



April 2026 Tribal Nation Newsletter

May 4, 2026 | [Universal Service Administrative Company \(USAC\)](#)



Tribal Nation News

Join USAC for the May 2026 Tribal Teleconference, designed for all Tribal Stakeholders and service providers, to provide an overview of the Universal Service Fund (USF). We will discuss all four USF programs—Lifeline, E-Rate, High Cost, and Rural Health Care—and provide information for service providers. There will be time for Q&A.

Please join us on **Tuesday, May 12, 2026, at 4 p.m. ET** – [Register](#).

Notes from USAC's Tribal Liaison

SAM.gov UEI Requirement for Service Providers and E-Rate BEAR Filers

Beginning August 2026, USAC will begin using SAM.gov banking information to remit payment for all Universal Service Fund (USF) invoices and requests for reimbursement.

All service providers and E-Rate applicants who use the Billed Entity Applicant Reimbursement (BEAR) invoicing method must have an active SAM.gov registration attached to a valid bank account. Once registered, service providers and BEAR filers must add their SAM.gov Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) to their FCC Form 498. Payments will be made to the bank account associated with the SAM.gov account. After the transition, service providers and E-Rate BEAR filers will need to annually renew their SAM.gov registration as failure to do so may result in delays in receiving payments. Payments cannot be released to an inactive SAM.gov account.

For more information, see USAC's [SAM.gov UEI Requirement](#) webpage.

[E-Rate](#)

Funding Year (FY) 2026 Application Filing Deadline Waiver Requests

If you need to request a waiver of the Funding Year (FY) 2026 application filing deadline, be sure to certify and submit your FCC Form 471 in the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC) **before** you file your waiver request with the FCC. Note that you will receive an out-of-window status notification after you certify your form. If the waiver request is granted, the FCC Form 471 will be treated as timely. See the [E-Rate Appeals Waiver Guide](#) for information on filing a waiver with the FCC.

FCC Form 500 Updates for Invoicing Method Changes

Beginning with FY2026, applicants must select an [invoicing method](#) (FCC Form 472/BEAR or FCC Form 474/Service Provider Invoicing (SPI)) for each funding request number (FRN) on their FCC Form 471 applications. If you need to modify the invoicing method on your FY2026 FRNs, you can submit a [Receipt Acknowledgement Letter \(RAL\) Modification Request](#) during the review of your FCC Form 471 application. The RAL modifications can be submitted before you receive a funding commitment decision letters (FCDL) from USAC. After you receive an FCDL, you can request invoicing method changes via the [FCC Form 500](#) using the new “Invoicing Method” change request. This change request must be submitted before any invoice is submitted for the FRN. Please note that if you are changing from BEAR to SPI, you will also need documentation showing your service provider consents to the change in invoicing method.

RAL Modification Requests and Post-Commitment Corrections

USAC issues an FCC Form 471 [Receipt Acknowledgement Letter](#) (RAL) to both the applicant and service provider(s) in EPC after an FCC Form 471 application is submitted and certified. The letter contains many of the details submitted on the FCC Form 471 and provides a means to correct any mistakes. If you were not able to make all the appropriate updates to your applicant profile in the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC) before the close of the EPC administrative window, you can provide updated information by filing a RAL Modification Request after submitting and certifying your FCC Form 471 application(s) but before you receive your FCDL.

Overview of the PIA Review Process

[Program Integrity Assurance](#) (PIA) is the process USAC uses to review FCC Forms 471 for compliance with E-Rate program rules and requirements. USAC reviews the information on your application and may contact you with additional questions on specific items.

To learn more information about the PIA Review process, including the Initial Review, Final Review, and Quality Assurance steps, and RAL Modification Requests, please review the [April 2026 E-Rate News Brief](#).

If you are Tribal library or TCU library, consider joining [T-LEAP](#).

[Lifeline](#)

Improved Consumer Experience on LifelineSupport.org

USAC released updates to the Lifeline consumer website, [LifelineSupport.org](#), to improve consumer experience and make key information easier to access. The refresh updates the website to include easier to understand content across key sections and improved navigation. USAC will continue enhancing program materials to ensure that information is helpful and easy to find for all consumers to better support both consumers and the organizations that assist them by including new webpages. For additional information on the updates, see our LifelineSupport.org Improvements [bulletin](#).

FCC Form 481 Training on May 19, 2026

Eligible telecommunications carriers (ETCs) participating in the High Cost and/or Lifeline programs must annually file the FCC Form 481 in accordance with [47 C.F.R. § 54.313](#) (High Cost) and [47 C.F.R. § 54.422](#) (Lifeline/High Cost and Lifeline-only). This form collects financial and operational information.

For the 2026 filing, all ETCs participating in Lifeline must file and certify the form, **even if the provider is not seeking Lifeline support**. Filings are due by July 1, 2026.

USAC's High Cost team will host a webinar for service providers on **Tuesday, May 19, 2026, from 2 p.m. until 3 p.m. ET**. [Register](#) for the training to learn more about how to file the FCC Form 481. In the meantime, please visit our [File FCC Form 481](#) page for more information.

[Rural Health Care \(RHC\)](#)

Submit RHC Program Post-Commitment Change Requests in RHC Connect

There are several actions that may be required outside of the regular application process. The following post-commitment change requests must be submitted by the service delivery deadline, June 30, of a given funding year:

- Site and Service substitutions
- Service Delivery deadline extensions

For more information, please visit the [Healthcare Connect Fund \(HCF\) Program Post-Commitment Actions](#) and [Telecommunications \(Telecom\) Program Post-Commitment Actions](#) webpages.

