

Universal Service
Administrative Co.

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

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Mission: Ensuring that all people in the United States have access to quality, affordable connectivity services.

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The Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) is an independent, not-for-profit corporation designated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as the administrator of the Universal Service Fund.

Executive Summary

2017 was a year of ongoing transformation for the Universal Service Administrative Company. The Lifeline, High Cost, and E-rate programs continued implementing modernization orders as issued by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Rural Health Care Program addressed an increase in applications for program support. The past year also saw leadership changes at USAC, culminating with Radha Sekar joining the organization as Chief Executive Officer in January of 2018.

Joel Lubin, Chair of the USAC Board of Directors said, "Ms. Sekar comes to USAC with experience in both the private and the government sector, and brings with her the operational experience, people engagement, and IT focus that is critical to USAC's success. This is the individual that we need to lead USAC at this critical point in time."

In the 2017 Funding Year, the four Universal Service Programs increased the public's access to broadband internet and telecommunications services. During 2017, 127,558 Schools and Libraries and 9,318 Rural Health Care Providers received discounts on their internet service bills allowing students, staff, and patients an opportunity for equal access to education and world class health care. During 2017, 89% of Zip Codes in the United States had at least one service provider offering wireline or wireless service to low income families — enabling their ability to access emergency services and participation in modern society by providing a platform for which to interact with the world and climb the ladder of economic opportunity. Finally, 1,421 service providers received High Cost support to expand rural broadband deployment by building out critical infrastructure to continue reducing the digital desert area in the United States.

In 2017, USAC focused on the mission of delivering Universal Service Fund programs in a cost-effective manner.

- Through increased compliance monitoring, program integrity efforts and oversight, USAC recovered $7.3M in improperly used Universal Service Funds.
- Each program received orders from the FCC in 2017, including orders for each program to support hurricane relief efforts in the US and territories. 40 FCC orders were received and responded to in total.
- USAC worked to enable participant success in USF programs by delivering timely, targeted outreach and communications to program audiences. This outreach included 34 webinars, 16 in person trainings/speaking opportunities and 81 newsletters, in addition to emails, videos and outreach calls aimed at helping eligible program participants access USF funds.

In 2018, USAC looks forward to improving and enhancing our systems using feedback from USF participants, further modernizing the Universal Service Fund programs, and continuing to support program participants through proactive outreach. Indeed, improving the overall experiences of our program audiences — and ensuring that the experience we provide fosters the ability of eligible participants to receive funding — is USAC's primary objective. Under Radha Sekar's leadership and in partnership with the FCC and USAC's Board of Directors, USAC continues its commitment to the mission of fulfilling Universal Service.

"I am excited to be part of the USAC team and looking forward to transforming the organization in to a high-performing team while having a watchful eye on fraud waste and abuse," Ms. Sekar said.

