ETC Designation Webinar

Lifeline and Tribal Teleconference

September 8, 2026

Universal Service Administrative Co.

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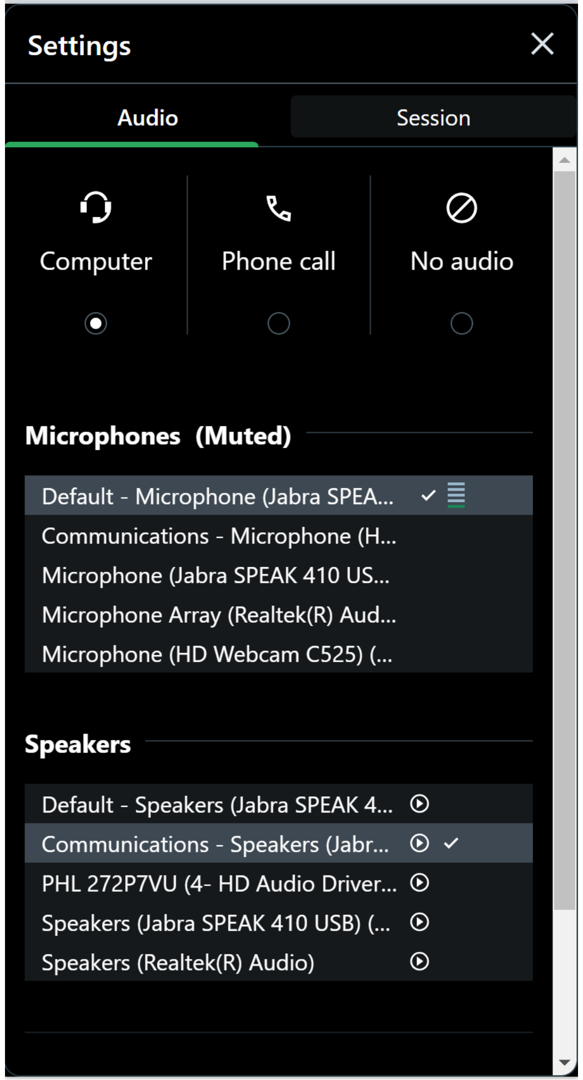

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Meet Our Team

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Communications Specialist

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Tribal Liaison

SAM.gov Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) Requirement

- Beginning **September 8, 2026**, USAC will use SAM.gov banking information to remit payments for all Universal Service Fund (USF) invoices and requests for reimbursement.
- **All** service providers and **all E-Rate participants that use the BEAR invoicing method** to receive USF disbursements must have:
  - A Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) on their FCC Form 498
  - An active SAM.gov account
  - A valid bank account associated with the SAM.gov account

SAM.gov UEI Requirement (cont.)

- If you are a Service Provider or E-Rate participant who receives funding from USAC:
  - Confirm that your FCC Form 498 includes a UEI and active SAM.gov account and that it is connected to the correct bank account—specifically, the bank account that is designated to accept USF disbursements.
  - To prepare for this change, USAC will contact service providers and E-Rate applicants by email to ensure they met these requirements.
- If you are a Service Provider or E-Rate applicant that does **not** have a UEI, or if you have a SAM.gov generated UEI but **not** an active SAM.gov account connected with a bank account:
  - Visit SAM.gov and complete the registration process.
  - This process can take up to six weeks, so USAC recommends starting **as soon as possible**, or your payments will be held until you have completed the process.

SAM.gov UEI Requirement (cont.)

- Service Providers and BEAR applicants will have to annually register with SAM.gov to keep their account active. USAC will not be able to process disbursements if the payee's SAM.gov account is inactive.
- For more information, visit USAC's SAM.gov UEI Requirement webpage.

Upcoming Dates

- **Lifeline**
  - Lifeline Compliance – September 9, 2026, at 3 p.m. ET – Register.
- **Rural Health Care**
  - Telecom Program Invoicing Best Practices – September 9, 2026, at 2 p.m. ET – Register.
  - FY2026 Funding Requests Update – September 16, 2026, at 2 p.m. ET – Register.
  - Q3 Service Provider Training – September 23, 2026, at 2 p.m. ET – Register.
- **E-Rate**
  - E-Rate Program Overview – September 10, 2026, at 2 p.m. ET – Register.
- **Tribal Teleconference**
  - High Cost 101 – October 13, 2026, at 4 p.m. ET – Register.

Agenda

- Introduction
- Join Lifeline as an ETC
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Resources

Introduction

Introduction

Lifeline Overview

The Lifeline program is a federal benefit program that helps low-income households pay for phone or internet service.

- Eligible households can receive:

$9.25 Standard Discount
Up to $9.25/month discount for internet or bundled services or up to $5.25/month for phone service that meets the minimum service standards.

