



## October 2024 USAC Tribal Nation Newsletter

October 30, 2024

### E-Rate

#### **E-Rate Help for Tribal Libraries: [Tribal Library E-Rate Advocacy Program \(T-LEAP\)](#)**

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) recently announced that the [Tribal Libraries Pilot Program](#), which provides one-on-one assistance to Tribal libraries seeking to request E-Rate support, has transitioned to a permanent program called the Tribal Library E-Rate Advocacy Program (T-LEAP). The application to enroll for T-LEAP assistance is year-round. USAC will host three T-LEAP trainings per year, beginning virtually in December. Interested Tribal Libraries can sign up [here](#). Read the full [Press Release](#).

**FCC Form 486 Reminder.** Applicants, don't forget 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) 2024 services from applicants or service providers without an approved FCC Form 486 on file. Use the [FRN Status Tool FY2016+](#) to find your funding request numbers (FRNs) and check the "FCC Form 486 Status" column. For FRNs with a service start date of July 1, 2024, and where the funding commitment decision letter (FCDL) was issued before July 2024, the **deadline to submit the FCC Form 486 is October 29, 2024**. If your FCC Form 486 appears to be late, we will send you an **FCC Form 486 Urgent Reminder Letter** after October 29 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 modified and your funding commitment amount reduced. View the [FCC Form 486 Filing](#) page to learn about submitting the form.

**Administrative Window.** The FY2025 EPC administrative window opened October 15. The EPC administrative window is the period of time during which applicants can make updates to their entity profile information in EPC to prepare for the upcoming FCC Form 471 application filing window. In particular, Tribal schools and libraries can update their Tribal status if needed. The administrative window **will close shortly before the FY2025 application filing window opens in early 2025, when the window opens** and applicants' EPC entity profiles will be locked.

**E-Rate Training.** USAC is holding online and in-person training events to help applicants and service providers through the E-Rate processes. Below are highlighted events scheduled over the next month. Visit the [In-Person E-Rate Training Events](#) page to learn more about the events where we will be in attendance to answer your E-Rate questions. Also, keep an eye on the E-Rate [Webinars](#) page for information on upcoming training opportunities.

#### **Upcoming Webinars:**

- **E-Rate Post-Commitment Process on October 31, 2024**, from 2 p.m. - 3 p.m. ET. USAC will discuss the applicant's roles and responsibilities in the E-Rate Post-Commitment Process and other post-commitment activities including filing the FCC Form 486, the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), service substitutions, commitment adjustments, appeals, and more. After the presentation, there will be time for questions and answers. [Register](#).
- **E-Rate Invoicing Webinar on November 7, 2024**, from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. ET. This webinar is designed to help E-Rate program participants (applicants and service providers) understand the invoicing process. Topics for the invoicing webinar will include the steps necessary to prepare for invoicing, filing an FCC Form 498, filing invoicing forms FCC Form 472 (BEAR) and FCC Form 474 (SPI), the invoicing review process, Basic

Maintenance of Internal Connections (BMIC) as it relates to invoicing, record keeping, and Open Data. This session will not cover the new Invoicing functionality in EPC. [Register](#).

### **2024 In-Person Training on November 12, 2024 at ATALM**

E-Rate experts will provide Tribal-focused E-Rate training and discuss program updates on November 12, 2024, from 1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. P.T. in conjunction with the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, & Museums' (ATALM) annual conference in Palm Springs, California. There will be time at the end of the sessions for USAC to answer questions from both new and experienced participants. Each session will cover the E-Rate program lifecycle beginning with the opening of the EPC Administrative Window, running a competitive bidding process, applying for funding, and invoicing for approved equipment and services. To attend the E-Rate program training, you must be registered for the conference. View the [event link](#) and [preconference workshop link](#).

## **Cybersecurity Pilot Program**

### **Schools and Libraries Cybersecurity Pilot Program**

The Schools and Libraries Cybersecurity Pilot Program (Pilot Program) is a three-year program providing up to \$200 million in Universal Service Fund (USF) support to offset the cost of eligible cybersecurity services and equipment to protect eligible schools' and libraries' broadband networks and data.

The Pilot Program application filing window will close at 11:59 p.m. E.T. on **Friday, November 1**. Each applicant should only complete one Pilot Program application and apply as either an individual school or library, or as part of a consortium.

To learn more about the Pilot Program, including application resources and upcoming trainings, please review the [September 2024 Newsletter](#) and visit the [Cybersecurity Pilot Program webpage](#).

