

**Universal Service Administrative Co. (USAC)  
SL-23-061 – Schools and Libraries Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) Services  
Questions & Answers**

<b>Q#</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>
1	RFP, Section 1.6.A says, “Telework is not authorized under the Contract.” Can USAC confirm that work-from-home Vendor employees using remote access into EPC via Okta to review the applications would be acceptable to USAC?	Remote work is not authorized under the Contract. All Contractor BPO operations personnel under the Contract must work from Contractor offices.
2	In 2.1.1, Application Processing: “Approximately 36,000 funding applications with over 56,000 individual funding requests are submitted annually.” Are these submitted electronically or via paper mail? If paper mail, does the scope of work include receiving, opening, and scanning the paper applications?	All FCC Funding Requests are filed electronically. There is no paper submission that requires opening and scanning of paper applications.
3	In 2.1.1, Application Processing: “The review is managed through EPC and requires manual effort, which includes communicating with applicants, generally through EPC, but sometimes also by phone,” Are phone calls completed using USAC-provided telephony equipment or is the Vendor expected to bring a telephony platform for making these calls?	The Vendor must provide telephony equipment. In performing the Services, Vendor shall provide a turn-key, full service operation to include, but not be limited to: facilities; equipment, including telephone instruments, related lines, and cable; telephone service; personal computers; Software (other than USAC Software); circuits; staff; training; setup, testing; and reporting. Vendor shall be responsible for the installation of the required cable and wire at any of its facilities.
4	In 2.1.1, Application Processing: “Reviews can include a four (4)-level review process.” How long does each level of review typically take? What is the volume of applications that typically end up needing the manual review process?	All applications need Initial and Final manual review. For 99.3% of applications, the average exception generation is between 5-7 exceptions per application. Approximately 0.7% of applications have more than 100 exceptions. Initial Review of each exception may vary but average time for a completion (without outreach to the applicant) is about 10 minutes, which makes average completion for one application about 45 minutes. If applicant outreach is needed, the completion time increases, on average, by about 7-10 days. Final, vendor QA, and USAC QA reviews take less time to complete than Initial review (on average it takes 5 minutes per exception or 25-30

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		minutes per application to complete Final, Vendor QA, and USAC QA reviews).																
5	In 2.1.1, Application Processing: “If any issues are found during either of the third or fourth level of review, or at the final review, the applications are returned to the initial reviewer for more work.” Are applications returned to the initial reviewer via workflow routing in EPC?	Yes, applications are returned to Initial Review via workflow routing in EPC.																
6	<p>Attachment 2 describes several types of reviews. Are there annual volumes available for each review listed below? Also are average times to complete each type of review available?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. PIA Application Review</li> <li>b. PIA Service Review</li> <li>c. PIA Highly Complex Application Reviews</li> <li>d. PIA Heightened Scrutiny Reviews (Simple, Moderate, and Complex)</li> </ul>	<p>Volumes are in Attachment 6 - Volumes, available in the Reading Room.</p> <p>See the response for Q4 above for summary of PIA time to complete.</p> <p>For HS reviews, the actual total elapsed processing time of simple reviews averages 1-3 days, moderate reviews average 2-10 days, and complex reviews average 7-15 days. If outreach is needed, then these numbers increase depending on the duration of the response to the outreach.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2020 Volume</th> <th>2021 Volume</th> <th>2022 Volume</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Simple HS Reviews</td> <td>611</td> <td>537</td> <td>390</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderate HS Reviews</td> <td>2,035</td> <td>762</td> <td>643</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Complex HS Reviews</td> <td>1,611</td> <td>1,472</td> <td>1,258</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2020 Volume	2021 Volume	2022 Volume	Simple HS Reviews	611	537	390	Moderate HS Reviews	2,035	762	643	Complex HS Reviews	1,611	1,472	1,258
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7	In section 2.1.1. Application Processing: “Once the PIA review is complete, USAC issues a Funding Commitment Decision Letter (“FCDL”). FCDLs are issued in "waves," or groups of commitments. Waves are run through USAC’s IT systems and require a distinct series of checks and balances to ensure that applications are committed in compliance with program rules.” Will USAC be	USAC does not need to send the vendor a file with data for letters for printing and mailing. All FCDLs issued are part of the automated wave process whereby the EPC system issues electronic letters that are sent via email and also stored within EPC.																