$34.25 Tribal Discount
Up to $34.25/month discount for households on qualifying Tribal lands.

$100 Link Up Discount
A one-time discount of up to $100 off the initial setup fees at addresses on qualifying Tribal lands receiving voice service from certain service providers.

$9.25 Survivor Benefit
A $9.25/month discount for phone, internet, or bundled services for up to 6 months for survivors who qualify.

- The Lifeline benefit is limited to one monthly service discount per household.

Join Lifeline as an ETC

Join Lifeline as an ETC

Overview

- An Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC) is a service provider authorized to offer Lifeline-supported services to qualifying consumers and can receive reimbursement for providing such services.
- Service providers must be designated as an ETC by their respective state commission **or** by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).
- Providers who are designated as ETCs must offer qualifying services to eligible consumers who reside on qualifying Tribal lands, if the designation order states that the **provider has been authorized to operate as a Tribal provider** for the specified service area.
- This presentation applies to the ETC designation process for Lifeline-only. The Commission's requirements concerning High-Cost ETC designations are different and are not discussed here.

Join Lifeline as an ETC

Introduction

- To participate in and offer Lifeline-supported services, a service provider must:

1 Create a Compliance Plan	2 Become an ETC	3 Obtain a Study Area Code (SAC)	3 Obtain a 498 ID/SPIN
• Non-facilities based resellers must submit a compliance plan to and obtain approval from the FCC. • A compliance plan must outline how the ETC will comply with Lifeline program rules.	• Submit an ETC designation petition to the FCC or state commission. • Upon approval, the FCC or state commission publishes the official order designating the provider as an ETC.	• Send an email to LifelineProgram@usac.org to request a Study Area Code (SAC). • USAC issues one SAC per state per designation order.	• Request a 498 ID/SPIN or review existing 498 ID/SPIN.

Note: All ETCs must comply with Lifeline program rules.

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Step 1: Create and Submit a Compliance Plan (1/2)

- ETCs who will not provide service across their own facilities are required to submit a compliance plan with the FCC.
  - The Wireline Competition Bureau's (WCB) Lifeline Compliance Plan Guidance Public Notice outlines compliance plan requirements.
- Providers that are facilities-based or offer a combination of facilities-based and non-facilities-based services are not required to have a compliance plan approved by the FCC.

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Step 1: Create and Submit a Compliance Plan (2/2)

- A compliance plan must include the following information about the service provider and the Lifeline plans it intends to offer, in addition to descriptions of certain provider practices and procedures:
  - The names and identifiers used by the service provider, its holding company, operating company and all affiliates.
  - Detailed information demonstrating that the service provider is financially and technically capable of providing the supported Lifeline service.
  - Geographic locations of the service provider's current service offerings if the service provider currently offers service.
  - Terms and conditions of each Lifeline service plan offering, including rates, the number of minutes provided, and additional charges.
    - Lifeline-supported services **must** meet Lifeline's minimum service standards (MSS).
  - All other certifications required under newly amended section 54.202 of the FCC's rules.

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Step 2: Become an ETC (1/3)

- To offer Lifeline-supported services, service providers must be designated as an ETC by their state commission **or** by the FCC.
  - This designation is required for every state where the provider plans to offer Lifeline.
- Service providers should contact their state commission to initiate the ETC designation process where applicable.
- In states where the state commission does not designate Lifeline ETCs, service providers must apply directly with the FCC for designation.

Note: The same steps apply for Tribally operated or owned providers.

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Step 2: Become an ETC (2/3)

- To obtain ETC designation from the FCC, a company must file a petition that:
    1. Demonstrates ETC designation jurisdiction rests with the FCC (or, in the case of Tribal service providers, argues where jurisdiction properly belongs).
    2. Certifies the company will comply with all service requirements for Lifeline, including that the company:
        - Acts as a common carrier offering voice telephony services meeting Lifeline requirements.
        - Makes the supported service available to qualifying low-income consumers.
        - Offers the supported service through its own facilities or a combination of its own facilities and resale of another carrier's services (or else provides a compliance plan warranting forbearance from this requirement).
        - Advertises the availability of services and related charges using generally distributed media.
        - Agrees to comply with the FCC's document retention and reporting requirements.
    3. Provides a detailed description of the service area for which the company requests designation.
    4. Demonstrates the company's ability to remain functional in emergency situations.