## **Lifeline**

### **Helene Weather Events Waiver**

On October 1, 2024, the WCB adopted an [Order](#) temporarily waiving the non-usage, de-enrollment for non-usage, and annual recertification requirements for participants requiring federal disaster assistance in areas affected by Hurricane Helene. These disaster areas include parts of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

The waiver period under this order is until November 30, 2024. Lifeline's non-usage rules will be reinstated on December 1, 2024, at which time consumers residing in the affected disaster areas will have thirty days to use their Lifeline service. Consumers who do not use their Lifeline service during the 30-day period will be de-enrolled from the program, following the 15-day notice period.

### **Helene Weather Events Order**

On October 2, 2024, the FCC issued an [Order](#) that allows consumers participating in FEMA's Individuals and Households Program (IHP) due to the Helene Weather Events to apply for and enroll in the Lifeline program. It also clarifies that consumers participating in Disaster SNAP (D-SNAP) as the result of any disaster are, by default, eligible to participate in the Lifeline program because D-SNAP and SNAP participation are considered to be the same for eligibility determinations and consumers participating in SNAP is eligible for the Lifeline program. Affected individuals can use this waiver to enroll in Lifeline until April 2, 2025. D-SNAP enrollees are not subject to this time limitation.

Consumers enrolling in the Lifeline program through FEMA IHP are required to undergo the annual recertification process and will continue to receive Lifeline benefits if they meet a standard, non-IHP eligibility criterion.

### **Hurricane Milton Waiver**

On October 9, 2024, WCB adopted an [Order](#) to temporarily waive the non-usage, de-enrollment for non-usage and annual recertification requirements for participants requiring federal disaster assistance in certain parts of Florida until December 15, 2024.

This order also temporarily waives the Lifeline non-usage and annual recertification requirements for 60 days for all future Emergency or Major Disaster Declarations due to hurricanes, typhoons, tropical storms, tropical cyclones, and wildfires through the end of 2024 for consumers in affected areas.

## Hurricane Milton Order

On October 10, 2024, the FCC adopted an [Order](#) that allows consumers who participate in FEMA's IHP because of Hurricane Milton, to qualify and enroll in the Lifeline program until April 10, 2025. It also clarifies that consumers participating in Disaster SNAP (D-SNAP) as the result of any disaster are, by default, eligible to participate in the Lifeline program because D-SNAP and SNAP participation are considered to be the same for eligibility determinations and consumers participating in SNAP is eligible for the Lifeline program. This Order will also extend to all future tropical weather systems (which include hurricanes, typhoons, tropical storms, and tropical cyclones) that lead to a Presidential declaration of emergency or major disaster within the next six months. Once a disaster is declared, the waiver will remain in effect for six months from the date of that declaration.

Consumers enrolling in the Lifeline program through FEMA IHP are required to undergo the annual recertification process and will continue to receive Lifeline benefits if they meet a standard, non-IHP eligibility criterion.

## Applications Open for Consumers Qualifying Through FEMA's IHP

On October 10, USAC updated its systems to allow consumers who receive FEMA's IHP support to qualify for Lifeline. Applicants will need to provide documentation showing that they are enrolled in IHP to receive the Lifeline benefit. This documentation must include:

- Their first and last name
- Enrollment date
- The name of the program
- Approval that they are receiving disaster assistance

## Resources

Consumers who have recently been affected by a disaster can refer to USAC's [Disaster Assistance](#) page on [LifelineSupport.org](#) for more information on how they may qualify for Lifeline.

Service providers can review the slide deck from our recent office hours for information on [how consumers can now qualify through IHP](#).

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

### All Connected Care Pilot Program (CCPP) Project Deadlines Are Extended!

On October 28, 2024, the FCC released Order [DA 24-1110](#) establishing a uniform completion deadline of December 31, 2025, for all projects funded by the CCPP. This waiver permits projects to continue using their pre-approved program budgets through the end of 2025 at the latest. This means that all projects may continue to submit forms and receive funding for services rendered through December 31, 2025, rather than being bound by the original project end date that was three years from the project's first funding commitment. Selected projects remain subject to all other CCPP rules including competitive bidding rules, funding request and commitment procedures, data reporting requirements, and document retention requirements.

