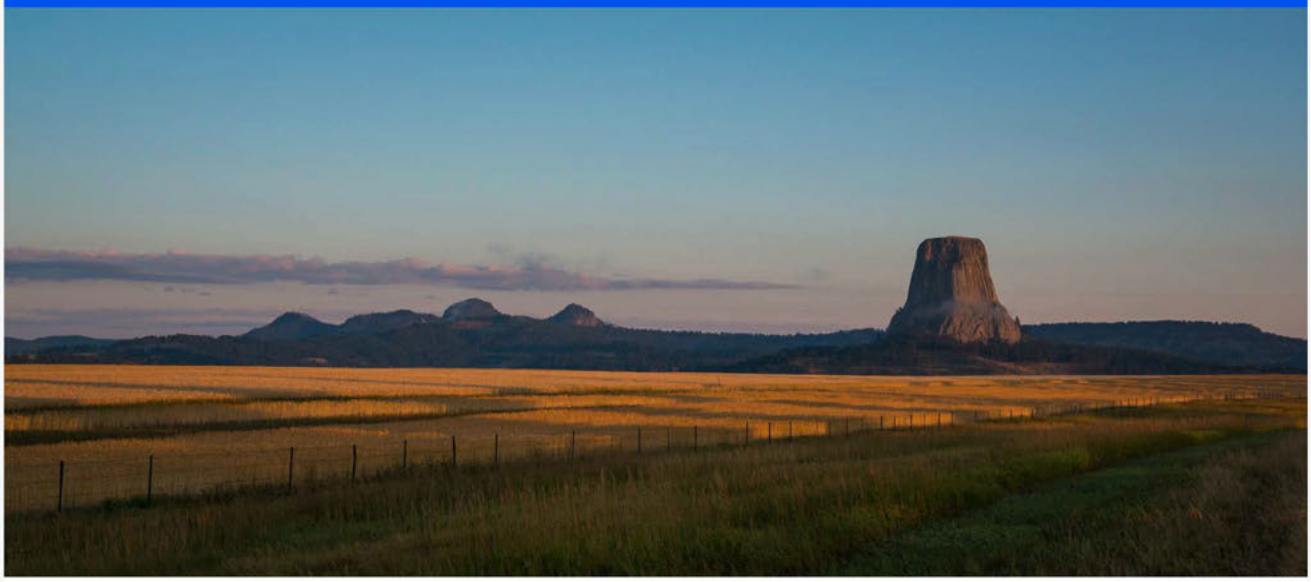
View this email as a web page.

Universal Service Administrative Co.

October 2026 Tribal Nation Newsletter

October 30, 2026 | Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC)



Tribal Nation News

Join the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) and the E-Rate team for the November Tribal Teleconference. This session will provide program updates, information about competitive bidding, and upcoming deadlines with time for Q&A.

Please join us on **Tuesday, November 10, 2026, at 4 p.m. ET** – Register.

Notes from USAC's Tribal Liaison

Tribal Library E-Rate Advocacy Program Recap

USAC hosted the Fall Tribal Library E-Rate Advocacy Program (T-LEAP) kick-off and information session webinar on October 27. To review the slides and resources, please review the deck here.

What is T-LEAP?

T-LEAP offers direct support to Tribal libraries and Tribal college and university (TCU) libraries in navigating the E-Rate application process, including one-on-one assistance in preparing applications, applying to the program, and receiving E-Rate support.

To learn more, please visit the T-LEAP page or contact the USAC Tribal Liaison. Interested Tribal libraries can sign up here year-round.

E-Rate

FY2025 Invoicing Deadline Reminders for Recurring Services

If you are an applicant, remember to file your FCC Form 486 if you have received a positive funding commitment and your services have started. USAC cannot process invoices for Funding Year (FY) 2026 services from applicants or service providers without an approved FCC Form 486 on file. Use the E-Rate FRN Status tool FY2016+ to find your funding request numbers (FRNs) and check the "FCC Form 486 Status" column. If your FCC Form 486 appears to be late, we will send you an FCC Form 486 Urgent Reminder Letter to remind you of the upcoming deadline. You have 15 days after the date of the reminder letter to submit and certify your FCC Form 486 without having your service start date changed and your funding commitment potentially reduced for that FRN. View the FCC Form 486 Filing page to learn about submitting the form and actions for late-filed forms.

Tips for the EPC Administrative Window:

The FY2027 EPC administrative window opened October 21, 2026. The EPC administrative window is the period during which applicants can make updates to their entity profile information in EPC to prepare for the upcoming FCC Form 471 application filing window. The administrative window will close shortly before the FY2027 FCC Form 471 application filing window opens in early 2027. Applicant entity profiles will then be locked and changes cannot be made. Prepare to update your entity profile information in EPC during the administrative window:

- Make sure you have an active Account Administrator.
- Account Administrators:
  - Add new users and deactivate users that no longer work at your organization;
  - Review and update user rights by form/transaction; and
  - Add or remove consulting firms.
- Update entity relationships for child entities or consortia members.
- Update student counts and library square footage.
- Update entity subtypes.

