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Universal Service
Administrative Co.

Tribal Outreach

July 2023 USAC Tribal Nation Newsletter

July 31, 2023

We are excited to announce that the [Universal Service Administrative Company](#) (USAC) is heading out on the road next month to present in person at two highly anticipated Tribal events.

On August 9, we will be joining forces with the Alaska Native Health Board in Anchorage, Alaska, for their Mega Meeting. This bi-annual event offers an invaluable opportunity to hear directly from Tribal leaders and Department Division Directors, as they share their thoughts on federal and state legislative priorities and initiatives.

Additionally, from August 28-30, we will be in Chandler, Arizona, to present at the National Tribal Telecommunications Association's Fall Tribal Broadband Summit. We look forward to engaging with industry leaders as they reveal best practices, new ideas, and real-world experiences of bringing high-speed internet to Tribal communities.

We hope to see you at these enriching events!

USAC Relationship with Program Consultants

Some Universal Service Fund program applicants choose to employ consultants during the program application process. Please be advised that USAC does not affiliate with or endorse individual consultants. Consultants who work with USF program applicants may not state or imply that their services are endorsed or recommended by USAC. If you have questions about USAC programs and the resources available to support applicants, please visit the program homepages.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact TribalLiaison@usac.org.

E-Rate

Tribal Library Report and Order Adopted by FCC

The FCC adopted a [Report and Order](#) on July 20, amending program rules to enhance Tribal applicants' access to the E-Rate program to encourage greater Tribal participation in the program. Specific updates to the E-Rate program rules include granting E-Rate eligibility to Tribal College and University libraries that serve as public libraries in their communities, changes to the category two discount and budget for Tribal libraries, and adding a Tribal community representative to the USAC Board of Directors. In addition, FCC Chairwoman Rosenworcel announced the extension of the Tribal Libraries Pilot Program for an additional funding year. **We will be providing additional information on both the Report and Order and how to apply to the Pilot Program in the near future.**

FY2024 Competitive Bidding

The FCC Form 470 for Funding Year (FY) 2024 is now available in the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC). Applicants who have long procurement cycles or other reasons for starting their FY2024 competitive bidding processes well in advance of the funding year can now complete and certify this form. See the [June 2023 E-Rate News Brief](#) for FCC Form 470 and competitive bidding resources.

E-Rate Trainings

The Beginning E-Rate Services Webinar was held on June 27. The session gave applicants and service providers a high-level overview of the next steps in the E-Rate process after equipment and services are funded. View the

[recording](#). View the [webinar slides](#).

To learn more about E-Rate program updates, please review the [July 2023 E-Rate News Brief](#).

[High Cost](#)

Form 481 and Broadband Deployment Data Now Available to Tribal Officials

Tribal governments may now access the most recent [FCC Form 481](#) filings submitted by telecommunications carriers that serve their lands with financing from the Universal Service Fund (USF) High Cost program, as well as deployment data for broadband networks supported by the Connect America Fund.

The High Cost Program ensures the universal availability of essential telecommunications services in rural America, including Indian Country. The program provides funding to telecommunications carriers to reach rural communities where the market alone cannot support the high cost of deploying network infrastructure and supplying connectivity. Historically, High Cost has subsidized traditional voice service to ensure that rates in rural and urban areas are reasonably comparable. The FCC, however, is reforming the program to support broadband with the modernized Connect America Fund, or CAF. Read the full [announcement](#).

USAC Updates CAF Map

USAC has released an updated version of the Connect America Fund Broadband Map – [CAF Map](#) – an interactive online map that shows the impact of the Connect America Fund (CAF) on broadband expansion to close the digital divide in rural America. The Connect America Fund – a central piece of the federal Universal Service Fund (USF) [High Cost program](#) – provides funding to telecommunications carriers to bring advanced communications networks and reliable, high-speed internet access to rural communities that might otherwise go unserved.

First launched in 2018, the CAF Map displays the geographic locations – by latitude and longitude – where carriers that receive CAF support have built out mass-market, high-speed internet service. The latest version of the map contains updated information to reflect broadband deployment through Dec. 31, 2022.

The CAF Map is a key source of information about CAF-supported broadband deployment for consumers, researchers, and policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels. Read the full [announcement](#).

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

FCC Announces Availability of Unused Funds to Fully Fund Rural Health Care Program Demand for FY2023

On May 24, 2023, the FCC Wireline Competition Bureau directed USAC to carry forward up to \$211.50 million in unused funds from prior funding years to the extent necessary to satisfy Funding Year (FY) 2023 demand for the Rural Health Care program. Because of this, all eligible RHC program funding requests filed during the FY2023 application filing window can now be fully funded without prioritization. Please read the [public notice](#) for more information.

Funding Request Reviews Starting Earlier Than Ever

In our continuing efforts to deliver funding decisions as soon as possible, RHC began funding request reviews before the funding request window closed. Information requests will be issued if funding requests are incomplete. Per program rules, applicants have 14 days to respond to information requests. Please be sure to reply by the deadline listed on the Information Request. **The first FY2023 funding commitments were issued on June 1, 2023, four weeks after the close of the filing window.**

New! FY2024 Competitive Bidding

Beginning on July 1, 2023, applicants can start the competitive bidding process for FY2024. For the Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) program, the FCC Form 461 (Request for Services Form), along with any other competitive bidding documents such as a Request for Proposal (RFP), may be submitted in RHC Connect. For the Telecommunications (Telecom) program, the FCC Form 465 (Request for Services Form) may be submitted in My Portal.

Learn more about RHC program rule changes, important reminders, RHC Connect updates, and online tools in the [July 2023 RHC Newsletter](#).

[ACP](#)

Proof of Eligibility Updates Released on June 29

On June 29, USAC released a simplified experience for consumers who need to provide proof of their eligibility to participate in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). Consumers will now be asked if they have a document that shows their income **before being asked about confirming their eligibility via a qualifying program**. If consumers have appropriate income documentation, they will be asked to answer a few questions about the size of their household and their annual income and then directed to a new "share proof of your income" page. This new page helps consumers understand the document requirements, gives common examples of acceptable documentation, and explains how to upload documents and what to do if they don't have proof of their income.

These changes were implemented based on USAC's understanding of how most successful applicants complete their application, and these updates will offer a quicker path to uploading documentation for many. Visit our [Community Resources](#) page for the latest screenshots of the online consumer application.

Updates to Acceptable Documentation Guide

On June 9, USAC released updates to the English version of the [Acceptable Documentation Guide](#) to make it easier for consumers to understand what documents they may need to provide when they apply for the ACP. The language and formatting have been simplified to help consumers understand the document requirements, and common examples of acceptable documentation to confirm their eligibility, identity, or address have been added. An updated Spanish version of the acceptable documentation guide is also [available](#).

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 [June 2023 ACP Newsletter](#).

Key Dates and Trainings

E-Rate

- **No upcoming webinars at this time.** To view prior webinars, please visit the E-Rate [webinar page](#) or the [E-Rate Tribal-specific trainings](#).

RHC

- **Wednesday, August 2, 2023** -- RHC will Host the HCF Request for Services Webinar at 2 p.m. ET - [Register](#).
- **Wednesday, August 16, 2023** -- RHC will Host the Telecom Request for Services Webinar at 2 p.m. ET - [Register](#).

Lifeline/ACP

- **Wednesday, August 9, 2023** -- Lifeline will host their August 2023 Monthly 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 at TribalLiaison@usac.org.

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