2017 Expenses, Receipts, and Payments Associated with the Administration of the Universal Service Programs

Unaudited | In Thousands

PROGRAM	DETAILS	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	TOTAL
Schools and Libraries (E-rate)	Receipts from Operations	$133,857	$133,941	$135,900	$135,994	$126,439	$133,128	$136,272	$159,909	$152,633	$159,107	$164,344	$167,095	$1,738,619
	Disbursements from Operations [1]	(203,908)	(224,567)	(204,955)	(226,938)	(276,288)	(245,148)	(221,945)	(243,181)	(219,984)	(257,760)	(114,485)	(180,223)	(2,619,383)
	Administrative Expenses	(8,807)	(5,933)	(9,161)	(7,588)	(8,852)	(10,409)	(11,241)	(3,793)	(8,410)	(6,315)	(7,369)	(6,924)	(94,803)
High Cost	Receipts from Operations	377,228	375,066	380,552	380,819	356,396	374,003	382,363	362,868	346,350	361,044	377,168	383,482	4,457,338
	Disbursements from Operations [1]	(368,070)	(386,333)	(386,124)	(386,415)	(386,113)	(385,962)	(406,447)	(384,219)	(383,564)	(429,979)	(380,421)	(384,501)	(4,668,148)
	Administrative Expenses	(5,974)	(4,057)	(6,266)	(5,191)	(6,162)	(7,246)	(7,825)	(2,641)	(5,854)	(4,396)	(5,130)	(4,820)	(65,560)
Lifeline	Receipts from Operations	130,122	121,066	123,075	123,030	112,651	118,601	121,055	92,285	88,083	91,819	95,445	97,042	1,314,273
	Disbursements from Operations [1]	(114,067)	(110,225)	(108,662)	(109,500)	(96,200)	(109,245)	(100,400)	(103,323)	(105,047)	(102,696)	(107,198)	(100,633)	(1,267,195)
	Administrative Expenses	(2,765)	(1,941)	(3,000)	(2,485)	(2,914)	(3,427)	(3,701)	(1,249)	(2,768)	(2,079)	(2,426)	(2,279)	(31,032)
Rural Health Care	Receipts from Operations	50,503	30,380	30,825	30,849	31,734	33,413	33,992	2	0	(32)	35,504	36,099	313,268
	Disbursements from Operations [1]	(19,349)	(11,551)	(12,244)	(15,756)	(26,007)	(37,468)	(52,401)	(25,118)	(21,163)	(22,639)	(10,518)	(7,267)	(261,481)
	Administrative Expenses	(1,081)	(696)	(1,077)	(892)	(1,043)	(1,227)	(1,325)	(447)	(991)	(744)	(869)	(816)	(11,208)

[1] Disbursements from operations equals cash outlays less admin transfer to USAC.
Note: Numbers may not add due to rounding.

Statement of Operations

For the Year Ended December 31, 2017 and 2016 | In Thousands

	2017[1]	2016
REVENUE	$ 196,730	$ 179,506
OPERATING EXPENSES:		
Contractual expenses	45,856	47,544
Personnel and related expenses	69,917	60,193
General and administrative	67,825	62,899
Depreciation, amortization, and loss on retirements	13,132	8,870
Total Operating Expenses	**$196,730**	**$179,506**

[1] 2017 figures are draft and unaudited

2017 USAC Contractors Receiving Payments Greater Than $1 Million

All contractors receiving payments greater than one million dollars have been assessed and their work has been deemed to be satisfactory or better.

CONTRACTOR/VENDOR	TYPES OF GOODS / SERVICES	PROCUREMENT METHOD
Solix, Inc.	E-rate Operational Support Services	Non-Competitive
Incentive Technology Group, LLC	EPC Consulting and IT Implementation Services	Non-Competitive
NTCA	Employee Benefits	Competitive
Cigna Healthcare	Employee Benefits	Competitive
Ampcus, Inc.	IT Staff Augmentation Services	Competitive
Boston Consulting Group	Lifeline National Verifier Consulting Services	Competitive
ManpowerGroup Public Sector, Inc.	IT Staff Augmentation Services	Competitive
HireStrategy	IT Staff Augmentation Services	Competitive
Clearpath Solutions Group	Various IT Systems, Hardware, and Software Solutions	Competitive
Appian Corporation	Appian Operations, Maintenance, and Cloud Services	Competitive
Grant Thornton, LLP	BCAPx Audit Services and IAD Co-Sourcing Audit Services	Competitive
KPMG, LLP	BCAPx Audit Services	Competitive
Moss Adams, LLP	BCAPx Audit Services	Competitive
Oracle America, Inc.	IT Software Solution	Non-Competitive

Dollar Range: | **>$5 million** | **$2 million–$5 million** | **$1 million–$2 million**

Report of Independent Auditors

To the Board of Directors of Universal Service Administrative Company:

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of Universal Service Administrative Company (the "Company"), which comprise the statement of financial position as of December 31, 2016 and 2015, and the related statements of operations and change in unrestricted net assets and cash flows for the years then ended.

Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America; this includes the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditors' Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial statements based on our audits. We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and in accordance with the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on our judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, we consider internal control relevant to the Company's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Company's internal control. Accordingly, we express no such opinion. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Opinion

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Company as of December 31, 2016 and 2015, and the changes in its unrestricted net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Other Matter

Our audit was conducted for the purpose of forming an opinion on the financial statements taken as a whole. The additional combining supplemental schedules of net assets and liabilities applicable to the Federal USF, of changes in net assets applicable to the Federal USF, and of cash flows applicable to the Federal USF are presented for the purposes of additional analysis and are not a required part of the financial statements. Such information has not been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audit of the financial statements, and accordingly, we do not express an opinion or provide any assurance on it.

Other Reporting Required by Government Auditing Standards

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards,* we also have issued a report dated June 29, 2017 on our consideration of the Company's internal control over financial reporting and on our tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements and other matters. The purpose of that report is to describe the scope of our testing of internal control over financial reporting and compliance and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on the internal control over financial reporting or on compliance. That report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* in considering the Company's internal control over financial reporting and compliance and other matters.



PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP
June 29, 2017

Click here for the full Report of Independent Auditors.

Universal Service Programs

2017 Authorized Support[1]

Unaudited | In Thousands

PROGRAM	AUTHORIZED SUPPORT
Schools and Libraries (E-rate)	$2,649,656
Rural Health Care	$261,500
Lifeline	$1,263,772
High Cost	$4,673,601
Total	**$8,848,529**

[1] Authorized Support includes all funding approved for disbursement for the months of January–December 2017, including funding approved but not yet disbursed (due to the Red Light Rule). It does not include recoveries from audits, appeals, or other enforcement actions.

Note: Numbers may not add due to rounding.

Schools and Libraries (E-rate) Program

The E-rate Program provides support to eligible schools and libraries so they are able to obtain high-speed internet access and telecommunications services at affordable rates, consistent with the objectives of universal service. In calendar year 2017, E-rate provided funding to more than 104,722 schools and 11,475 libraries throughout the United States and its territories.

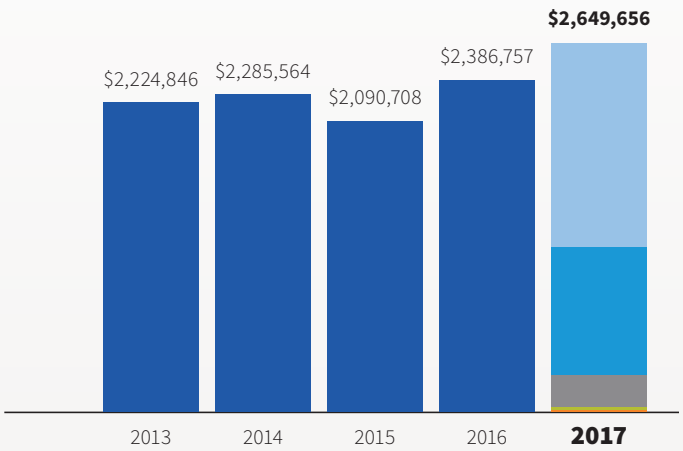
In 2017, the E-rate Program:

- **Issued funding decisions faster.** Over 98 percent of viable E-rate applications received their funding commitment decision letters by the end of 2017. This is faster than last year, when 88 percent were issued by the end of 2016. The E-rate Program was able to improve the E-rate Productivity Center (EPC) system continuously and resolve issues more quickly, which led to faster application processing times, meeting the goal of giving schools and libraries the money they need, faster.
- **Helped those in need.** In the fall, as Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria hit the United States and its territories, the E-rate Program mobilized quickly to launch a Hurricane Relief web page where affected applicants could learn about measures to accommodate their extenuating circumstances, including FCC Hurricane Relief orders, deadline extensions, FAQs, and a second application filing window. During that window, the E-rate Program received $10.3 million in funding requests from 83 applicants including more than 1,000 schools and 6 libraries.
- **Engaged users to improve systems.** Designing, testing, and improving the EPC system was a critical component of 2017, and the E-rate Program actively engaged with the users themselves — service providers, applicants, and consultants — to make sure we were focused on those areas that mattered most to our users. Through the course of the year, the E-rate Program conducted roughly 16 rounds of user testing, involving over 90 members of the E-rate community, who helped resolve countless issues.