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	sending the Vendor a file with data for letters the Vendor will then print and mail?	
8	2.1.2. Post-Commitment Reviews – Are there annual volumes for each of the 4-types of post-commitment reviews and also average durations for each review?	<p>Volumes are in Attachment 6 - Volumes, available in the Reading Room.</p> <p>All Post Commitment reviews have an initial and final review. Volumes are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Appeals: Volume = 1,691 in 2022</li> <li>● Service Substitutions: Volume = 1,611 in 2022</li> <li>● SPIN Changes: Volume = 908 in 2022</li> <li>● Commitment Adjustments: Volume = 564 in 2022</li> </ul> <p>Note: For some processes and reviews, a super reviewer(s) may be designated based on experience and complexity of the review where the final review is skipped.</p> <p>Average elapsed processing days for post commitment transactions that did not have a hold are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Appeals: 60 days</li> <li>● COMAD: 46 days</li> <li>● FCC Form 500: 27 days</li> <li>● Service Substitution: 41 days</li> <li>● SPIN Change: 35 days</li> <li>● FCC Form 486: 1 day</li> </ul>
9	In section 2.1.2.2. Appeals: “... and preparing a decision letter with supporting arguments based on detailed procedures” Will USAC be sending the Vendor a file with data for letters the Vendor will then print and mail?	USAC does not need to send the vendor a file with data for letters for printing and mailing. All decisions issued are part of the automated wave process whereby the EPC system issues electronic letters that are sent via email and also stored within EPC.
10	In section 2.1.2.5. Commitment Adjustments: “After the Commitment Adjustment Letter (“CAL”) is issued, the recovery process includes issuing Demand Payment Letters (“DPL”s)” Will	USAC does not need to send the vendor a file with data for letters for printing and mailing. All decisions issued are part of the automated wave process whereby the EPC system issues electronic letters that are sent via email and also stored within

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	USAC be sending the Vendor a file with data for letters the Vendor will then print and mail?	EPC. Any commitment adjustment letter that becomes eligible for a demand payment letter, will be tracked and issued by the vendor with USAC oversight to ensure timely processing takes place.
11	In 2.1.2.6. Other Change Requests: "At the conclusion of the review, a Revised Funding Commitment Decision Letter ("RFCDL") is issued, which provides a full explanation of the work that was performed and the decision" Will USAC be sending the Vendor a file with data for letters the Vendor will then print and mail?	USAC does not need to send the vendor a file with data for letters for printing and mailing. All decisions issued are part of the automated wave process whereby the EPC system issues electronic letters that are sent via email and also stored within EPC.
12	Attachment 2, Section 6 - How long is training for this contract currently?	Stand-up training occurs over 6-8 weeks with periodic refreshers on specific processes over the initial period. New training is required for onboarding additional teams/employees and also as program rule changes occur or as program needs arise.
13	Attachment 2, Section 6 - It mentions having a dedicated trainer on-site. If the workers are performing the work remotely, would USAC permit the trainer to be remote as well?	Remote work is not authorized under the Contract. All Contractor BPO operations personnel under the Contract must work from Contractor offices.
14	Attachment 2, Section 6 - It mentions a dedicated trainer. Does it need to be a trainer 100% dedicated to this specific USAC contract? Would USAC approve of a trainer who is also a trainer on another USAC contract?	No. A trainer does not need to be solely dedicated to the E-Rate contract. They may also train on other USAC contracts. Yes, USAC may approve a trainer who is also a trainer on another USAC contract.
15	RFP P. 17 The Differentiators summary is limited to 250 words. With such a small word limit, USAC may not benefit by getting clear descriptions of the differentiators. Would USAC consider expanding this key section of the proposal to allow for a 250 word summary followed by up to three descriptions of individual differentiators for a total of 1,000 words.	The word limit will not change.
16	RFP P. 18 Should the phrase "in developing or implementing a core curriculum" be included in the paragraph or was this a typo?	This phrase is meant to be included in the paragraph and is not a typo.