### FCC Waives Certain RHC Program Rules in Response to Hurricane Milton

On October 9, 2024, the FCC released Order [DA 24-1059](#) waiving the following RHC rules for participants and service providers located in areas affected by Hurricane Milton within the state of Florida:

- **Deadline for Appeals and Requests for Waiver** – The FCC waives the 60-day deadlines for requests for review or waiver of decisions by USAC or the FCC and provides an additional 60 days to file appeals and waivers. This waiver is in effect for all deadlines of appeals and waiver requests from October 5, 2024, through March 8, 2025.
- **Information Requests** – The FCC waives the 14-day deadline for applicants in the affected areas to respond to Information Requests from USAC related to funding requests, appeals and waivers, invoices, audits, and other documentation submitted by program participants. This waiver will apply to all Information Requests issued on or after October 5, 2024, regardless of the related funding year. The new deadline for responding to Information requests is March 8, 2025.
- **Documentation Retention and Production** – Due to possible lost records, the FCC waives the rule that applicants and service providers must retain all documents for at least five years after the last day of the supported services in a given funding year. If lost records are later requested by USAC or the FCC, program participants will not be penalized, but applicants and service providers will be held responsible for obtaining

such records, where available, from a third party. Program participants that are affected also must certify that the records were destroyed in the hurricane. Current rules apply to all records that were not destroyed.

- **Invoice Filing Deadline** – The FCC waives the invoicing deadline for FY2023 funding requests and granted the automatic 120-day extension. Thus, for single-year funding commitments that previously had a deadline of October 28, 2024, the new deadline will be February 25, 2025.

### FCC Waives Certain RHC Program Rules in Response to Hurricane Helene

On October 1, 2024, the FCC released Order [DA 24-1025](#) waiving the following RHC program rules for participants and service providers located in areas affected by Hurricane Helene within the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia:

- **Deadline for Appeals and Requests for Waiver** – The FCC waives the 60-day deadlines for requests for review or waiver of decisions by USAC or the FCC and provides an additional 60 days to file appeals and waivers. This waiver is in effect for all deadlines of appeals and waiver requests from September 23, 2024, through February 28, 2025.
- **Information Requests** – The FCC waives the 14-day deadline for applicants in the affected areas to respond to Information Requests from USAC related to funding requests, appeals and waivers, invoices, audits, and other documentation submitted by program participants. This waiver will apply to all Information Requests issued on or after September 23, 2024, regardless of the related funding year. The new deadline for responding to Information requests is February 28, 2025.
- **HCF Program Annual Report** – The FCC waives the September 30, 2024, deadline for the affected HCF participants to file their annual reports for FY2023. Affected program participants have until February 28, 2025, to file annual reports for FY2023.
- **Documentation Retention and Production** – Due to possible lost records, the FCC waives the rule that applicants and service providers must retain all documents for at least five years after the last day of the supported services in a given funding year. If lost records are later requested by USAC or the FCC, program participants will not be penalized, but applicants and service providers will be held responsible for obtaining such records, where available, from a third party. Program participants that are affected also must certify that the records were destroyed in the hurricane. Current rules apply to all records that were not destroyed.
- **Invoice Filing Deadline** – The FCC waives the invoicing deadline for FY2023 funding requests and granted the automatic 120-day extension. Thus, for single-year funding commitments that previously had a deadline of October 28, 2024, the new deadline will be February 25, 2025.

## Key Dates and Trainings

### 2024 In-Person E-Rate Trainings

- **Tribal-Focused E-Rate Training:** November 12, 2024, 1:30-4:30 p.m. PT in Palm Springs, California. This Tribal-focused training will be held in conjunction with the ATALM annual conference. To attend the E-Rate training, you must be registered for [ATALM](#).

### E-Rate Webinars

- **E-Rate Post-Commitment Process** – October 31, 2024, at 2 p.m. ET – [Register](#)
- **E-Rate Invoicing Webinar** – November 7, 2024, from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. ET – [Register](#)

### RHC

- **FY2025 HCF Program Funding Request Webinar** – November 13, 2024, at 2 p.m. ET – [Register](#)
- **FY2025 Telecom Program Funding Request Webinar** – November 20, 2024, at 2 p.m. ET – [Register](#)

### Lifeline

- **November 2024 Monthly Webinar: Resolving National Lifeline Accountability Database (NLAD) Common Errors** – November 13, 2024, at 3 p.m. ET – [Register](#)
- **December 2024 Monthly Webinar: Completing the annual FCC Form 555** – December 11, 2024, 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?**

If you have questions or suggestions about Tribal universal service support, you may contact USAC's Tribal Liaison, Gem Labarta, at [TribalLiaison@usac.org](mailto:TribalLiaison@usac.org).