Looking forward, the E-rate Program will continue to make improvements to its systems and tools, will reach out to external user testing groups to gather feedback about critical improvements, and will strive to ensure that all program participants receive the information they need to succeed in the program.

Authorized Support[1] by Year

Unaudited | In Thousands



2017 Authorized Support[1] by Service Category

Unaudited | In Thousands

- Data Transmission and Internet Access — $1,465,680
- Internal Connections — $916,341
- Voice Services — $233,391
- Managed Internal Broadband Services — $21,317
- Basic Maintenance of Internal Connections — $12,927

2017 Total: $2,649,656

- Pre-2017 Total Support

[1] Authorized Support includes all funding approved for disbursement for the months of January–December 2017, including funding approved but not yet disbursed (due to the Red Light Rule). It does not include recoveries from audits, appeals, or other enforcement actions.

Note: Numbers may not add due to rounding.

Rural Health Care Program

The Rural Health Care (RHC) Program provides support to eligible rural health care providers that qualify for reduced rates on telecommunications and broadband services. This subsidizes their access to these services, making telehealth services affordable in rural areas. In 2017, the Rural Health Care program saw increased requests for funds, pushing demand over the program's funding cap. In FY2017, the total number of funding requests increased by 21.2 percent from the total received in FY2016, and an approximate two percent increase in total dollars requested.

In 2017, the Rural Health Care Program:

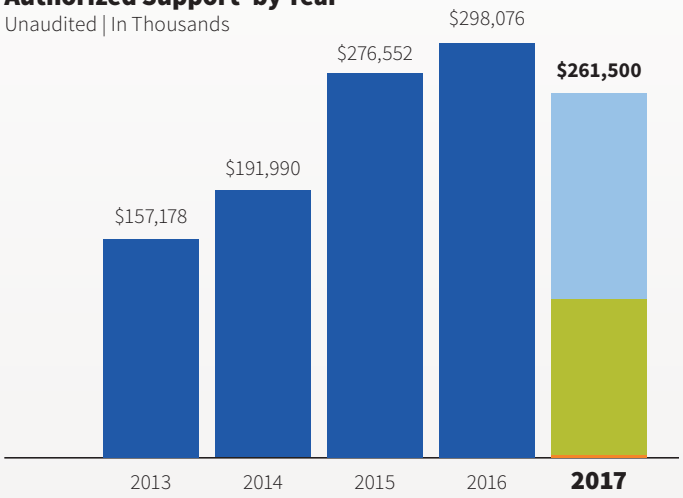
- **Responded to requests for more guidance.** In the early part of 2017, the RHC Program received feedback from its participants that they wanted more — more guidance, more support, and more proactive training on program participation. The RHC team team enhanced outreach to their applicants, service providers, and consultants in an effort to make navigating the program as easy as possible, by hosting webinars, reviving the monthly newsletter, and sending timely email communications. In 2017, we held 11 webinars, which is about a 40 percent increase from prior years.
- **Responded to program growth.** The RHC Program evolved to address the growing volume of applications and program changes. In FY2017, the total number of funding requests increased by 21.2 percent from the total received in FY2016, and an approximate two percent increase in total dollars requested.

The RHC Program team had to adjust in real-time to new program challenges and evolving guidance. To respond effectively, the RHC Program team reconfigured its organization to focus on documenting and systematically mitigating key program risks while continuing to review applications consistently.

