December 2023 USAC Tribal Nation Newsletter

December 29, 2023

Monthly Tribal Teleconference
Universal Service Administrative Company’s (USAC) January Tribal Teleconference will provide an overview of the E-Rate program, with time for questions and answers. Please join the teleconference on Tuesday, January 9, 2024, at 4 p.m. ET – Register.

USAC and all Customer Service Centers (CSC) will be closed on Monday, January 1, 2024.

USAC and the E-Rate, Emergency Connectivity Fund, High Cost, Rural Health Care, Contributors & Service Providers CSC will be closed on Monday, January 15, 2024.

E-Rate

Funding Year 2024 FCC Form 471 Filing Window Dates Announced
The Funding Year (FY) 2024 FCC Form 471 application filing window will open on Wednesday, January 17, 2024, at 12 p.m. ET, and will close on Wednesday, March 27, 2024, at 11:59 p.m. ET.

Wednesday, February 28, 2024, is the last date to submit and certify an FCC Form 470 for the FY2024 FCC Form 471 filing window. FCC Forms 470 must be posted to USAC’s website for a minimum of 28 days before the FCC Form 471 can be filed.

Update Your EPC Profile by January 12, 2024
All E-Rate applicants should now review their profiles in the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC) and make any necessary changes. The EPC Administrative Window will close on Friday, January 12, 2024, after which point the profiles are locked in order to ensure a smoother filing process and more timely review of the E-Rate applications. View the EPC Administrative Window webinar slides to learn more.

Please note that USAC has made updates in EPC based on the FCC’s July 2023 Tribal Order, including eligibility and Category Two service updates. View the Tribal Library Eligibility Changes in EPC video to learn more.

FY2024 Eligible Services List Released
The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Wireline Communications Bureau (WCB) released the FY2024 Eligible Service List (ESL) on December 15, 2023. Review the FY2024 ESL on the Eligible Services List page to learn which services are eligible for E-Rate discounts for the upcoming funding year.

WCB addressed a number of items related to the FCC’s Declaratory Ruling (FCC 23-84) finding that the use of Wi-Fi or other similar access point technologies on school buses is an educational purpose, and the provision of such service, including the equipment needed to provide such service, is eligible for E-Rate support. The ESL makes the services and equipment needed for school bus Wi-Fi eligible in FY2024.

To learn more about how to apply for school bus Wi-Fi and review other E-Rate program updates, please see the December 2023 E-Rate News Brief.
High Cost

FCC Provides Guidance on State, Tribal Engagement to Determine Eligibility of Locations for BEAD Funding

The FCC has released new guidance to carriers that receive Universal Service Fund (USF) High Cost support on engaging and coordinating with state broadband offices and Tribal governments regarding the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) program.

The BEAD program, a $42.45 billion initiative administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), will invest in network infrastructure and broadband deployment across the U.S. The program will prioritize connecting unserved locations (those that have no internet access or broadband with speeds slower than 25 megabits per second downstream and 3 megabits per second upstream) and underserved locations (those that have broadband with speeds slower than 100 megabits per second downstream and 20 megabits per second upstream).

The FCC Public Notice (DA 23-1115) provides guidance to carriers participating in the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF), Connect America Fund Phase II Auction (CAF II Auction) and Bringing Puerto Rico Together (Uniendo a Puerto Rico) Fund and the Connect USVI Funds (PR/USVI Fund) programs, as well as the new Enhanced Alternative Connect America Cost Model (Enhanced ACAM) program.

This guidance addresses:

- Engaging with Tribal governments that have jurisdiction over Tribal lands that receive broadband service supported by the High Cost program, and providing supporting documentation to state broadband offices if a carrier has obtained Tribal government consent to serve Tribal locations.
- Participating in the BEAD challenge process to determine which locations are ineligible for BEAD funding because they are already served or will be served by “reliable broadband service” at required speeds.
- Providing requested information to state broadband offices, which will apply for and allocate BEAD funding on behalf of subgrantees in their states. This includes information about the service areas and specific locations that carriers serve (or plan to serve) using High Cost support, as well as details about the technologies used to provide service at those locations and the speeds available.

Key Dates and Trainings

E-Rate

- The FY2024 FCC Form 471 application filing window will open on January 17, 2024 at 12 p.m. ET.
- Tuesday, January 9, 2024 – January Tribal Teleconferences Q&A Session focusing on E-Rate will be held at 4 p.m. ET – Register.
- To view prior webinars, please visit the E-Rate webinar page or E-Rate Tribal Training page for additional information about changes made to the E-Rate program to encourage greater Tribal applicant participation.

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 at TribalLiaison@usac.org.

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