Reminders

For more information about FY2027 competitive bidding, how to use Open Data to confirm invoicing and service delivery deadlines, and more, please review the October 2026 E-Rate News Brief.

If you are a Tribal library or TCU library interested in participating in E-Rate, consider joining T-LEAP and review the participant process.

Lifeline

Reminder: Provider Billing Must Include Amount Charged and Amount Passed Through

Service provider billing documentation must clearly indicate the amount charged to the subscriber and the amount of Lifeline support that is being passed through to the consumer. These billing details should match the information in the corresponding claims submitted for reimbursement.

Reminder: Recognize and Report Email Phishing Attacks

October marks Cybersecurity Awareness Month, and USAC is taking an opportunity to remind service providers to remain alert to phishing emails that could put account credentials, subscriber information, or other sensitive information at risk.

Phishing emails are designed to appear as though they come from a trusted person or organization to prompt recipients to respond. Service providers are encouraged to stay informed of emerging phishing tactics and have proactive measures in place to help protect the Lifeline program and the consumers it supports.

Newer Phishing Tactics

- AI-written emails that sound convincing and are error-free
- Fake login portals that mimic Microsoft, Google, or banking sites
- QR-code phishing that redirects to malicious pages
- Deepfakes using realistic voices or videos of trusted people

Common Phishing Signs

Common signs include a message creating urgency or fear (e.g., “Your account will be locked”), generic greetings, and suspicious attachments (unexpected Word, Excel, or ZIP files). Please be aware that correct grammar, familiar logos, and professional language do not confirm a message is necessarily legitimate.

How to Stay Safe

- Use caution with urgent or unexpected requests.
- Hover over links to check the destination before clicking. Do not click if the destination is unfamiliar or suspicions.
- Verify login prompts by navigating directly to the website.
- Report suspicious messages.

If you receive a message claiming to be from USAC but you are concerned that it is phishing, email WhistleblowerReports@usac.org.

Support Center: Operating Schedule Through Year-End

The Lifeline Support Center will be closed on the following days: November 26 and December 25, 2026, and January 1, 2027. Additionally, Lifeline applications requiring manual review will not be reviewed and approved on these days.

Rural Health Care (RHC)

FY2027 Urban and Rural Rates – Telcom Program

On August 7, 2026, the FCC released an order as part of FCC 26-54. This order waives the FCC’s rules for FY2027 to permit the use of previously approved rural rates from funding years 2024 through 2026 that would otherwise require approval of a cost-based justification using Method 3. For more information on rural rates and the waiver, please review FCC 26-54 and USAC’s FY2027 Urban and Rural Rate Information tip sheet.

Submit your FY2027 Request for Services Forms to Start Competitive Bidding

The HCF Program's FCC Form 461 and the Telecom Program's FCC Form 465 (Request for Services Forms) may be submitted in RHC Connect along with any other competitive bidding documents, such as a Request for Proposal (RFP). Please use the following resources to submit these forms:

HCF Program FCC Form 461:

- Prepare for Competitive Bidding & Request Services webpage

- Welcome to RHC Connect – FCC Form 461 webpage
- Competitive Bidding Exemptions webpage
- RHC Connect FCC Form 461 User Guide
- How to File the FCC Form 461 self-guided training video

Telecom Program FCC Form 465:

- Prepare for Competitive Bidding & Request Services webpage
- Welcome to RHC Connect – FCC Form 465 webpage
- Competitive Bidding Exemptions webpage
- RHC Connect FCC Form 465 User Guide
- Telecom Program Request for Services (FCC Form 465) self-guided training video

FCC RHC Program Rulemaking

The FCC adopted a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking seeking comment on efforts to streamline and improve the RHC program as part of FCC 26-54 . Specifically, the Commission is seeking comments on defining the scope of "similar services" and "comparable rural areas" for purposes of determining rural rates in the Telecom Program, measures to lessen the burdens resulting from the cost study option of determining rural rates and the associated evidentiary requirements proposed previously, ways to encourage the use of lower-cost back-up services, and how to establish an eligible services list for the RHC Program. Comments were due in the FCC's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS) in WC Docket No. 17-310 on or before September 30, 2026, and reply comments on or before October 30, 2026.

Key Dates and Trainings

Tribal Teleconference with E-Rate
Tuesday, November 10, 2026, at 4 p.m. ET – Register >

E-Rate | Eligible Services 101
Tuesday, November 3, 2026, at 2 p.m. ET – Register >

RHC | FY2027 Funding Request Best Practices (HCF Program)
Wednesday, November 11, 2026, at 2 p.m. ET – Register >

RHC | FY2027 Funding Request Best Practices (Telecom Program)
Wednesday, November 18, 2026, at 2 p.m. ET – Register >

RHC | Consortium Best Practices
Wednesday, December 9, 2026, at 2 p.m. ET – Register >

Lifeline | Navigating the National Lifeline Accountability Database (NLAD)
Wednesday, November 18, 2026, at 2 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 in the specifics of each program.

Questions or suggestions? Contact USAC's Tribal Liaison at TribalLiaison@usac.org.

[redacted].

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