



INDIANA SCHOOL TECH PLAN

Rationale for Change

2016 marked a change in Indiana's model for collecting information on technology initiatives in our schools. The data we had accumulated via the technology plan in past years had become less and less useful, and the system used to collect it proved resistant to change. Recent changes to E-Rate provided us the flexibility to overhaul this system while remaining compliant with Indiana Code.

History of the Tech Plan Requirement

E-Rate is the commonly used name for the Schools and Libraries Program of the Universal Service Fund, which is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) under the direction of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The program provides discounts to assist schools and libraries in the United States to obtain affordable telecommunications and Internet access.



With the establishment of these discounts in 1997, the FCC required schools to submit a technology plan of “no more than 3 years.” In their adoption of this Order (97-157), they declared that “it would not be unduly burdensome to require eligible schools and libraries to ‘do their homework’ in terms of preparing these plans.”

In 2005, the Indiana Legislature established IC 20-20-13-7, creating the requirement for schools to submit a technology plan every three years; making adjustments to this plan each year. This Indiana code reflects the four elements required by the FCC (intent, training, maintenance, evaluation) and added a fifth: “other information requested by the department...” This code has not been amended since the 2006 session.

By 2011 the FCC had changed its stance on the burden presented by the annual submission of technology plans and eliminated the requirement for schools who were only seeking discounts for services external to the school.

Beginning in 2015, the FCC's E-Rate Modernization Order (FCC 14-99) completely eliminated the requirement for schools to submit a technology plan. One of the goals set out in this order was to make the application process for schools “fast, simple, and efficient.”

Previous Indiana Tech Plan

The practice that had been in place for Indiana schools was a lengthy online submission process. The form required detailed goals, strategies, and metrics to be provided (a full page of documentation) for every school in the district. In addition to similar metrics to be provided at the district level, the previous form required five tables of specific budgetary information that was neither a requirement of the FCC, nor the Indiana Code.



The IDOE supported and maintained a system (through IDOE Online) that allowed for live editing and monitoring of these plans. This system presented a yearly challenge of opening and closing access, as well as an approval process to assure that all of the questions had been sufficiently answered. All plans, and their yearly updates, were read by the Office of eLearning to ensure that districts were diligent in completing the plan. Other than this access, results were not designed to be consumed. Approval resulted in the generation of a PDF certificate which was previously needed to demonstrate to the FCC that a district had a valid plan on file. Such documentation is no longer required for the E-Rate discount.

New Indiana Tech Plan

The Indiana Tech Plan launched here has resulted in a substantial improvement over the previous model by providing data that is useful to the IDOE as well as school corporations. The Tech Plan provides a snapshot of where each corporation is with regard to integrating student technology and the infrastructure to support it. Reporting takes place in a brief survey constructed in the IDOE JotForm Account, available here each March:

<http://www.doe.in.gov/elearning/tech-plan-survey>

The new model is designed for ease of use and simplicity of information gathered.



The Office of eLearning will maintain oversight of the completion of this survey. Results populate a series of maps to house district info, as well as infographics which display trends across the state. Completion of this survey will ensure district representation in these published formats and serve as the fulfillment of Indiana Code, qualifying public districts for state technology funds.