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September 2025 Tribal Nation Newsletter

September 30, 2025 | [Universal Service Administrative Company \(USAC\)](#).



Tribal Nation News

Join USAC for the October 2025 Tribal Teleconference, in collaboration with the [E-Rate program](#), to learn more about the E-Rate pre-commitment process, including competitive bidding for eligible equipment and services. There will be time for Q&A. Please join us on **Tuesday, October 14, 2025, at 4 p.m. ET** – [Register](#).

Notes from USAC's Tribal Liaison

New Dates for the E-Rate Fall Training Series

The E-Rate fall training series is a set of webinars that covers the E-Rate program from start to finish. You'll be given a general overview of how the program works, then move into the specifics of each step of the process. This includes how to enter the program, request bids for service, complete an application, understand your Category 2 budget, and invoice E-Rate. These sessions are for E-Rate program participants of all levels of experience and will include opportunities to ask questions.

Tribal libraries interested in learning more about and participating in the E-Rate program are encouraged to attend. Below is a brief description of what to expect during each session.

Category Two (C2) Budgets on **October 16, 2025, at 2 p.m. ET** – [Register](#)

Provides an overview of C2 budgets and C2 budget guidance for the new FY2026 – FY2030 C2 budget cycle. There will be time for Q&A.

The EPC Administrative Window on **October 21, 2025, at 2 p.m. ET** – [Register](#)

Details the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC) Administrative Window, including how applicants can make updates to their EPC profile information to prepare to file the FCC Form 471 and EPC best

practices. There will be time for Q&A.

E-Rate Post-Commitment Process on **October 23, 2025, at 2 p.m. ET** – [Register](#)

Describes applicants' roles and responsibilities in the E-Rate post-commitment process, including filing the FCC Form 486, certifying compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), service substitutions, commitment adjustments, and appeals. There will be time for Q&A.

Invoicing Webinar on **October 30, 2025, at 2 p.m. ET** – [Register](#)

Walks through the E-Rate invoicing process, including the steps necessary to prepare, filing an FCC Form 498, filing invoicing forms FCC Form 472 (BEAR) or FCC Form 474 (SPI), the invoicing review process, and recordkeeping. This session will not cover the new Invoicing functionality in the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC).

Eligible Services 101 on **November 6, 2025, at 2 p.m. ET** – [Register](#)

Reviews the equipment and services that are eligible for E-Rate funding in funding year (FY) 2026. There will be time for Q&A.

[Tribal Library E-Rate Advocacy Program \(T-LEAP\)](#)

Mark your calendars! USAC will be hosting the T-LEAP Fall Kick-Off and Info Session on **Wednesday, October 1, 2025, at 3 p.m. ET**. During this webinar, USAC's Tribal Liaison and Tribal Library Advocates will share general information about the E-Rate program, including eligibility and program requirements, and how T-LEAP can support your Tribal library in receiving E-Rate funding. Sign up for the webinar [here](#).

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](#)

EPC Administrative Window Opens October 15, 2025

The EPC administrative window is the period during which applicants can make updates to their profile information. For example, student count, National School Lunch Program (NSLP) participation rate, library square footage, and other entities and individuals associated with the applicant can all be updated to prepare for the upcoming FY2026 FCC Form 471 application filing window. The EPC administrative window also provides an opportunity to review EPC account permissions and make updates as needed.

The administrative window will open on Wednesday, October 15, 2025, and will close shortly before the FY2026 application filing window opens in early 2026. After that time, applicant EPC profiles will be locked and may not be updated by the applicant.

Visit the [EPC Administrative Window](#) page for detailed information on updating entity profiles, or join our October 21 [Administrative Window webinar](#) to learn more and ask questions.

Updating Account Administrators in EPC

E-Rate applicants require an active Account Administrator to update their profile information in EPC. If you have an active Account Administrator and want to reassign the role to someone else, the current Account Administrator can do so by using the “Modify Account Administrator” function in EPC.

