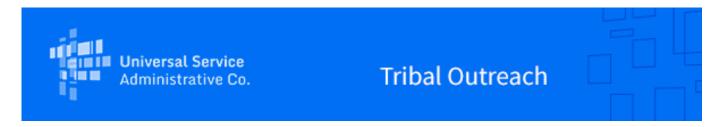View this email as a web page.

March 2023 USAC Tribal Newsletter

March 31, 2023

Dear Tribal Leader,

Universal Service Administrative Company's (USAC) April Tribal Teleconference will include a review of all four Universal Service Fund programs and the Affordable Connectivity Program, and the opportunity to ask questions about these programs and ways your community can participate. Please join us on **Tuesday, April 11, 2023, at 4 p.m. ET.** (Register).

USAC attended the National Tribal Telecommunications Association (NTTA) Tribal Broadband Summit and it was great to connect with Tribal participants in person. We'll be on the road this year and look forward to meeting with representatives from Tribal communities. If you are organizing or attending events and you'd like us to consider joining, please send information about the events to TribalLiaison@usac.org.

E-Rate

Prepare for Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) review. During PIA review, we verify certain information on your FCC Form 471 application, and we may have additional questions to help us in our review. We will notify you by email and in your EPC News Feed that there are PIA questions waiting for you to answer. Now is a good time to alert your service provider that you may need help with network diagrams, product descriptions, and other data that they should be able to supply if asked any questions about the requested services and equipment. Please respond promptly to any PIA requests for information or documentation.

UEI Requirement Coming Soon. In the second quarter of 2023, USAC will update the FCC Form 498 for all E-Rate applicants **to require entities to provide an active SAM.gov assigned Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) on the FCC Form 498.** All E-Rate applicants who are using the Billed Entity Applicant Reimbursement (BEAR) method of reimbursement will need to provide their UEI by submitting a new FCC Form 498 or modifying their existing FCC Form 498. The February 16, 2023 E-Rate News Brief provides more information about this requirement and how to register on SAM.gov to obtain a UEI.

Tribal E-Rate Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. On Thursday, February 16, 2023, the FCC adopted a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (Notice) on potential changes to the E-Rate program meant to encourage greater Tribal participation. The Notice seeks comments on a variety of topics, including making Tribal College libraries eligible for E-Rate, improving the E-Rate application process, simplifying the cost-allocation rules and procedures, increasing the category two discount level and funding floor for Tribal applicants, adopting a definition of "Tribal," as well as any other changes that can be made to make it easier for Tribal applicants to access and participate in the E-Rate program.

Comments are due April 24, 2023 in the FCC's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS). Reply Comments are due by May 23, 2023. Comments should be filed with the CC Docket Numbers 02-6, 96-45, and 97-21.

If you have any questions or would like more information about applying for E-Rate program funding, you can also reach out to USAC's Tribal Liaison at TribalTraining@usac.org for additional help.

Rural Health Care (RHC)

Federal Communications Commission (FCC)'s Wireline Competition Bureau Releases Order DA 23-189 Extending the Close of the Funding Year (FY) 2023 Application Filing Window to May 1, 2023.

On March 8, 2023, the FCC released an [Order (DA 23-189)](#) extending the deadline for filing FY2023 funding requests to May 1, 2023.

The FY2023 Application Filing Window opened **December 1, 2022 and now closes May 1, 2023.** This means that you can submit your funding requests ([FCC Form 462](#) or [FCC Form 466](#)) no later than 11:59 p.m. ET on May 1, 2023. We highly encourage you to submit your funding requests as early as possible in the filing window. Learn more about [filing windows](#).

Wednesday, April 19, 2023, RHC will host their Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) Program office hours webinar at 2 p.m. ET. - [Register](#)

Wednesday, April 26, 2023, RHC will host their Telecommunications (Telecom) Program office hours webinar at 2 p.m. ET - [Register](#)

Lifeline and the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)

The Lifeline team held their Quarter 1 Lifeline 101 Training on March 15, 2023. If you were not able to attend, the [slides](#) are available.

Thanks to our collective efforts, [ACP](#) has reached over 17 million households.

In conjunction with the FCC's newly expanded efforts to promote ACP, including outreach grants [announced](#) for nationwide, Tribal, and [pilot program participants](#), USAC released updates to the online consumer application on March 30 to make the application and enrollment process easier. Key updates include streamlining the qualification question, sharing the results of database checks earlier in the process, simplifying the certification language, and providing specific instructions for how to enroll with a participating provider.

Overview of Planned Enhancements

- Providing a new "Before You Get Started" page with tips for the application process

- Starting with a single initial program selection question for most applicants that asks if they qualify for Medicaid and/or SNAP

- Letting consumers who qualify through an automated data match know their results prior to creating an account

- Simplifying the language on the certifications page and reducing the required interaction to a single written confirmation from the consumer

- Enabling automatic sign-in following account creation

- Providing clear, specific directions for how to enroll with a provider once approved

- Updating email outreach to consumers to encourage them to complete their applications

USAC created several new resources to help navigate the enhancements:

- [Video](#) demonstration of the new consumer application

- [Screenshots](#) of different workflows in the new consumer application

- English online [application instructions](#) (updated translations in nine other languages are coming soon)

If navigators or service providers would like to update their consumer outreach materials, USAC recommends referring to the "Apply Now" button on AffordableConnectivity.gov to ensure consumers can access the updated application workflow. More details on the enhancements are available in the bulletin USAC released on March 29 and the recorded webinar from March 29.

These changes incorporate feedback from navigators and other stakeholders, and USAC and the FCC will continue making improvements to the ACP system based on future feedback.

ACP Support Center PO Box Transition

The ACP and Lifeline Support Centers transitioned their PO Box mailing address for both the ACP and Lifeline to a new address. Mail sent to the old PO Box mailing address will continue to be forwarded for a period to ensure that there is no interruption in application/document processing. However, service providers should begin using the new PO Box as soon as possible. Below is the new PO Box mailing address:
ACP Support Center PO Box 9100
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18773-9100

USAC released updated versions of the ACP application and recertification forms with the new PO Box mailing address on our website. The new PO Box has also been updated on all USAC web content. Service providers should update their consumer outreach materials that contain the current ACP and Lifeline Support Centers' mailing address. For more information, please refer to the bulletin USAC released on March 28.

The USAC ACP team will host office hours on the upcoming enhancements on April 5 and April 13 at 3 p.m. ET. Please register in advance to attend.

Key Dates and Trainings

E-Rate

- **No upcoming webinars at this time.**

RHC

- **Wednesday, April 19, 2023**, RHC will host their Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) Program office hours webinar at 2 p.m. ET. - Register

- **Wednesday, April 26, 2023**, RHC will host their Telecommunications (Telecom) Program office hours webinar at 2 p.m. ET - Register

Lifeline/ACP

- **Wednesday, April 5, 2023**, ACP will host office hours on the upcoming enhancements at 3 p.m. ET – Register

- **Wednesday, April 12, 2023**, Lifeline will host their monthly webinar at 3 p.m. ET – Register

- **Thursday, April 13, 2023**, ACP will host their Q1 Tribal host office hours on the upcoming enhancements at 3 p.m. ET – Register

USF Program Technical Assistance

The USAC Customer Service Center (CSC) provides customer service for the Universal Service Fund (USF) programs. Visit our 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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