Telecom Program

The following post-commitment change requests are now available in RHC Connect for Telecom Program applicants.

- Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN) changes (corrective and operational)
- Site and service substitutions
- Invoice filing deadline extensions

For more information, visit the [Post-Commitment Actions](#) webpage on the USAC website as well as specific webpages for [SPIN Changes](#) and [Service Substitutions](#). A step-by-step [Post-Commitment Change Request](#) user guide is available to help you submit these requests correctly.

HCF Program

The following post-commitment change requests are available in RHC Connect for HCF Program applicants:

- SPIN changes (corrective and operational)
- Site and service substitutions
- Service delivery deadline extensions for non-recurring charges
- Invoice filing deadline extensions

For more information, visit the [Post-Commitment Actions](#) webpage on the USAC website as well as specific webpages for [SPIN Changes](#) and [Site and Service Substitutions](#). A step-by-step [Post-Commitments Change Request](#) user guide is available to help you submit these requests correctly.

RHC Connect System Enhancements

RHC is committed to continually improving the stakeholder experience in RHC Connect. The following system enhancements were deployed in the system on April 17, 2026:

FCC Form 462/466 Duplicate Check on Intake

The FCC Forms 462 and 466 now display a duplicate check on submission.

- Applicant's view of duplicate table on the Rates page
 - This table will display on the Rates tab of an FCC Form 466.
 - This table will display on the Expense Items tab of an FCC Form 462.
- Applicant comments on potential duplicates
 - Applicants can add comments when the system flags their Form 426 or 466 as a potential duplicate.
 - These comments are preserved and can be seen by reviewers.
- Duplicate validation on the signature page
 - The FCC Forms 462 and 466 signature pages now validate against duplicate criteria and display a clear error message when a potential duplicate exists.
 - Applicants are prevented from completing the FCC Forms 462 and 466 until they review and address duplicate warnings.

FCC Form 462 General Operational Effectiveness Enhancements

- Clearer request reasons for applicants and reviewers
 - Added a "Request Reason(s)" field to the Information Request table on the Information Request tab, visible to both applicants and reviewers, so it is clear why additional information is being requested.
- Easier navigation from the Information Requests views back to the application
 - Added a "Back to Application" button on the Information Request view so users can quickly return to the underlying application after reviewing or responding to a request.

Telecom SPIN Change Information Requests

We've added information requests to the Telecom SPIN change application review process.

- Applicants can see all open and past information requests related to their Telecom SPIN change Pos Commitment Change Requests in one place, submit responses, and upload documentation through RHC Connect.
- Applicants will receive email notifications when there is an information request created and when an information request deadline is approaching.

General Enhancement and Bug Fixes

- Recall for FCC Form 462 fixed
 - In the 20-Mar-2026 release, we disabled the option that allowed applicants to recall an FCC Form 462 because a bug was discovered with this process.
 - With release H-26.2 / T-26.2, we have corrected the bug and re-enabled the recall option for the FCC Form 462.
- Account holder telephone number formatting

- We've corrected the inconsistent formatting of account holder telephone numbers on the Information Requests tab for both internal and external users.
- Organization creation and group rename race condition
 - We fixed a bug that sometimes caused the creation of new HCPs to fail because the system would record the new HCP before it checked to see if the HCP already existed.
- Duplicate line items in bulk upload template
 - Fixed a vulnerability in the Form 463 bulk invoice upload template that allowed duplicate line items to be submitted.
- FCC Form 469 submission after Invoice Filing Deadline
 - Fixed an issue where the HCP was able to submit the invoice to USAC after the invoice filing deadline had passed if the service provider had submitted it before the IFD.
- Removed the Third Party Authorization (TPA) refresh notice
 - We removed the message about TPA refresh and the report download that had been visible since the TPA refresh project.

View all RHC Connect user experience related system enhancements and any upcoming RHC systems maintenance dates on the [RHC Connect Updates](#) page.

[High Cost](#)

FCC Form 481 Filing System Now Open

All eligible telecommunications carriers (ETCs) participating in the High Cost and/or Lifeline programs may now access the [FCC Form 481](#) for program year 2027 through the [USAC E-file/Okta One Portal](#) and begin the annual Form 481 filing process. FCC Form 481, which must be certified by July 1, 2026, collects financial and operations information used to validate carrier support, fulfilling the annual [54.313 reporting requirement](#) for High Cost funding recipients.

Please join USAC on **Tuesday, May 19, 2026, at 2 p.m. ET**, for a webinar overview of FCC Form 481 and walkthrough of the filing process – [Register](#).

Key Dates and Trainings

Tribal Teleconference | One USAC

Tuesday, May 12, 2026, at 4 p.m. ET – [Register >](#)

RHC | Post Commitment Change Requests Webinar (HCF)

Wednesday, May 6, 2026, at 2 p.m. ET – [Register >](#)

RHC | Post Commitment Change Requests Webinar (Telecom)

Wednesday, May 22, 2026, at 2 p.m. ET – [Register >](#)

High Cost | FCC Form 481 Overview and Walkthrough

Tuesday, May 19, 2026, at 2 p.m. ET – [Register >](#)

Service Providers | New 499 filer ID Basics

Wednesday, May 6, 2026, at 2 p.m. ET – [Register >](#)

E-Rate

No upcoming webinars. To view prior webinars, please visit the [E-Rate Webinars](#) page.

USF Program Technical Assistance

The USAC Customer Service Center (CSC) provides customer service for all USF programs. Visit the [Contact USAC](#) page to get in touch with specialized agents trained in the specifics of each program.

Questions or suggestions? Contact USAC's Tribal Liaison at TribalLiaison@usac.org.

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