



Tips from Learningtech: Easing into Technology Planning

Beyond the adage, “*Failing to plan is planning to fail*,” there are many benefits to developing a comprehensive Technology Plan. Having your Technology Plan approved by the right agencies makes you eligible for a variety of funding opportunities (e.g., E-Rate, EETT, K-12 Voucher Program, private grants). Developing a comprehensive Technology Plan is a significant amount of work; getting it approved is a detailed process that must meet rigid guidelines and deadlines, many of which vary by state. **The ideal scenario is to write a single technology plan that meets all requirements by the designated deadline.**¹ Some schools find this task difficult, and ask:

“Is there any way to simplify the process, easing into it and spreading out the work?”

Consider the various “levels” of Technology Plans and their deadlines:

- **No technology plan** is needed by applicants who seek E-Rate discounts for ONLY Basic Telephone Service.² (A plan IS REQUIRED for other forms of Telecommunications services.) **DUE:** NA. **NOTE:** In some states, schools might be eligible for state-managed discount programs that do not require a technology plan.³
- **An E-Rate approved Technology Plan**⁴ is acceptable for the E-Rate program only, and is a prerequisite for receiving Telecommunications (other than Basic Telephone Service) or Internet Access or Internal Connections discounts. The plan must be approved by a USAC-certified approver before discounted services can begin. **DUE:** The earliest that discounted services can begin is July 1 for any funding year. **NOTE:** The plan must be written – including all 5 required E-Rate elements for the following funding year - prior to filing an E-Rate application Form 470 (typically no later than December) or a Form 471 for a previously approved multi-year contract (in early February).
- **An EETT approved Technology Plan**⁵ is required for all state-administered technology funding programs. EETT approval requires about a dozen elements, though the rubric varies somewhat by state, as do submission dates (at least five of the elements are the same as E-Rate elements). **DUE:** There are typically 2 or 3 submission opportunities per year; submission dates vary by state.⁶ **NOTE:** An approved EETT technology plan is acceptable for E-Rate application purposes, with a supplemental budget analysis acceptable to the state Department of Education.⁷

¹ In California, CDE recommends submitting an EETT plan by “cycle B” (typically early December) for state approval, then supplementing that EETT plan with the E-Rate Supplemental Budget Analysis for E-Rate approval.

² SLD defines “Basic Telephone Service” as wired or wireless single-line voice service (e.g., local, cellular, and/or long distance) (<http://www.universalservice.org/sl/applicants/step02/basic-telephone-service.aspx>). Basic telephone service must be provided by a telecommunications carrier.

³ For example, the California Teleconnect Fund discounts 50% of the basic line charges for most copper circuits including phone, T1, etc. This discount can be “stacked” with other discounts, including E-Rate.

⁴ SLD’s Step 2: Technology Planning (<http://www.universalservice.org/sl/applicants/step02/technology-planning/>) provides detailed requirements.

⁵ CDE’s EETT: Technology Plan Requirements (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/et/ft/eettfortechplans.asp>) identifies California’s requirements for EETT approval.

⁶ In California, technology plans can be submitted for CDE approval in any one of 3 Cycles – Cycle A (early October), Cycle B (early December), or Cycle C (early April). HOWEVER, CDE recently announced that plans submitted for Cycle C approval will NOT be eligible for E-Rate funding for the following year.

⁷ A Supplemental Budget Analysis indicates the applicant is aware of and will be able to secure the financial resources it will need to achieve its technology aims, including technology training, software, and other elements outside the coverage of E Rate.

The technology plan must be approved before receiving E-Rate funded services or filing Form 486.

To ease into and spread out the work of developing a technology plan and get it approved by all the relevant agencies, a viable safety-net scenario is to:

1. **By mid-December** (before submitting a Form 470⁸), complete a plan that addresses the 5 required E-Rate elements for at least the following funding year
2. **By late December**; submit a Form 470 (but not before completing Step 1!)
3. **By early February**, file Form 471
4. **By early April** (or by the deadline established for your state), augment the 1-year E-Rate-Only plan to include the additional components required to complete an EETT 3-year plan, soliciting a separate approval from the state. (Note, all these dates vary from year to year.)

While this strategy involves pleasing two sets of reviewers, with two sets of criteria (though E-Rate is a subset of EETT), for two separate approvals, it does allow for:

- Distribution of the technology plan development workload
- Approval of the plans within designated cycles
- Timely submission of applications without interruption of annual E-Rate funding.

Additionally, Learningtech recommends:

5. **In the spring** (or by the deadline established for your state, if any), complete your state's web-based technology survey for each school site whether or not it's required or the equivalent information if your state does not require such a survey.
6. **By mid-December each year** (prior to filing Form 470), complete the supplemental budget analysis acceptable to your state's Department of Education to document annual progress on EETT approved plan goals and budget.⁹

DISCLAIMER: *The ideal scenario is to write a single plan that meets both EETT and E-Rate requirements, submitted in time for both EETT and E-Rate approval for the following funding year. When a school cannot accomplish the ideal scenario, this safety-net scenario is a viable option. There are complex compliance issues with significant considerations applicable to different types of schools (e.g., direct-funded charters), situations (e.g., expiring plan, new plan), state interpretations, etc. This article presents a generalized discussion of most common points. This article does not discuss all possible considerations. For more detailed and fully-researched analysis, please contact The Miller Institute for Learning with Technology for consultation at (650)598-0105.*

⁸ There is no precise due date for the "plan which is written," but what matters is prior to Form 470 submission, which must be at least 28 days prior to Form 471 submission deadline, which is typically the first week of February, but varies slightly from year to year.

⁹ The supplemental budget analysis should be done annually and filed locally. In California, CDE recommends documenting completion through internal communication like email. (<http://www.ctap4.org/grants/planning.htm#erate>)