



Universal Service
Administrative Co.

March 2026 Tribal Nation Newsletter

March 31, 2026 | [Universal Service Administrative Company \(USAC\)](#)



Tribal Nation News

Join USAC for the April 2026 Tribal Teleconference, held in collaboration with the E-Rate program, for applicants and service providers who are new to the E-Rate program. After attending this webinar, you will be able to: accurately describe what E-Rate is and the different steps of the E-Rate process, obtain a Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN), bid on projects, certify compliance, and invoice USAC. There will be time for Q&A.

Please join us on **Tuesday, April 14, 2026, at 4 p.m. ET** – [Register](#).

Notes from USAC's Tribal Liaison

Lifeline Introduces a Tribal Lands Verification Tool for Consumers

On March 26, 2026, Lifeline launched the [Lifeline Tribal Lands Verification Tool](#) to help consumers check whether their home address is located on qualifying Tribal lands. Consumers who live on qualifying Tribal lands may be eligible to receive an enhanced [Tribal benefit](#) of up to \$34.25 per month towards the cost of internet, phone, or bundled services, as well as a one-time Link Up discount of up to \$100.

This tool is for informational purposes only and does not determine a consumer's eligibility for the Lifeline benefit. Consumers must apply for the Lifeline benefit and have an approved application before enrolling with a phone or internet company to begin receiving the benefit. Consumers who do not live on qualifying Tribal lands may still qualify for the standard Lifeline benefit of up to \$9.25 per month.

Service providers and consumer advocates are encouraged to inform consumers who live on Tribal lands about the availability of the tool. For additional information, refer to our [March 26, 2026](#) bulletin announcement.

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 also add their SAM.gov Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) to their FCC Form 498. To prepare for this transition, USAC will be sending an email to service providers and BEAR applicants with additional information. Once the transition has occurred, service providers and BEAR applicants must renew their SAM.gov registration annually receive disbursements

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

E-Rate

Guidance on Competitive Bidding and the Minimum 28-Day Waiting Period

March 4, 2026, was the last day to certify and submit a Funding Year (FY) 2026 FCC Form 470, wait the required minimum 28-day period, and certify and submit an FCC Form 471 before the application filing window closes on April 1, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. E.T.

For applicants who have **not** yet certified and submitted their FY2026 FCC Form 470, you may still take the following steps:

1. Certify and submit your FCC Form 470 as soon as you are ready. Be sure to upload any request for proposal (RFP) documents you have to your form. Please review the [FCC Form 470 Filing](#) webpage for more information.
2. Wait at least 28 days before you choose a service provider, sign a contract, and submit and certify your FCC Form 471. If you are required to wait more than 28 days due to your state or local procurement rules or regulations, or competitive bidding requirements, be sure to follow those requirements. As a reminder, ensure you follow all competitive bidding requirements and wait the required 28-day minimum period before awarding a contract. The [FCC Form 470/Competitive Bidding infographic](#) contains reminders to help ensure your success in the E-Rate program. Additional resources include [Competitive Bidding FAQs](#), [28-Day Waiting Period](#), and the [E-Rate Document Retention](#) page.
3. Certify and submit your FCC Form 471. You will receive a notification that your form is considered out-of-window.
4. Request a waiver of the FCC Form 471 application filing window deadline with the FCC, providing details of the circumstances that led to your late filing. You can refer to the Submitting Window Waiver Requests section of the [FCC Form 471 Filing](#) page on the USAC website or the [E-Rate Appeals Waiver Guide](#) to learn more about how to file a waiver request.

If the FCC approves your waiver request, USAC will move your FCC Form 471 to an in-window status and add it to the queue for Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) review. If the FCC denies your waiver request, your FY2026 FCC Form 471 application will not be reviewed or processed by USAC.

Extended Customer Service Center Hours for Final Days of the Application Filing Window

The E-Rate Customer Service Center (CSC) will be open extended hours before the April 1, 2026 deadline for the close of the FY2026 FCC Form 471 application filing window to help applicants with last-minute questions and any issues. Call CSC at (888) 203-8100 for assistance.

Below are CSC's extended hours beginning Saturday, March 28, through Wednesday, April 1 (all times are Eastern Time (E.T.)):

- Tuesday, March 31 – 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- Wednesday, April 1 – 8 a.m. to 11:59 p.m.

