if you do not find what you need on our list.

E. If you used any data other than National School Lunch Data to determine eligibility, you should check the "alternative discount mechanism" box and PIA will then ask you questions about how you arrived at your data. Make sure you keep all documentation to verify your answers.

F. Rural/Urban: If you're unsure if a school building is located in an urban or rural county, review this chart: <http://www.usac.org/sl/applicants/step05/urban-rural/msa/texas.asp>. Counties listed on this website should be listed as Rural!

3) Block 5

A. For each separate contract, vendor, or service, submit a new Block 5 (funding request).

Important: Submit separate 471s for Priority 1 and Priority 2 services, otherwise, all FRNs can go on a single 471.

B. Telecom Services must be provided by Telecommunications Providers.

If you're requesting discounts in the Telecommunications Services category, your provider **MUST** be an eligible telecom provider. How do you know if they are? Go to the SLD's BEAR/SPIN search at: http://www.sl.universalservice.org/Forms/SPIN_Contact_Search.asp and enter the provider's SPIN number (including the wildcard "%"). If the next to the last column has a Y in it, they're eligible, which means they are an ETP. If there is no Y, then you can't include the request in the telecom category.

C. Be certain that everything you list on your 471 was included on your establishing 470.

Meaning, if you listed cellular service on your 471, then be sure it was competitively bid using a Form 470. If you have a multi-year contract for an eligible service, you should list the original 470 that was used to competitively bid that service.

D. Sign contracts at least 29 days AFTER posting Form 470.

If you waited until the last possible day to post a Form 470 for Year 11, remember not to sign or file the associated Form 471 until the 470 has been posted for 29 days. Vendor selection and contracts can not be made, nor can a Form 471 be signed or submitted, before this date. You can, and should, however, start your Form 471 now, and then just fill in the missing information on the 29th day.

E. Service Start Date: This should always be the first day of the funding year... so for Year 11, it should be 07/01/2008 (even if your contract started 2 years ago).

F. Installation charges for eligible services/equipment are eligible

Don't forget that if you purchase a T-1 line and the Telco is charging you \$200 to install it, that \$200 is eligible and should be listed under non-recurring charges on Item 23f.

G. Deduct ineligible charges on Items 23b and 23g.

For example, if you are using a phone bill as the basis for your pre-discount amount, don't forget to list the ineligible charges for payphones, directory listings, unlisted phone numbers, late fees, equipment charges, etc. on the Block 5 so you only request discounts on eligible amounts.

4) Block 6

This is the certification/signature page and I encourage you to read the certifications carefully before you hit submit.

A. Item 25d: List the total amount of your technology budget, minus the cost for E-Rate eligible services, in Item 25d. This number shouldn't be \$0 unless you are only applying for phone service. Otherwise, list the total amount you're planning to spend in 08-09 on computers, printers, professional development, software, other hardware, tech staff salaries, etc. If you already submitted your application and listed \$0 but didn't mean to, wait until you receive your RAL and make the correction there. For public and charter schools, a place that you can attain this information will be in the budget section of your ePlan System (<https://www.sedl.org/cgi-bin/mysql/eplan/eplan.cgi>).

B. Item 25f: Never ever check this box. The tendency on Block 6 is to check everything, but this is one case where you want to be extremely careful. Item 25f asks if any of your service providers

are providing you with any of your "non-discounted share," meaning... are YOU paying your 40% share or is a vendor finding the money for you or just "forgiving" that debt to them. If you check this box, you're saying you're in violation of program rules. Don't check it!

Frequently Asked Questions

1) Which is better to use: the 471 Interview format or the Create Form 471 format?

Use the Create Form 471 format. I believe the non-interview format is just as easy and doesn't come with the programming bugs that some have experienced.

2) Is it possible to amend a 471 after it's been submitted?

You cannot amend a 471 after it's been submitted, but you can make corrections to it using the RAL (Receipt Acknowledgement Letter) which will be mailed to you in a few weeks by the SLD. Simply mark what should be corrected to your application, and fax it back to the SLD. If you made major mistakes to your submitted 471, simply complete a new 471 by February 7 and then cancel the original one when the RAL comes.

3) Can I submit my application online even if I don't have a PIN?

YES! Everyone should submit their 471 online! After you hit submit, the system will ask you if you want to paper certify or eCertify. If you don't have a PIN, then you'll just have to print a copy of the certification page and mail it to the SLD (by February 7).

4) Proof of Postmark

If you mail your application and/or certification pages, be certain to retain a copy of proof of postmark. **IMPORTANT: IF YOU SHIP VIA AN EXPRESS COURIER, THE COURIER'S ACTUAL PICK-UP TIME IS CONSIDERED THE POSTMARK.** Each year, there are dozens of applicants that drop their applications off in the nearest express courier box expecting that it will be picked up at the scheduled time - and it is not. Scheduled time doesn't count and has lost on appeal to the FCC.

Also, don't include more than one document in a single envelope. For example, don't include 2 certification pages, or a certification page and Item 21 attachments, in the same envelope. Pay the extra fee and ship everything separately, with proof of postmark or shipment delivery.

If you have any questions, and you haven't been able to find the answer in the Form 471 instructions or via the SLD's Client Service Bureau, please e-mail me at erate@esc12.net.

Happy Filing!

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