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February 2025 Tribal Nation Newsletter

March 3, 2025 | Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC)



Tribal Nation News

USAC's February Tribal Teleconference, held in collaboration with the Lifeline team, will provide an overview of the Eligible Telecommunication Carriers (ETC) process and requirements for the Lifeline program with time for Q&A. Please join us on **Tuesday, March 11, 2025, at 4 p.m. ET** – [Register](#).

Tribal Library E-Rate Advocacy Program (T-LEAP)

Tribal libraries and Tribal college and university (TCU) libraries can now receive direct support 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

As a reminder, **March 26, 2025**, is the last day of the Funding Year (FY) 2025 E-Rate application filing window. In order to certify the FY2025 FCC Form 471 on time, applicants needed to have submitted and certified their FCC Form 470 by **February 26, 2025**, to comply with the required minimum 28-day waiting period.

To learn more about the competitive bidding process, please view the [Competitive Bidding Infographic](#). Additionally, applicants can view the [How to File an FCC Form 470](#) learning module or the [How to File the FCC Form 471](#) learning module, which guides users through all aspects of preparing, submitting, and certifying these forms.

Reminders for Filing an FY2025 FCC Form 471

Below are reminders for some of the actions you should take before the FY2025 application filing window closes on March 26, 2025.

Wait the required, minimum **28-day period** before selecting your service provider(s) and before submitting and certifying your FCC Form 471. The earliest date you can enter into a contract is listed on your FCC Form 470 as the “**Allowable Contract Date**.” Changes to the FCC Form 470 beyond certain allowable changes require applicants to restart the minimum 28-day waiting period from the date of the change before selecting a service provider, signing a contract, or submitting and certifying an FCC Form 471.

Additionally, if you make any substantial changes to your uploaded request for proposals (RFP) or RFP documents **after** you certified and submitted your FCC Form 470, the start of the minimum 28-day waiting period will change to the date you uploaded your updated documents.

- The E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC) will not allow you to create a contract record if the FCC Form 470 you try to cite for the contract was not posted for at least 28 days.
- Once the minimum 28-day waiting period has ended and a service provider is selected, the applicant must have a contract or other binding agreement **prior** to the submission of the FCC Form 471. Note that a verbal agreement is not considered a contract or legally binding agreement under E-Rate program rules.
- For services provided under tariff or on a month-to-month basis, EPC will not allow you to finish entering a funding request for those services if the cited FCC Form 470 was not posted for at least 28 days.

Do not wait until the end of the application filing window to contact us with questions or issues. You can open a customer service case in EPC or call the Customer Service Center (CSC) at (888) 203-8100 as soon as possible if you need assistance. If you choose to open a customer service case, you will also be able to upload one or more documents that provide additional information we need to process your request.

California Wildfires Relief Order

On January 16, 2025, the Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB) of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released an [Order](#) that provides relief to schools and libraries located in the Affected Disaster Areas. WCB extended the FY2025 application filing window to September 26, 2025 and extended the 120-day invoice filing deadline for funding requests that have a deadline within 60 days of the date of the Order for schools and libraries located in the Affected Disaster Areas.

Schools and Libraries Cybersecurity Pilot Program

On January 16, 2025, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released a [Public Notice](#) announcing the participants selected for the Schools and Libraries Cybersecurity Pilot Program (Pilot Program). The Pilot Program funding application filing window will run from March 18 – September 15, 2025. USAC is no longer accepting application for the Pilot Program. To learn more, visit USAC's [Cybersecurity Pilot Program webpages](#).

Rural Health Care (RHC)

NEW: Submit Third Party Authorizations in RHC Connect

If you are a health care provider (HCP) participating in the Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) or Telecom Program, and a consultant or other third party (i.e., anyone who is not employed by the HCP) will file forms on behalf of your site, a third-party authorization (TPA) must be filed with USAC. A TPA provides written authorization to USAC allowing the third party to complete and submit forms on behalf of the HCP or consortium in the HCF or Telecom Program. RHC program participants may now submit third party authorizations in RHC Connect.

Please use the following resources to submit your TPAs:

- [Third-Party Authorization webpage](#)
- [RHC Connect – Third-Party Authorization User Guide](#)
- [Sample TPAs](#)

As a reminder for consortia applicants, Letters of Agency (LOA) and Letters of Exemption (LOE) are also submitted in RHC Connect. Please use the following resources to submit LOAs and LOEs:

- [Letter of Agency webpage](#)
- [Letter of Exemption webpage](#)
- [RHC Connect LOA/LOE User Guide](#)
- [Sample LOA](#)

New! SPIN Lookup Tool Available in Open Data

Do you want to see if a service provider is registered with USAC? Do you want to see if a service provider has provided the required certifications on their FCC forms, allowing them to participate in the RHC program? A Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN) Lookup Tool is now available on the [RHC Open Data](#) webpage.

The [RHC SPIN Lookup Tool](#) can be used to view and export service provider profile data found in RHC Connect. This data includes important information regarding the service provider, such as contact information and details regarding the FCC Forms 498 and 499.

For more information, visit the [RHC SPIN Lookup Tool](#) webpage.

Hurricane Milton Waiver

To learn about the [Hurricane Milton Waiver](#), please review the [December 2024 Tribal Nation Newsletter](#).

Lifeline

2025 Recertification Is Ongoing

Recertification is an annual requirement for all active Lifeline subscribers that ensures they are still eligible for the benefit. On February 13, 2025, USAC initiated automated eligibility database checks to verify the eligibility of Lifeline subscribers due for recertification in 2025.

- Subscribers who pass the automated check will not need to take any action for their 2025 recertification.
- Subscribers who fail the automated check will be required to recertify their continued eligibility through a manual process. USAC will conduct outreach to those subscribers.

Service providers should regularly monitor the **Recertification Subscriber Status Report** in the National Lifeline Accountability Database (NLAD) to identify subscribers undergoing recertification. This report is updated daily to reflect automated check results.

To learn more about the recertification process, providers should visit the [Recertification webpage](#), view the [Recertification Office Hours](#), and reference the February 4, 2025, [bulletin](#) issued by USAC.

California Wildfires Waiver Expiring Soon

On January 16, 2025, the WCB released an [Order](#) that temporarily waives the annual recertification requirements and de-enrollment for failed recertification under the Lifeline rules for households receiving **broadband-only Lifeline service** in Affected Disaster Areas.

The waiver period under this Order is through March 17, 2025. USAC will resume recertification efforts on March 18, 2025.

Key Dates and Trainings

E-Rate | No upcoming webinars at this time.

To view prior webinars, please visit the [E-Rate Webinars](#) page.

RHC | FY2025 HCF Program Office Hours

March 12, 2025, at 2 p.m. ET – [Register >](#)

RHC | FY2025 Telecom Program Office Hours

March 19, 2025, at 2 p.m. ET – [Register >](#)

RHC | FY2025 Service Provider Training

March 26, 2025, at 2 p.m. ET – [Register >](#)

Lifeline | Tribal Q1 Training: ETC Designation Overview

March 11, at 4 p.m. ET – [Register >](#)

Lifeline | Navigating USAC Systems

March 12, 2025, 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 in the specifics of each program.

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

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