To learn more about the E-Rate program, review the [March 2026 E-Rate News Brief](#). If you are Tribal library or TCU library, consider joining [T-LEAP](#).

[Lifeline](#)

Reminder: New NLAD De-Enrollment Codes Effective April 22

On April 22, USAC is updating the National Lifeline Accountability Database (NLAD) de-enrollment codes by adding the following new codes: **deEnrollSubscriberInitiated**, **deEnrollMovedfromServiceArea**, **deEnrollNotEligible**, **deEnrollImproperEnrollment**, and **deEnrollPIIUpdate**.

The following codes will be removed: deEnrollLeaving and deEnrollFailedRecertification.

Providers must include both the de-enrollment date and the correct code, ensuring the selected reason accurately reflects why the subscriber is being de-enrolled. Attempts to use removed codes will result in an error message.

For additional details on the new de-enrollment codes, service providers should review Lifeline's [February 19, 2026](#), bulletin announcement.

April 2026 Monthly Webinar: How to Manage the Lifeline Benefit

Join us on **Wednesday, April, 2026**, for our next Lifeline program webinar where we will provide consumers and consumer advocates with an overview of how existing Lifeline subscribers can manage their Lifeline benefit. Register for the April 2026 monthly webinar. [Register](#) for the April 2026 monthly webinar.

Recordings of previous webinars are available on our [Webinars](#) page.

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

FY2026 Filing Window Closes April 1, 2026

The filing window for FY2026 closes tomorrow, April 1, 2026. Learn more about [filing windows](#). Beginning in FY2024, the FCC directed USAC to allow health care providers to file funding requests in the RHC Program up to 30 days after the close of the application filing window. If the FCC grants a waiver of the application filing deadline, USAC will process the funding request as if it was timely filed prior to the close of the application filing window. USAC will dismiss the funding request if there is no request to waive the application filing deadline or if the FCC denies the waiver request.

For more information, please read FCC Order [DA 24-366](#).

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 [HCF Program Post-Commitment Actions](#) and [Telecom Program Post-Commitment Actions](#) webpages.

RHC Connect System Enhancements

RHC is committed to continually improving the stakeholder experience in RHC Connect. The following system enhancements will be deployed March 20, 2026:

Anytime Decommitment Applicant Submission and View

We are delivering a complete decommitment experience for HCF applicants, allowing them to start, submit, view, and withdraw decommitment requests. Applicants will be able to:

- Select an FCC Form 462 for partial decommitment from a list of eligible FCC Forms 462.
- Reduce a specific line item's commitment amount.
- Select one or multiple FCC Form 462 applications for full decommitment from a list of eligible FCC Forms 462.
- View an explanation when an FCC Form 462 is not available for decommitment.
- See the funding details of the selected FCC Forms 462.
- View the details of submitted decommitment requests.

The [Post Commitment Change Requests](#) user guide has been updated to reflect these upcoming changes.

Invoicing and Post-Commitment Controls

To prevent inconsistent or conflicting requests, we are implementing additional controls around invoicing and other post-commitment actions when decommitments have been submitted or processed. In particular, the system will:

- Restrict invoicing and other post-commitment actions on an FCC Form 462 while a related decommitment request is in submitted status.
- Update the commitment amounts available for invoicing after a decommitment has been processed.

Email Notifications

Emails will be automatically sent to HCP users when the decommitment request is:

- Submitted
- Processed
- Including a decision PDF
- Including a revised FCL for approved partial decommitments
- Withdrawn

Key Dates for FY2026

Rural Health Care Program: **Funding Year 2026**

FY2026: JULY 1, 2026 - JUNE 30, 2027



Key Dates and Trainings

Lifeline | How to Manage the Lifeline Benefit

Wednesday, April 8, 2026, at 3 p.m. ET - [Register >](#)

Tribal Teleconference with E-Rate

General E-Rate 101

Tuesday, April 14, 2026, at 4 p.m. ET - [Register >](#)

E-Rate

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

E-Rate In-Person Trainings

USAC is coming to an event near you in 2026. E-Rate experts will provide training, discuss program updates, and answer questions from new and experienced participants. USAC will announce when registration for these in-person training events will open in a future news brief.

Below are events that we will attend where we can answer your E-Rate questions.

- E-Rate Training – Phoenix, AZ: September 15, 2026
- E-Rate Training – Washington, DC: September 24, 2026

RHC

No upcoming webinars. To view prior webinars, please visit the [RHC 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.