If you don’t have an active Account Administrator, call the E-Rate Customer Service Center (CSC) at (888) 203-8100 for assistance.

- If you are already a user on your entity's EPC account and are an authorized employee of the applicant, the CSC can assign the Account Administrator role to you.
- If you are not a user on your entity's EPC account and are an authorized employee of the applicant, the CSC must first create you as a user on the account. After you have established your username and password and accepted EPC’s Terms and Conditions, the CSC can then assign the Account Administrator role to you.

Note – you must be an authorized employee of the applicant to assume the Account Administrator role. The Account Administrator role **cannot** be assigned to a consultant, attorney, or other third-party representative of the applicant.

FY2025 FCC Form 486 Deadline Reminder

Generally, October 28, 2025, is the deadline to file an FY2025 FCC Form 486 if your Funding Commitment Decision Letter (FCDL) is dated on or before July 1, 2025, and your service start date is July 1, 2025. If these conditions apply to you, please submit and certify your [FCC Form 486](#) on or before this deadline.

If your FCC Form 486 appears to be late, we will send you an FCC Form 486 Urgent Reminder Letter to remind you that the FCC Form 486 is due. The service start date you reported on your FCC Form 471 is used to determine when to send the letter, so if your service start date has changed, your deadline may have changed as well.

This reminder letter is posted to your EPC Newsfeed and is emailed to the contact person on the FCC Form 471.

You have 15 days after the date of the reminder letter to submit and certify your FCC Form 486 without penalty.

Applicants whose services started after July 1, 2025, or whose FCDLs are dated after July 1, 2025 (including any that have not yet been issued), will have an FCC Form 486 deadline later than October 28, 2025. However, we encourage you to submit and certify your FCC Form 486 as soon as possible after services start for FY2025, as long as you can accurately complete all the certifications on the form.

The FRN Invoice Deadline Tool provides the ability to search, view, and download invoice-related data, including FCC Form 486 status and deadline date. View the [video](#) to learn more about this [tool](#).

FY2024 Invoicing Deadline Reminders for Recurring Services

Both applicants and service providers can request an invoice filing deadline extension in EPC by following the steps below. There is no penalty for requesting an invoice filing deadline extension and not using it.

Applicants:

- On your invoicing landing page, click the link to the billed entity record (the name in the “Welcome!” link near the top of the page or the first entry under the “My Entities” section).
- Select the “Related Actions” menu and choose “Invoice Deadline Date Extension Request.”

Service providers:

- From the “Records” tab at the top of any EPC page, click the “Service Providers” option.
- Use the Search function to locate your service provider record.
- Select the “Related Actions” menu and choose “Invoice Deadline Date Extension Request.”

You can use the [E-Rate FRN Status Tool FY2016+](#) to find your invoicing filing deadline by searching for the FRN(s) and looking in the “Last Date to Invoice” column.

To learn more about the E-Rate program, please review the [September 2025 E-Rate News Brief](#).

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

Invoice Filing Deadline

The invoice deadline for most RHC single-year FY2024 funding commitments is October 28, 2025. Per [FCC Order 19-78](#), the invoice filing deadline is four months (120 days) from the later of the service delivery deadline, the date of a revised funding commitment letter (FCL) approving a post-commitment request, or a successful appeal of a previously denied or reduced funding request. This invoice filing deadline applies to both RHC programs: the Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) Program and the Telecommunications (Telecom) Program.

A single 120-day extension of the invoice filing deadline is available if the health care provider (HCP) or service provider is unable to meet the invoice filing deadline for any reason. The request for an extension must be submitted prior to the original invoice filing deadline. Thus, the deadline to request an extension of the invoice filing deadline for most single-year FY2024 funding commitments is also October 28, 2025. Please submit invoice filing deadline extensions in RHC Connect.

