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Universal Service Administrative Co.

Tribal Outreach

August 2023 USAC Tribal Nation Newsletter

August 31, 2023

Universal Service Administrative Company's (USAC) September Tribal Teleconference, "E-Rate Tribal Order Updates," will cover E-Rate program updates announced in July, including the Tribal Libraries Pilot Program for FY2024. Time will be provided for Q&A. Please join us on **Tuesday, September 12, 2023, at 4 p.m. ET** – Register.

Hawaii Wildfires Response
On August 18, 2023, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released Order DA 23-723, waiving certain Universal Service Fund (USF), Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), and Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) program rules to assist program participants and providers located in areas affected by the Hawaii wildfires. To learn more, see FCC Order DA 23-723.

As a reminder, **Monday, September 4, 2023** is a federal holiday and USAC offices will be **closed**.

E-Rate

FCC Adopts Order Providing Tribal Libraries Greater Access to E-Rate Program Funding
The FCC took steps to further enhance Tribal applicants' access to the E-Rate program through program simplifications and other changes aimed to encourage greater Tribal participation. The FCC, in its July 21 order (FCC 23-56), also took steps to simplify E-Rate processes for other E-Rate applicants.

Specific updates to the E-Rate program rules include:

- Granting E-Rate eligibility to Tribal College and University libraries that also serve as public libraries in their communities.

- Increasing the maximum Category Two (C2) discount rate to 90% and the C2 funding floor to $55,000 for Tribal libraries.

- Creating an exemption to the competitive bidding requirements for libraries (Tribal and non-Tribal) seeking E-Rate support for C2 services that total a pre-discount price of $3,600 or less per library per funding year.

- Adopting a formal definition of "Tribal" in the E-Rate program to better identify Tribal applicants seeking E-Rate funding and to ensure Tribal libraries receive the new C2 benefits.

- Adding a Tribal community representative to the USAC Board of Directors and to the Schools and Libraries Committee of the Board.

- Directing USAC to provide increased outreach and training to Tribal applicants.

Visit to the FCC's Tribal Order page to learn more.

Tribal Libraries Pilot Program Extended for Funding Year 2024
To help Tribal libraries and Tribal College and University (TCU) libraries that also serve as public libraries and other Tribal libraries to be able to participate in the E-Rate program, the Tribal Libraries Pilot Program provides one-on-one assistance in preparing, applying, and receiving E-Rate support. This includes sharing information about

program rules and requirements, providing training on how to use the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC), and walking through the competitive bidding and application processes. To learn more about the Pilot, including eligibility, expectations, and applying for the pilot , please review the Tribal Libraries Pilot Program page.

The FCC will host a webinar on the Tribal Library Pilot Program on **Thursday, September 7, 2023 at 2 p.m. ET**. to explain how Tribal libraries can benefit from E-Rate support and detail how you can join the pilot. The pilot program application can also be accessed at tinyurl.com/TribalLibraryPilot.

FCC Seeks Further Comment on Simplifying the E-Rate Program

The FCC, in its July 21 order (FCC 23-56), also issued a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking seeking comments on rule changes and clarifications to further simplify the E-Rate application process for all E-Rate applicants, including Tribal schools and libraries. The proposed rules were published in the Federal Register on August 9, 2023. Comments are due on September 25, 2023 and reply comments are due on October 23, 2023. You may submit comments, identified by CC Docket Nos. 02–6, 96–45, 97–21, by filing electronically through the FCC's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS). You can also file comments by paper by submitting an original and one copy of each filing via US Postal Service first-class mail to Commission's Secretary, Office of the Secretary, FCC, 45 L Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20554.

To learn more about other E-Rate program updates, please review the August 2023 E-Rate News Brief.

High Cost

New Tool for Tribal Government Officials
USAC has released a new user guide to help Tribal government officials navigate the 54.314 Certification Filing System in E-File to download the annual FCC Form 481 filings submitted by eligible telecommunications carriers (ETCs) that serve their Tribal jurisdictions with support from the USF's High Cost program.