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Step 2: Become an ETC (3/3)

- In addition, the company's petition for ETC designation must also:
    1. Demonstrate the company will satisfy applicable consumer protection and service quality standards.
    2. Certify that neither the company, nor any party to the application, is subject to a denial of federal benefits pursuant to the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988.
- If the company is seeking Lifeline-only designation, the petition must also:
    3. Demonstrate the company is financially and technically capable of providing the Lifeline service in compliance with FCC rules.
    4. Submit information describing the terms and conditions of any voice telephony plans offered to Lifeline subscribers.
- Prior to designating a company as an ETC, the FCC must determine whether such designation is in the public interest.

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Step 3: Obtain a Study Area Code (SAC)

- A Study Area Code (SAC) is a unique number that USAC assigns to ETCs that identifies the provider based on the service area where they are designated to offer the Lifeline services.
- ETCs are issued one SAC per service area where they are designated to operate.
- USAC uses the following information to complete a SAC request:
  1. The approved compliance plan (if applicable)
  2. The ETC's designation order
  3. Terms and conditions of Lifeline program service, including service plans
  4. 498 ID/SPIN and company contact information
  5. Any other supporting documentation asserting that the provider is approved to participate in Lifeline

Join Lifeline as an ETC

Step 4: Obtain a 498 ID/SPIN (1/2)

- A 498 ID, also known as Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN), is required to participate in Lifeline (and any of USAC's other programs).
  - This number is unique and assigned to each service provider by USAC.
- The FCC Form 498 collects service provider contact, billing, and collection information.
  - Service providers register for a 498 ID/SPIN by visiting E-File in One Portal and completing the FCC Form 498.
    - One Portal is USAC's single sign-on dashboard where users can log into USAC systems.
- For more information on how service providers can obtain and manage a 498 ID/SPIN, service providers can refer to our Register for a 498 ID page.

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Step 4: Obtain a 498 ID/SPIN (2/2)

- To begin registration, service providers must register in One Portal and create an account.
- To create an account, select “Service Provider – 498 ID” and then “Register Your Company.”
- Once an account is created, service providers register their company.
- The FCC Form 498 will be saved in E-File and USAC will be notified to review the submission.
- Once registration is complete and approved, USAC will issue the 498 ID/SPIN.

ETC Responsibilities

All Lifeline ETCs are responsible for complying with the Lifeline program rules, including but not limited to:

- Registering for Representative IDs in the Representative Accountability Database (RAD) to perform transactions.
- Ensuring Lifeline-eligible consumers have qualified through the National Verifier.
- Enrolling Lifeline-qualified consumers in the National Lifeline Accountability Database (NLAD).
- Preventing duplicate enrollments by ensuring that enrolled subscribers are not already enrolled by another service provider and keeping NLAD up to date.
- Providing Lifeline subscribers with Lifeline-supported services that meet Lifeline's minimum service standards.
- Submitting claims to receive reimbursement in the Lifeline Claims System.
- Advertising Lifeline to their consumers.

Frequently Asked Questions

Tips for ETC Designation

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **How can Tribal-owned providers get designated for Lifeline?**
   If a service provider consults with its state's commission and determines that the state does not have the authority to designate it as an ETC, it must seek designation through the FCC. If there is ambiguity about whether a state has jurisdiction over a Tribally owned service provider, they may petition the FCC for a determination of jurisdiction.

2. **What is a 498 ID, and how is it used for a SAC request?**
   A 498 ID (also known as SPIN) is required for all parties that participate in any of the four universal service programs and receive payment directly from USAC. This ID is a unique number assigned to each service provider by USAC and helps to ensure that approved reimbursement is directed to the correct service provider.

3. **Can a non-ETC participate in Lifeline and receive a SAC?**
   No, only designated ETCs can participate in Lifeline and receive a SAC.

4. **Do you need a SAC to register for a 498 ID?**
   Yes, providers will need a SAC from USAC before they can sign up for a 498 ID/SPIN. Learn more about how to obtain a SAC.

Questions?

Resources

ETC Resources

Review the following ETC Resources:

- The Join Lifeline as an ETC webpage to learn more about becoming a Lifeline ETC
- FCC Resources
  - 1997 Public Notice – Procedures for FCC Designation of Eligible Telecommunications Carriers
  - 2012 Public Notice – Lifeline Compliance Plan Guidance
  - 2012 Lifeline Reform Order – FCC Modernizes Lifeline Program for Low-Income Americans
  - 2024 Public Notice – WCB Reminder on Lifeline Requirements for ETCs
  - 2025 Public Notice – WCB Reminder on Lifeline Compliance Plan Approval Requirements
- The list of State Commissions

ETC Resources

- Visit usac.org/lifeline for general program information.
- Email LifelineProgram@usac.org for technical support and additional information on processes, rules, and requirements and cc our Tribal Liaison at TribalLiaison@usac.org.
- Visit Lifeline's Webinars page to review past trainings and register for upcoming events.

Questions?

Thank You!

Universal Service
Administrative Co.