- **Focused on program integrity.** The RHC Program consistently administered the fund in full accordance with program rules, with the ultimate objectives being that participants who should receive funding did, and that the program was being administered in the best way possible. The RHC Program team, in collaboration with the USAC Audit team and General Counsel, resolved 100 percent of audit findings and 89 percent of whistle blower complaints from 2017.

Looking forward, the RHC Program is committed to providing timely outreach and support to RHC Program participants throughout the application process, enhancing online tools and resources, and incorporating feedback from participants about where improvements can be made.

Authorized Support[1] by Year
Unaudited | In Thousands



2017 Authorized Support[1] by Service Category
Unaudited | In Thousands

- Telecommunciations Program — $147,536
- Healthcare Connect Fund — $111,496
- Pilot Program — $2,467

2017 Total: $261,500

- Pre-2017 Total Support

[1] Authorized Support includes all funding approved for disbursement for the months of January–December 2017, including funding approved but not yet disbursed (due to the Red Light Rule). It does not include recoveries from audits, appeals, or other enforcement actions.

Note: Numbers may not add due to rounding.

Lifeline Program

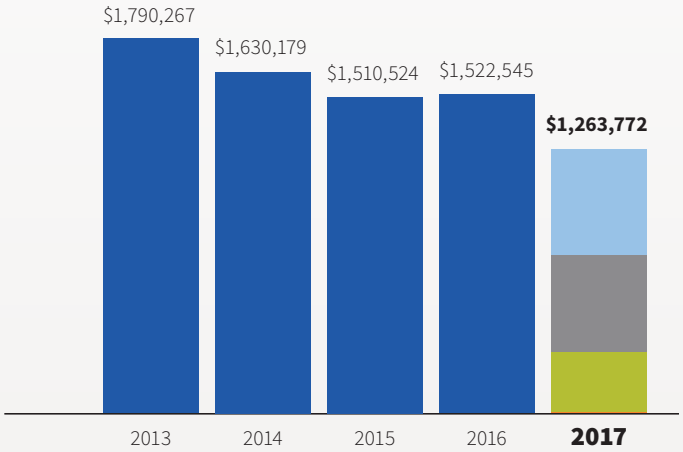
The Lifeline Program helps more than 10 million households in need obtain the voice and broadband connectivity services critical to participate and function in today's digital world. The program provides support to telecommunications companies that in turn offer discounts on telecommunications services to eligible consumers.

In 2017, the Lifeline Program:

- **Built out a system to verify program eligibility.** The Lifeline Program team made significant strides in building the Lifeline National Eligibility Verifier (National Verifier), which is designed to determine Lifeline subscriber eligibility, maintain an eligibility database, and conduct annual recertification. Lifeline partnered with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to move Lifeline subscribers closer to automated validation in four states (Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, and Mississippi) by executing Computer Matching Agreements that support automated validation of subscribers' participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Medicaid, and Federal Public Housing Assistance Program.
- **Answered the call.** The Lifeline Call Center served an increasing number of consumers (increasing from 35,000 calls in 1Q2017 to 59,000 calls in 4Q2017) while conducting more efficient individual phone conversations and reducing our rate of abandoned calls. Always striving for improvement, the Lifeline team beat its 2017 target metrics.
- **Created user-friendly tools.** USAC deployed a "Companies Near Me" tool on usac.org that allows potential Lifeline consumers to access, simply by typing in their zip codes, the names of companies offering Lifeline, the type of services they offer, the states they serve, and their phone numbers — making critical information readily available for anyone. Launched in November of 2017, this tool has already been used over 5,700 times in December 2017 alone.
- **Tightened controls.** Partnering with the FCC, USAC implemented additional controls in the Lifeline Program to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse. To prevent false enrollments of deceased subscribers, USAC integrated the U.S. Social Security Administration's death master file into NLAD's validations, which prevented 726 erroneous subscribers in its first two months. To prevent service providers from claiming reimbursement for an excessive number of subscribers, in August 2017 USAC began rejecting FCC Forms 497 that claimed more subscribers than the subscriber count in NLAD reflected, leading to 361 rejected reimbursement claims, and fewer attempted claims that exceeded the NLAD count in each subsequent month. In addition, USAC increased the sampling of enrollment transactions to provide heightened scrutiny for compliance with program rules and to increase program integrity.