All participating carriers must file and certify FCC Form 481 with USAC on an annual basis. The form collects financial and operational information used to validate carrier support, including information about a carrier's holding company, operating companies, affiliates and branding designations (doing-business-as or DBA); ability to function in emergency situations; terrestrial backhaul; Tribal lands engagement; and comparability of voice and broadband service rates in rural and urban areas.

Through the 54.314 filing system, federally recognized Tribes may view FCC Form 481 data for carriers that serve their lands. FCC Form 481 filings may also be downloaded by individual Study Area Code (SAC). Note that the 54.314 system is now the only way for Tribes to view FCC Form 481 filings, as carriers are no longer required to file the form separately with Tribal or state governments.

The most recent Form 481 filing, which carriers certified with USAC by July 3, 2023, is for Program Year 2024 because the information in the filing will be used for disbursements for 2024. The data filed is from 2022, which is the most recent full calendar year for which data is available.

In order to obtain access privileges to the 54.314 system, Tribal governments should contact the High Cost Division at Form481@usac.org to request an authorization form. Once granted access, Tribal officials will be able to log into the 54.314 system and view Form 481 data filed by the carriers serving their lands.

Lifeline and ACP

Medicaid Renewal Process
As a result of COVID-19, the Medicaid renewal process (Spanish) has been on hold. However, yearly eligibility reviews will resume in 2023. ACP consumers who qualified for the ACP benefit through Medicaid may need to renew their Medicaid eligibility this year. To reach as many Medicaid recipients as possible, USAC updated the "Do I Qualify" page on AffordableConnectivity.gov with information on how consumers can renew their Medicaid eligibility. To prepare for the Medicaid renewal process, consumers should update their contact information, check their mail, and complete the renewal form if they receive one. Consumers can contact their state Medicaid office for more information about the Medicaid renewal process.

National Verifier Legacy URLs

On May 4, 2023, USAC transitioned the National Verifier portal from nv.fcc.gov to GetInternet.gov. At the end of August, USAC will be retiring legacy National Verifier URLs to the online applications for the Lifeline program and ACP.

- Consumers can access the online application for the Lifeline program at LifelineSupport.org using the "Apply Now" button.

- Consumers can access the online application for the ACP at GetInternet.gov. This site can also be accessed in Spanish at AccedeaInternet.gov.

Training and Resources
Find upcoming trainings and other resources on the Lifeline Learn page or ACP Learn page on USAC's website.

To make sure you are receiving the latest information, please sign up for USAC's newsletter and, if you would like to be an outreach partner for the ACP, sign up at fcc.gov/acp.

To learn more about ACP or Lifeline program updates, please review the April 2023 Lifeline Newsletter or the August 2023 ACP Newsletter.

Key Dates and Trainings

E-Rate

- **Wednesday, September 12, 2023** -- September Tribal Teleconference on E-Rate Tribal Order Updates will be held at 4 p.m. ET – Register.
- To view prior webinars, please visit the E-Rate webinar page or the E-Rate Tribal-specific trainings page.

RHC

- **Wednesday, September 6, 2023** -- RHC will host the Best Practices webinar at 2 p.m. ET – Register.
- **Wednesday, September 20, 2023** -- RHC will host the Funding Year 2023 Update webinar at 2 p.m. ET – Register.

Lifeline/ACP

- **Wednesday, September 13, 2023** -- Lifeline will host the September 2023 Monthly Webinar on Consumer Advocate Training at 3 p.m. ET – Register.
- **Thursday, September 12, 2023** -- ACP will host the Transparency Data Collection System Office Hours at 3 p.m. ET - Register.
- **Wednesday, September 20, 2023** -- Lifeline will host the Tribal Q3 Training: How to Apply for Lifeline webinar at 3 p.m. ET – Register.

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 to answer your program-specific questions.

Questions or Suggestions?
Contact the USAC Tribal Liaison, Gem Labarta, at TribalLiaison@usac.org.

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