For more information, visit the following Post-Commitment Actions webpages:

- [Post-Commitment Actions](#) webpage – HCF Program
- [Post-Commitment Actions](#) webpage – Telecom Program

[Lifeline](#)

Payment Quality Assurance Assessments Have Begun

The fiscal year 2026 Payment Quality Assurance (PQA) assessment program is now underway. PQA is a program that assesses payments for Lifeline made to service providers during the past 12 months to verify whether the payments were made in accordance with FCC rules.

For disbursements made each month, a certain number of payments will be chosen, and selected service providers will be asked to provide specific documentation – for example, eligibility documentation or recertification forms. It is important that you maintain proper documentation to be able to respond correctly and completely to PQA requests.

Emails notifying service providers whose disbursements have been selected for PQA are being sent from the domain name PQA@USACcms.i-sight.com. Please check your email – including your spam or junk email folder – and provide requested documentation within 10 business days if you receive an email from USAC’s PQA program. This will help expedite your review.

- Do not hesitate to contact your PQA reviewer if you have questions. Contact information is provided in the email.

- Contact your reviewer if you are unable to respond by the deadline.

For information on PQA, visit our [PQA Program](#) page.

Annual Update Released to Lifeline Voice Obligation Conditional Forbearance List

On August 4, 2025, the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Wireline Competition Bureau (Bureau) issued a [public notice](#) with an updated list of counties (in which competitive conditions are met) where certain service providers will no longer be required to offer Lifeline-supported voice service, **effective October 3, 2025.**

This forbearance only applies to Eligible Telecommunication Carriers (ETCs) with designations that enable them to receive both High Cost and Lifeline support. **Lifeline-only ETCs must continue to provide voice service as required.**

Providers that participate in both the Lifeline and High Cost programs are required to advertise and offer Lifeline-supported voice services. However, in the [2016 Lifeline Order](#), the FCC established that this obligation could be waived in counties where certain competitive conditions are met. The Bureau evaluates data annually and publishes a list of counties where the following competitive conditions are met:

1. At least 51% of Lifeline subscribers in the county are obtaining broadband internet access service.
2. There are at least three other providers of Lifeline broadband internet access service that each serve at least 5% of the Lifeline broadband subscribers in that county.
3. The ETC does not actually receive federal high-cost universal service support.

For qualifying service providers, this forbearance will remain in place until 60 days after the FCC issues its 2026 update, which will publish a revised list of counties that meet the competitive conditions.

Note: This forbearance does not preclude ETCs from electing to provide and receive reimbursement for Lifeline-discounted voice service.

Key Dates and Trainings

E-Rate

Fall Training Series

- Category Two (C2) Budget – Thursday, October 16, 2025, 2 p.m. ET – [Register >](#)
- EPC Administrative Window – Tuesday, October 21, 2025, 2 p.m. ET – [Register >](#)
- E-Rate Post-Commitment Process – Thursday, October 23, 2025, 2 p.m. ET – [Register >](#)
- Invoicing Webinar – Thursday, October 30, 2025, 2 p.m. ET – [Register >](#)
- Eligible Services 101 – Thursday, November 6, 2025, 2 p.m. ET – [Register >](#)

Conference Schedule

- New England Library Association Conference, October 26–28, 2025 in Newport, Rhode Island – [Event Link >](#)

RHC | Post-Commitment Change Request (HCF and Telecom) Webinar

Wednesday, October 1, 2025, at 2 p.m. ET – [Register >](#)

RHC | Q4 Service Provider Training

Wednesday, October 8, 2025, at 2 p.m. ET – [Register >](#)

Lifeline | National Verifier 101 Webinar

Wednesday, October 8, 2025, at 3 p.m. ET – [Register >](#)

Tribal Teleconferences:

- T-LEAP Fall Kick-Off and Info Session – Wednesday, October 1, 2025, at 3 p.m. ET – [Register >](#)
- Tribal and E-Rate Teleconference: E-Rate 101 and Pre-Commitment – Wednesday, October 14, 2025, at 4 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.

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