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17	RFP P. 19 Specific Prompt 1 is a 4 part prompt with the response limited to 300 words. This is very few words per sub-part for USAC to make substantive evaluations of the difference between proposals. Would USAC consider expanding the word limit to 600 words (approx. 150 per sub-part)?	The word limit will not change.
18	Attachment 1 - Bid Sheet & Attachment 6 - Volume Expectations; The Bid Sheet says that bidders are to use the activity volume numbers from the USAC reading room. Attachment 6 in the Reading Room says "2024 volumes are anticipated to remain roughly the same as 2021/2022." Should bidders use an average of 2021 and 2022 or another method? Without clarification, this provides the opportunity for bidders to use different activity volumes in their proposals and thereby reduce the comparability of the prices among bidders. Would USAC consider clarifying a specific activity volume to be used in bidding by each bidder?	Bidders should use the 2022 transaction volumes when developing and providing pricing proposals. Volumes are in Attachment 6 - Volumes, available in the Reading Room.
19	Attachment 1 - Bid Sheet & Attachment 6 - Volume Expectations; Compliance Support/Document Production is included as an activity in the bid sheet but not in the Volume Expectations. Please provide the past volume experience.	The average expected yearly volume is around 1,300 requests per year. These requests range in complexity and size in terms of the documents produced. Volumes are cyclical and may ebb and surge at different times throughout the year.
20	SOW & Attachment 6 - Volume Expectations; What percentage of EPC automated reviews of Form 471 applications result in no issues identified?	Generally around 2% of applications result in no substantive actions being needed to be taken by a reviewer.
21	SOW & Attachment 6 - Volume Expectations; In order to increase the likelihood of comparable offers from bidders, would USAC consider providing volume expectations for the number of applications with no exceptions to EPC business rules? Also, for applications with exceptions, would USAC consider providing information on the average number of exceptions per application and the extent (level of effort) of PIA review follow-up interactions with applicants?	All applications will generate at least one exception related to services review. The approximate average of exceptions per application would be between 5-7 exceptions. Note it is a varying scale, as an application could have less than 5 exceptions or several hundred. The level of effort of the review process is case by case and can be driven by various factors. (i.e., accuracy of the submitted application, which exceptions generate, completeness of responses received, etc.).

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22	Attachment 1 - Bid Sheet & Attachment 6 - Volume Expectations; The bid sheet makes a distinction between "Highly Complex" PIA reviews and "Heightened Scrutiny (HS)" PIA Reviews but the Volume Expectations only includes volumes for HS reviews. In order to increase the likelihood of comparable offers from bidders, would USAC provide clarity on the volume expectations for both?	<p>For the Complex PIA reviews the volumes were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● FY2020 - 101 applications,</li> <li>● FY2021 - 62 applications, and</li> <li>● FY2022 - 59 applications.</li> </ul> <p>The quantities for the HS reviews are already included in Attachment 6 - Volumes, available in the Reading Room.</p>
23	SOW & Attachment 6 - Volume Expectations; In order to increase the likelihood of comparable offers from bidders, would USAC consider providing volume expectations for the percentage of invoices with no edits identified on automated review?	The billing marker for invoice reviews is manual reviews completed. Manual review volumes are on Attachment 6 - Volumes, available in the Reading Room.
24	SOW & Attachment 6 - Volume Expectations; In order to increase the likelihood of comparable offers from bidders, would USAC consider providing volume expectations for the percentage of invoices with no edits identified on post-pay review?	The billing marker for invoice reviews is manual reviews completed. Manual review volumes are on Attachment 6 - Volumes, available in the Reading Room. Post-payment selections are subject to internal USAC procedures and selection rates may vary.
25	RFP P. 18 2. Summary of Project Approach, second paragraph; The RFP states, "The methodology should also include the requirements laid out in the Transition Plan (Attachment 2, Section 4), and meet designated Milestones set forth in Attachment 9 (Transition Milestones)." Should the first reference actually be for Attachment 2, Section 5?	This reference should be to Attachment 2, Section 5. The document is revised to correct this.
26	RFP P. 24 7. EVALUATION CRITERIA, Transition Management; Transition Management is not called out in the Instructions. Where should this be located in the proposal, and is there a page limit?	This should be located in Technical (Volume II): Summary of Project Approach. The Technical Volume should be no longer than fifteen (15) single-spaced pages of text, including any diagrams.
27	RFP P. 17 6.10.3 Key Personnel; The second paragraph in this section requires the Offeror to provide an organizational chart. Is there a page limit for this?	The page limit for this chart will be one page.