Looking forward, the Lifeline Program anticipates launching the National Verifier, which will deliver a streamlined, consistent verification process for potential Lifeline subscribers and will enable greater protection against program waste, fraud, and abuse.

Authorized Support[1] by Year
Unaudited | In Thousands



2017 Authorized Support[1] by Service Category
Unaudited | In Thousands

- Bundle — $505,890
- Voice — $466,880
- Broadband — $290,759
- Linkup — $243

2017 Total: $1,263,772

- Pre-2017 Total Support

[1] Authorized Support includes all funding approved for disbursement for the months of January–December 2017, including funding approved but not yet disbursed (due to the Red Light Rule). It does not include recoveries from audits, appeals, or other enforcement actions.

Note: Numbers may not add due to rounding.

High Cost Program

The High Cost Program provides funding to eligible telecommunications carriers to deliver service in rural areas where the market alone cannot support the substantial cost of deploying network infrastructure and delivering connectivity. While the High Cost Program has historically subsidized voice service, the FCC is modernizing the program to close the digital divide with a series of new Connect America funds that require carriers to meet defined broadband build-out obligations across rural America.

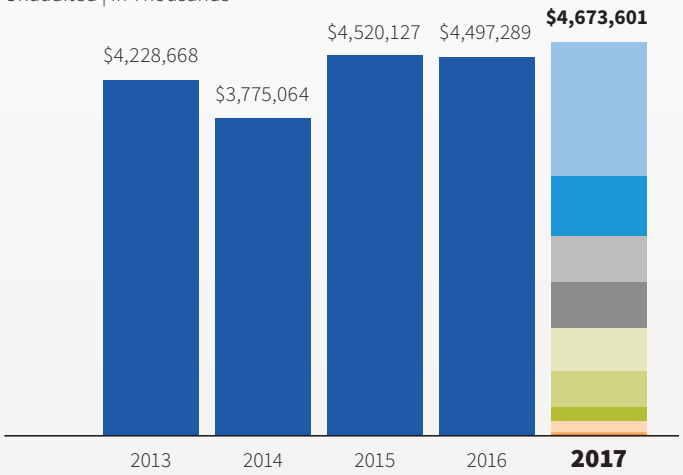
In 2017, the High Cost Program:

- **Launched three modernized funds.** The High Cost Program implemented three new funds in 2017 to bring broadband to rural America: Alternative Connect America Cost Model (ACAM), with $555.8 million disbursed in 2017; Connect America Broadband Loop Support (CAF-BLS), with $713.9 million disbursed in 2017; and the Alaska Plan (AK Plan), with $128.3 million disbursed in 2017.
- **Introduced a new online platform for compliance and navigated the first filing deadline.** In April 2017, the High Cost Program launched the High Cost Universal Broadband (HUBB) portal to collect geolocated broadband deployment data to ensure that carriers that receive Connect America support are building out broadband as required. High Cost launched the HUBB following months of outreach to gather and incorporate the input of carriers, consultants, industry trade associations and other key stakeholders. In July 2017, Price Cap carriers receiving Connect America Fund (CAF) Phase II model-based support successfully filed deployment data for more than 900,000 broadband locations using the HUBB portal.
- **Shared broadband deployment data with states.** In August of 2017, the High Cost Program launched a new state access tool that allows state utility commissions to access broadband deployment data filed with the HUBB for their states by filing year and fund.
- **Developed a new compliance process.** The High Cost Program performed extensive compliance work in 2017 including manual validation of approximately 518,000 CAF I locations and 10,000 Rural Broadband Experiments (RBE) locations filed by carriers, verification of broadband deployment for approximately 650 CAF I locations and 300 RBE locations, and in-depth reviews of annual FCC Form 481 filings. In addition, the program conducted drive testing to verify more than 57,300 road miles of 3G and 4G network coverage by wireless carriers participating in the Mobility Fund Phase I and network coverage reaching more than 45,700 people by carriers that received Tribal Mobility Fund support.
- **Developed new processes to drive efficiency and ensure integrity.** The High Cost Program in 2017 developed and implemented standardized, repeatable intake and planning processes to handle new FCC orders and other key projects and responsibilities.

