September 2023 USAC Tribal Nation Newsletter

September 29, 2023

Universal Service Administrative Company’s (USAC) October Tribal Teleconference, “Tribal Pilot Program and E-Rate Q&A,” will provide live support for questions regarding the E-Rate program updates announced in July, including updates to the Tribal Libraries Pilot Program. Please join the teleconference on Tuesday, October 10, 2023, at 4 p.m. ET – Register.

USAC will also host a repeat session of the Tribal Pilot Overview on October 3, 2023, at 4 p.m. ET. During the session, we will discuss the recent E-Rate program updates and walk through information to help Tribal libraries decide if they want to join the Tribal Library Pilot for Funding Year (FY) 2024. Time will be provided for Q&A – Register.

E-Rate

In the August 2023 Tribal Nation Newsletter, we shared information about the additional steps the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) took to expand eligibility and increase Tribal participation in the E-Rate program. A few specific updates in FCC 23-56 include granting E-Rate eligibility to Tribal college and university libraries that also serve as public libraries in their communities, increasing the maximum Category Two (C2) discount rate to 90 percent and the C2 funding floor to $55,000 for Tribal libraries, and creating an exemption to the competitive bidding requirements for libraries (Tribal and non-Tribal) seeking E-Rate support for C2 equipment and services that total a pre-discount price of $3,600 or less per library per funding year.

In addition, a formal definition of “Tribal” in the E-Rate program was adopted to better identify Tribal applicants seeking E-Rate funding and to ensure Tribal libraries receive the new C2 benefits.

An entity is ‘Tribal’ for purposes of E-Rate funding if it is a school operated by or receiving funding from the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), or if it is a school or library operated by any Tribe, Band, Nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska native village, regional corporation, or village corporation (as defined in, or established pursuant to, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. § 1601 et seq.)) that is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians.

These changes are in addition to the adoption of FCC 22-8 (2022 Tribal Library Order) in 2022. The 2022 Tribal Library Order amended the FCC’s definition of library to include Tribal libraries, and to clarify Tribal libraries are eligible for support from state library administrative agencies under the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and the Museum and Library Services Act of 2018. Tribal Councils can designate a library as a Tribal library (for example, through a Tribal Resolution), and Tribal libraries should be able to demonstrate that they have three basic characteristics of a library: (1) regularly scheduled hours, (2) staff, and (3) materials available for library users.

To learn more about the most recent changes, please visit the FCC’s Tribal Order page.

Apply for the Tribal Libraries Pilot Program!

The Tribal Libraries Pilot Program provides one-on-one assistance in applying for and receiving E-Rate support. This includes sharing information about program rules and requirements, providing training on how to use the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC), and walking through the competitive bidding and application processes. To learn more...
about the pilot, including eligibility, expectations, and application steps, please review the Tribal Libraries Pilot Program page.

You can complete the survey application for the Pilot Program at [https://tinyurl.com/TribalLibraryPilot](https://tinyurl.com/TribalLibraryPilot).

**USAC Announces Fall Virtual Trainings**

USAC confirmed the E-Rate Fall 2023 Training dates for applicants and service providers that wish to learn more about the program and how to participate. These training sessions will be virtual, and registration for each session is now available through the links below. The sessions are for E-Rate program participants of all levels of experience and will include opportunities to ask questions. Recordings of these trainings will be available after the trainings.

- **E-Rate Program Overview** on Tuesday, October 3, 2023 at 2 p.m. ET – [Register](#).
  - USAC will provide a high-level overview of the E-Rate application process from beginning to end and explain basic program concepts for applicants and service providers. After the presentation, we will conduct a Q&A session.

- **E-Rate Pre-Commitment Process** on Thursday, October 5, 2023 at 2 p.m. ET – [Register](#).
  - USAC will discuss the E-Rate Pre-Commitment process. This includes how to get started, competitive bidding, applying for discounts, and Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) review. After the presentation, we will conduct a Q&A session.

- **Eligible Services 101** on Thursday, October 12, 2023 at 2 p.m. ET – [Register](#).
  - USAC will provide an overview of E-Rate eligible services followed by a Q&A session.

- **Category Two Budgets** on Tuesday, October 17, 2023 at 2 p.m. ET – [Register](#).
  - USAC will discuss Category Two (C2) budgets. We will provide an overview of C2 budgets and C2 budget guidance for FY2024. After the presentation, we will conduct a Q&A session.

- **EPC Administrative Window** on Thursday, October 19, 2023 at 2 p.m. ET – [Register](#).
  - USAC will discuss the EPC Administrative Window, the period during which applicants can make updates to their profile information in the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC), to prepare for the upcoming FCC Form 471 application filing window. After the presentation, we will conduct a Q&A session.

- **E-Rate Post-Commitment Process** on Tuesday, November 7, 2023 at 2 p.m. ET – [Register](#).
  - USAC will discuss the E-Rate Post-Commitment Process and other post-commitment activities. Topics include starting services, the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), service substitutions, appeals, and more. After the presentation, we will conduct a Q&A session.

- **Invoicing** on Thursday, November 9, 2023 at 2 p.m. ET – [Register](#).
  - This webinar is designed to help E-Rate program participants (applicants and service providers) understand the invoicing process. We will discuss the FCC Form 472 (BEAR Form) and the FCC Form 474 (SPI Form), invoice deadlines, invoicing reviews, and more. This session will not cover the new invoicing functionality in EPC.

To review other E-Rate program updates, please see the [September 2023 E-Rate News Brief](#).

**Lifeline and ACP**

**FCC Releases Report and Order for Consumers in Certain High-Cost Areas**

On August 4, 2023, the FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB) released a report and order ([FCC 23-62](#)) that adopts rules to establish an enhanced discount for monthly broadband services in certain high-cost areas for Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) consumers. Service providers in certain high-cost areas designated by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) can provide up to a $75 monthly benefit to ACP-eligible households if the provider can show they would experience particularized economic hardship that
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 program updates, please visit the ACP Bulletins page and review the August 2023 ACP Newsletter.

Key Dates and Trainings

E-Rate

- **Tuesday, October 3, 2023** – USAC will host a repeat info session on E-Rate Tribal Order Updates and the Tribal Libraries Pilot program at 4 p.m. ET – [Register].

- **Tuesday, October 10, 2023** – October Tribal Teleconference Q&A Session focusing on E-Rate Tribal Order Updates will be held at 4 p.m. ET – [Register].

- To view prior webinars, please visit the E-Rate webinar page or the E-Rate Tribal-specific trainings.

RHC

- **Wednesday, October 18, 2023**, RHC will host a webinar on best practices for invoicing in the Connected Care Pilot Program (CCPP) at 2 p.m. ET – [Register].

Lifeline/ACP

- **Wednesday, October 11, 2023**, Lifeline will host the October 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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