

Network Upgrade

When is the best time to consider a network overhaul/ upgrade?

Is it too early to think about the next “E-Rate Season”? We don’t think so! It is never too early to think about an expiring contract, network upgrade, or overhaul!

The time is always NOW. Whether your contract expires this funding year or next, it is never too early to shop for the perfect network solution. Here are two timelines that are worth considering for your expiring WAN contract!

“My WAN contract expires in FY2024... what should my timeline look like and why?”

March/ April: Start to Plan Internally

- What does your current contract/provider look like? What do you like and don’t like?
- What changes would you like to see?
- What is your budget?



Late June: Construct RFP.

- Work with your E-Rate consultant on your RFP.
- Be sure you know what you want in your RFP, don’t leave it to your consultant to decide for you!
- Educate and Recognize any Procurement or State Rules and Regulations.
- Create a scoring Matrix.
- Utilize USAC to educate on all eligible services and the do’s and don’ts of curating a form 470/ RFP.



January: Look for the 471 filing window opening and closing dates!



May/ Early June: Learn About Different Vendor’s Solutions and What Might Work For You. Shop Around!

- Research Vendors and Solutions
 - USAC Things to Note: USAC encourages you “shop around” and educate your team on all solutions available to you! To promote an “Openness & Fairness” selection process!
 - “Open” means there are no secrets in the process – such as information shared with one bidder but not with others – and that all bidders know what is required of them.
 - “Fair” means that all bidders are treated the same and that no bidder has advanced knowledge of the project information.



July/ August: Release your RFP.

- Put out RFP. This gets your RFP on the street before school resumes in August. Also allows you extra time to interview finalists in the RFP process, negotiate contracts, etc., before filing your 471.



February: File your FCC Form 471.

- Work with your selected vendor to fill out and file your form 471. And get ready to enjoy your new network!

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“My WAN contract expires in FY2025/ 2026/ 2027... what should my timeline look like and why?”

You will follow the same timeline listed above for contracts expiring in FY2024, just a year or two earlier than your expiring contract date.

Note that this is great that you are looking and planning ahead. The more time you provide vendors, the more seamless the transition. Here are a few tips to achieve this!

Consider more time for your network to be constructed if leaving your current provider. This means releasing an RFP a whole year early! This allows districts to award a new contract to a different provider, and they can build the district's network while they are in the last remaining year of their current contract. This creates a seamless cut-over plan.

This can be achieved by filing a 471 with two FRN line items:

- 1.) One for the last year of their current contract and;
- 2.) Another for your new contract.

This will automatically trigger a response from USAC asking if you've filed for duplicate services. Once you explain that the new contract does not begin until the construction is complete, which will be when your current contract expires, this gets approved every time.

This may seem daunting, but we promise there are many resources to help make the process smooth! You can always contact us or USAC with any questions you may have!

FCC Form 471

General Instructions
and Filing Requirements

Schools and Libraries Universal Service
Services Ordered and Certification Form

Approval by OMB
3060-0806

Estimated Average Burden Hours Per Response: 4 hours

Instructions for Completion
Services Ordered and Certification Form

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