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28	RFP P. 17 6.10 Proposal Content; Is it acceptable to use 10 pt. font on tables and graphics?	All text shall be 12 point font.
29	In reviewing the resource library, it appears that there are over 70 edits to just the invoicing procedure. Is there an online content management / workflow system that the contractor can use to assist staff in determining the appropriate procedure for each case, or must staff review all procedures to determine what is most appropriate?	There is an online repository of all procedures (steps to clear the Invoicing edit). Each edit has a corresponding procedure that walks a reviewer through the review steps. Reviewers do not have to read all the procedures to figure out which edit to use or how to clear the edit. Only edits identified by the system will require review of the related procedure.
30	In the Post Commitment Entity Updates Procedure, Step 3.1.2.1, it appears that entity updates must be done individually for each entity, FRN, and funding year. (i.e., if two school districts merge, each school must be managed individually at the FRN level). Is this correct, or is there a mass change process available in EPC?	Entity updates are made individually on a Funding Year, FRN (funding request), and entity basis.
31	SOW P. 2 2.1.1; "Reviews can include a four (4)-level process". Please confirm that contractors are expected to complete 3 of the 4 levels of review, and that the first two levels (initial reviewer and second reviewer) must be completed for 100% of all applications.	Correct. The contractor is expected to complete the initial, final, and contractor quality assurance levels of review. Yes, as a general rule all applications must go through the first two levels of review.
32	SOW P. 5 2.1.2.3; Please provide annual volume estimates for entity updates.	USAC received 545 entity update requests in 2022.
33	SOW P. 2 ; The RFP states, "For the third level of review, the BPO's quality assurance team selects a sample of applications to review to ensure that the initial and final reviews were done correctly." Will contractors determine the appropriate number of applications to sample for the third level of review, or will USAC determine how many or which applications need to go through the third level? If the latter, please provide the number and/or type of applications that complete the third level of review.	Contractor will work in conjunction with USAC to ensure sufficient levels of QA. Contractor is responsible for determining the QA sample size in a manner that ensures a high level of confidence in the accuracy of the review based on population size and the degree of risk.
34	SOW P. 5 2.1.2.5; The COMAD Procedures document included in the virtual reading room indicates that COMAD determinations receive a minimum of three reviews (pg 8). Please confirm that the	The E-Rate Contractor will be initially responsible for three levels of review for every COMAD determination. This