Looking ahead to 2018, the High Cost Program will continue to push forward on all these fronts as it implements additional modernized funding mechanisms, such as Phase II of the Mobility Fund and the CAF Phase II Auction; further enhances the HUBB portal and other key High Cost systems and tools; and refines and executes the compliance process. Another important priority for 2018 will be an expanded open data initiative to share funding figures and other key High Cost information with the public. Through all these efforts, the High Cost program will help carriers and other key stakeholders successfully navigate the ongoing transition to a modernized program with new funds, new broadband build-out obligations and with new reporting requirements.

Authorized Support[1] by Year

Unaudited | In Thousands



2017 Authorized Support[1] by Service Category

Unaudited | In Thousands

- CAF Phase II — $1,589,621
- CAF Broadband Loop Support (BLS)[2] — $712,301
- Alternative Connect America Model (ACAM) — $555,802
- Frozen Support CETCs — $536,816
- High Cost Loop (HCL) — $524,178
- CAF Intercarrier Compensation (ICC) — $418,986
- Frozen Support Price Caps — $173,222
- Alaska Plan Fund — $128,314
- Mobility Fund Phase I — $31,034
- Rural Broadband Experiments (RBE) — $3,328

2017 Total: $4,673,601

- Pre-2017 Total Support

[1] Authorized Support includes all funding approved for disbursement for the months of January–December 2017, including funding approved but not yet disbursed (due to the Red Light Rule). It does not include recoveries from audits, appeals, or other enforcement actions.

[2] CAF BLS includes 2015 ICLS true-up adjustments disbursed in 2017.

Note: Numbers may not add due to rounding.

USAC 2017 Efforts to Combat Waste, Fraud, and Abuse at the Enterprise Level

- USAC stood up an internal, **enterprise-wide compliance and risk group**. This group successfully implemented an enterprise risk management program as required by the Office of Management and Budget circular A123.

- USAC implemented an **Open Data governance process**, including a standardized geocoding approach, to provide cross program data analytics about universal service support. This increased transparency allows internal and external audiences to review support levels, identify potential errors, and better understand how and where funds are being deployed.

- FCC's **audit reported USAC compliance** with both the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act of 2010 (IPERA) and the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Improvement Act of 2012 (IPERIA).

- USAC **increased the number and percentage of successful FCC Form 499 filers** across USAC's contributor base through a combination of increased desktop audits, dedicated training and education resources, increased outreach to filers, improved outreach and notifications, and a stronger emphasis on customer service across the finance division.

- USAC's enterprise-wide Data Strategy team **enhanced USAC's audit capabilities** by automating the data review process to increase access and clarity of data for auditors. The automated process allows auditors to more quickly identify accounts that need additional scrutiny and the data dictionary that was created as part of this process ensures that auditors know exactly what the data they're looking at means.

- USAC's Open Data platform allows USAC to **deploy, review, and share information** with the FCC and the public quickly. This saves costs and staff time by reducing the need for multiple data access systems across programs.

- USAC **improved the process for referring potential waste, fraud, and abuse** to the FCC's Enforcement Bureau and Office of the Inspector General.

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