

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of)
)
Comprehensive Review of the Universal Service) WC Docket No. 05-195
Fund Management, Administration, and Oversight)

**Reply Comments of E-Rate Management Professionals Association, Inc.
on
NOTICE OF INQUIRY
(Released September 12, 2008)**

The E-Rate Management Professionals Association, Inc. (E-MPA) is a (501)(c)(6) trade association whose purpose is to promote excellence and ethics in E-Rate professional management and consulting through certification, education and professional resources.

E-MPA serves as an advocate for the critical role served by E-Rate management professionals and consultants. The organization strives to strengthen and support the E-Rate program by acting as a self-governing body of E-Rate management professionals and consultants. E-MPA provides assurance to stakeholders by maintaining the highest standards, developing and promoting best practices, and requiring ethical conduct for all members.

Reply Comments Regarding E-Rate Consultant Registration:

In its initial Comments to this NOI, the Universal Service Administrative Company (“USAC”) indicated its continued support of a program to register consultants.¹ The consultant issues that USAC addresses include definition of a consultant and procedures for registration, identification, and disclosure statements for potential conflicts of interest. USAC also recommends that registration information would be made available in the data associated with the FCC Form 471 Data Retrieval tool “thereby enabling applicants to make more informed decisions about selecting consultants by reviewing the funding history of applicants associated with consultants.”

¹ Comments of the Universal Service Administrative Company. WC Docket No. 05-195. November 13, 2008, pages 34-36.

USAC does not explain what consultant-related problem or problems its new registration/disclosure proposal is designed to solve and why it believes its proposal is likely to be successful. USAC simply states, in conclusionary fashion, that “USAC believes it would enhance program integrity if USAC could monitor registered consultants’ participation in the program.” [USAC Comments at p. 35]

No doubt USAC harbors some serious consultant-related concerns, many of which we and others in the E-rate community likely share. However, until USAC explains publicly what, exactly, its consultant-related concerns are and how its proposed new registration and disclosure rules will address them, no one will be able to comment intelligently on whether USAC’s proposal is or is not well suited for that purpose.

USAC’s proposal to the Commission to adopt a new, extremely broad set of registration and disclosure requirements for consultants is incomplete and thus premature. In order to properly evaluate this issue, the Commission and stakeholders in the program will need for USAC to provide further details on how the registration information will be used, benefits for the program that may be derived from a consultant registration system, administrative costs that will be added, new procedures that would need to be implemented, and other factors that should be carefully considered.

Accordingly, we request that the Commission instruct USAC to provide full details of its proposal in a supplemental submission and, thereafter, give the public an appropriate opportunity to respond to USAC’s revised proposal.

Conclusion:

One of the principle reasons for the formation of the E-Rate Management Professionals Association or E-MPA was to provide a degree of consultant self-regulation and adherence to a tough code of ethics. We are confident that E-MPA is well-suited to offer effective, viable, and simple alternative solutions to many of the consultant-related issues with which USAC currently appears to be wrestling. We invite USAC to discuss them with us and to work jointly toward developing proposals for workable solutions that we all could agree would enhance program integrity.

Submitted by:

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