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	E-Rate contractor is expected to perform three levels of review for every COMAD determination.	includes Initial, Final, and Vendor QA. Sampling rate may change depending on performance.
35	<p>SOW P. 4 2.1.1.4; The SOW includes information on the types of Heightened Scrutiny reviews that the contractor must perform, but there are not any defined procedures for these reviews in the virtual reading room. Some of the SOW requirements (compliance rules focused on competitive bidding, conflict of interest concerns, etc.) indicate that contractor staff must review all initial bid documents and research entity and contractor relationships to ensure compliance with FCC rules.</p> <p>Please confirm that our understanding that the contractor must review all initial bid documents and research entity and contractor relationships to ensure compliance with FCC rules is the correct interpretation of the requirement.</p>	<p>Yes the HS procedures were included in the PIA procedures under Section 5 (Heightened Scrutiny Review Procedures).</p> <p>For the identified population, the contractor would be expected to perform reviews consistent with procedures included in the PIA procedures under Section 5.</p>
38	Att 5; Attachment 5 includes KPIs related to actions that are not part of the E-Rate operational process, such as facilitating the documentation of new IT requirements and providing UAT to test all bug fixes and software enhancements. Since these are non-billable tasks that can consume reviewer time, will USAC consider adding a T&M rate for any approved, non-production activities requested by USAC?	USAC considers these functions as part of the monthly firm fixed price costs.
39	Will USAC accept a price narrative in addition to Attachment 1, Bid Sheet, should contractors wish to provide additional information about assumed Levels of Effort or Assumptions?	Yes. USAC will accept the price narrative on the Assumptions tab of Attachment 1 – Bid Sheet or as another tab of the Bid Sheet.
40	To ensure consistency across bids, please provide the volumes contractors should use in Attachment 1 - Bid Sheet, Variable Price tab, column 'C'.	Attachment 6: Volumes is available in the Virtual Reading Room. Offerors shall include those volumes in their bid sheet.
41	It appears through researching various public websites that the list of eligible services changes each year. Please confirm that in addition to the current year, contractor staff must be aware of and analyze the	Yes, contractor staff would need to comprehend and analyze current and prior year eligible service lists. They would also



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	eligible service list for the appropriate funding year for every pre- and post-commitment review.	need to be aware of product and service eligibility changes that may have occurred historically.
42	VRR 21 - Technical Services Team Procedure; Please confirm that, per Attachment 5, the contractor is expected to perform all tasks listed in the Technical Services Team Procedure. This comprises determining if specific services or equipment are eligible for E-Rate funding, to include, but not limited to: 1) researching individual products on manufacturer or third party websites to determine its function and capability and if it should be added to the services matrix; and 2) contact manufacturers directly to inquire about specific products to determine if they should be added to the services matrix.	The Technical Services Team is responsible for supporting the operations teams to confirm the eligibility of products and services offerings in the E-Rate program. This consists of independent research and working directly with service providers and vendors to determine the make-up of the product or service and make an eligibility determination. This team also responds to product and service related escalations in EPC from the various operations teams. They also are responsible for the administration and update of any service or product related references in EPC.
43	SOW P. 3 2.1.1; Is the contractor responsible for processing the waves and if so how often in a week?	The Wave process can be run for multiple transactions and may require several sequential wave runs a week. For instance, there may be a FY2023 PIA funding request wave, and a separate FY2022 PIA funding request wave on different days within the same week. Similarly, there could also be completed post-commitment reviews that would require additional waves. There may be 8 to 10 waves run per week for various review processes.
44	SOW P. 3 2.1.1; If the contractor is responsible for processing the waves is there a procedure in the reading room that you can direct us to?	There is not a procedure for the wave included in the reading room. Generally, the wave process is a multi-tiered process that is used to finalize the review process once applications have been evaluated and a funding decision has been made by the reviewer, which puts the applications in a wave ready state. The applications in wave ready status are included in the next schedule funding wave. The wave process requires contractor and USAC authorizations before the wave can be processed and Funding Commitment Decision Letters can be issued. The contractor does the initial administrative review of the wave population and manages various final step checks and balances that are in place. The contractor documents and

