

TOPIC: E-RATE

QUESTION: How is the service provider selected?

“It is the responsibility of the e-rate applicant, after the Form 470 has been posted for 28 days, to select service providers and to file the form 471. Now, there are many cases where there are no competitive bids for services that an applicant lists on their Form 470. In this case, the applicant is allowed to utilize their incumbent service provider. When this happens, the applicant would simply state that they received no bids for their listed service and that they are selecting their incumbent service provider for the next e-rate funding year. However, if there are bids, the applicant is required to create review criteria and review the bids. When reviewing these bids, e-rate rules require that the applicant select the most cost effective service provider. Part of that cost effective analysis is utilizing cost as the single largest factor in the selection criteria. This does not mean that you have to select the lowest cost provider, but rather that cost needs to weigh in on the evaluation more than any other single factor.

Other criteria that can be used in the review process may include: examining the footprint of the service provider; using peer review of other districts, examining network security; evaluating downtime issues; ensuring a local maintenance presence. E-rate provides a lot of flexibility for the applicant to use any characteristics that are important to them in selecting a service provider.”

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