

## NEW Process for Receiving and Answering PIA Questions

Starting with FY2016, E-Rate applicants will receive and answer Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) questions through USAC's new IT system, known as the E-rate Productivity Center (EPC). The PIA process involves USAC staff reviewing the information on each applicant's FCC Form 471 and may necessitate USAC sending an applicant questions in order to complete their review. Applicants who have completed and submitted their Form 471s for FY2016 could begin receiving questions as early as this week. Not all applications require additional questions and answers; however, if an applicant receives a PIA request, it is the applicant's responsibility to respond within the designated timeframe (typically 15 days). All PIA questions will be sent through EPC's News feed and all applicant responses will be sent back to USAC in EPC. PIA questions will not be emailed or faxed. Applicants must diligently check the EPC system regularly to ensure they do not miss a PIA response deadline.

In addition to the instructions provided below, USAC will email instructions on accessing PIA questions in EPC to the main contact person identified on FY2016 FCC Form 471. Districts and schools need to make sure the contact information on all Form 471s are current. If an applicant needs to update their contact information or provide holiday/summer contact information, applicants can submit a modification to a Form 471 using the instructions below.

Following is the process for accessing and responding to PIA questions for FY2016 applications:

### How you will be notified

Applicants can locate their questions in the *My Tasks* section of the landing page. The hyperlinked name for each task is "**Respond to Notifications for Form 471 [form number]**."

Keep in mind that the News item hyperlink will take you to the complete list of PIA questions, but the My Tasks hyperlinks will take you to each individual question. For example, if you receive five PIA questions, you will see a list of all five questions if you use the News item option, and five separate tasks if you use the My Tasks option. If you submitted more than one FCC Form 471 that requires PIA review, you will receive a separate set of questions for each form.

### How to access your PIA questions

When an applicant clicks on the hyperlink (from either News or Tasks in EPC), the applicant will access the Review Inquiries page. The Review Inquiries page is the applicant's dashboard (repository) for all PIA inquiries for each application. Applicants can also access the Review Inquiries page by selecting Records, then "Review Inquiries" from the left-hand navigation.

Applicants can perform the following actions from the Review Inquiries page by clicking the appropriate button at the top of the page:

1. Respond to inquiries
2. Request an extension
3. Submit a modification to your form ("RAL correction")

### How to respond to your PIA questions

Click on the "*Respond to Inquiries*" button to view and respond to PIA questions.

When an applicant clicks on this button, they will see "Pending Inquiries" and "Submitted Inquiries" dashboards. These dashboards list the status of the PIA outreach, for example: the type of outreach, the date the notification was sent, the response due date, the reviewer's name and telephone number, and the read status (the blue eye in the "Read" column turns grey after you open that inquiry). Pending inquiries are questions submitted by PIA to the contact person; submitted inquiries are responses you submitted to PIA.

When the applicant selects a pending inquiry, a template is displayed listing the PIA question(s) associated with that inquiry. Applicants can enter their answers within the template, upload supporting documentation (a single document or multiple documents), and/or provide additional narrative information.

The system allows applicants to begin working on answers and then save their work for later editing or additions by clicking the "*Save & Close*" button. If an applicant needs to return to their work, the applicant will choose "Review Inquiries" from the Records tab.

As always, provide complete answers and respond to all PIA questions. Applicants should contact their PIA reviewer immediately if they are unsure of what to do or need further clarification. If an applicant does not respond within seven (7) days – or an applicant's response is incomplete – the applicant will receive a reminder notification via EPC.

When a applicant completes a PIA response, the applicant must submit the response to PIA by clicking the "*Submit*" button. Submitted responses will appear in the Submitted Inquiries dashboard. To expand this dashboard, click on the plus sign ("+") to the right of the Submitted Inquiries header.

### **How to request an extension of time to answer PIA questions**

Applicants can request more time to respond to PIA review questions if needed. Applicants will automatically be granted a seven-day extension upon a first request. Original response due dates (generally 15 days from the date the PIA questions were issued) are automatically adjusted and a new due date is calculated and displayed. Subsequent extension requests are not automatic. These requests are reviewed and the decision to grant or deny the request will appear in the Review Inquiries dashboard.

### **How to submit modifications to your FCC Form 471**

If an applicant needs to provide or correct information that has been previously submitted on a FCC Form 471 in advance or during the PIA response process, applicants can submit allowable corrections by clicking the "*Submit Modifications*" button on the Review Inquiries page.