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		saves their recommendations, which may include removing applications from the wave if a compliance concern is identified. The contractor's commitment manager runs the first review of the wave and forwards their recommendations to the contractor's general manager for agreement. The contractor general manager will either concur with the commitment manager and forward on to USAC for final authorization or can return the wave to the commitment manager if items of concern are identified. Once USAC confirms agreement, the final authorization of the wave is initiated by USAC.			
45	SOW P. 6 2.1.3.3.; Can you give more specifics on Account Maintenance? Which procedures in the reading room are associated with Account Maintenance and volumes?	Account maintenance will be performed as part of post commitment transactions, which are included in multiple procedures. You can reference post commitment volumes for this.			
46	Att 3; The free response tab appears to be identical to the contractor Capability Checklist that was issued as part of the 2018 USAC E-Rate Request for Proposal, including references to services provided in the years 2018 and 2019. May we anticipate that a revised Attachment 3 will be issued?	A revised Attachment 3 is posted.			
47	SOW P. 3 2.1.1.4.; PIA Heightened Scrutiny Reviews section states there are special teams with additional training. Does each function (i.e., competitive bidding, cost effectiveness, installment payment plan validation, state matching funds for fiber construction, ineligible entity fair share verification, endowment reviews, and Red light status) require a separate team?	Yes, for overall continuity of the review process separate teams are needed to avoid bottlenecks. There can be some functional consolidation of some of these examples as they are related. Generally, there should be isolated teams related to the following: Fiber services related reviews, Cost Effectiveness reviews, Competitive Bidding reviews, and Special Compliance reviews.			
48	SOW P. 4 2.1.1.4 (a) - (c); Please provide volumes for Simple, Moderate, and Complex HS Reviews		2020 Volume	2021 Volume	2022 Volume

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		Simple HS Reviews	611	537	390
		Moderate HS Reviews	2,035	762	643
		Complex HS Reviews	1,611	1,472	1,258
49	COMAD Procedures; In the COMAD procedures there are references to onsite audits, BCAP, AAD, OIG investigations and Special Compliance reviews. Will the vendor be involved or responsible for on-site audits, BCAP, AAD, OIG investigations and special compliance reviews? If so, what is the level of effort and volumes for these reviews.	Vendors will not have any involvement with on-site audits. The Vendor will be responsible for understanding the audit finding and rule violation noted within these audits conducted to complete the COMAD determinations.			
50	Customer Inquiry Procedure; Will the vendor be responsible for receiving, intake, and response for customer inquiries? If so please provide daily interval volume and AHT so we may calculate the staff needed to meet the three day KPI.	Customer cases may be escalated to the vendor for aged pending transactions. There were 1,318 cases escalated to the vendor in CY2022.			
51	Point 1.6 mentions, "All required Contract services must be performed within the United States at either USAC's headquarters at 700 12th Street NW, Suite 900, Washington, DC 20005 ("USAC Headquarters"), or such other location as USAC may approve in its sole discretion"  Question: Can we have a mix of on-site and remote workforce?	Remote work is not authorized under the Contract. All Contractor BPO operations personnel under the Contract must work from Contractor offices.			
52	Who is the incumbent, and how long has the incumbent been providing the requested services? Please share incumbent details like contract value, and number of active FTEs served (if available). Has the Current Incumbent maxed out the extension? Has the current contract gone full term? Are you satisfied with the incumbent performance? Will they be eligible to respond on this opportunity? What estimated or actual dollars were paid last year, last month, or last quarter to any incumbent(s)? Please describe your	USAC does not provide information regarding incumbent contractors.			

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	level of satisfaction with your current or recent vendor(s) for the same purchasing activity, if applicable.	
53	Why was this RFP floated?	Current contract will be expiring this year and USAC is seeking a contractor for business processing services for the federal Universal Service Schools and Libraries (E-Rate) Program.
54	Is previous experience with any specific phone systems, or software required?	No.
55	Question: We do not have experience in providing BPO support services for similar-sized BPO operations to any Federal government clients. Although we have been providing the required services to a few State government agencies and renowned commercial clients. Will that experience be evaluated equally in the evaluation stage? Or other vendors with similar experience for Federal government agencies will be given more advantage. Please confirm.	USAC is not a federal agency, a government corporation, a government controlled corporation, or other establishment in the Executive Branch of the United States Government. USAC is seeking a Contractor that possesses expertise and extensive experience standing up and operating a BPO. This experience does not have to be from a federal client. Prior work with similar programs (e.g., government entitlements) or with reaching and / or working with customers whose demographics are similar to the E-Rate base, large and small service providers, and school and library facilities are preferred.