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Universal Service
Administrative Co.

Tribal Outreach

September 2024 USAC Tribal Nation Newsletter

September 27, 2024

Upcoming USAC Customer Service Center Closure

USAC and the E-Rate, Emergency Connectivity Fund, High Cost, Rural Health Care, Contributors, and Service Providers Customer Service Centers (CSCs) will be closed on **Monday, October 14, 2024**.

The Lifeline and Affordable Connectivity Program CSCs will be **open**.

For future planned closures, please review the [2024 USAC CSC Holiday Hours and Closures](#) calendar.

[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 opened **September 17, 2024**. From **September 17, 2024, to November 1, 2024**, schools, libraries, and consortia applicants will be able to access the Pilot Program FCC Form 484 Part 1 in the E-Rate Productivity Center (EPC) and begin completing it. Each applicant should only complete one Pilot Program application and apply as either an individual school or library, or as part of a consortium. The FCC published a notice in the Federal Register announcing September 20, 2024 as the effective date for the information collection requirement rules for the Cybersecurity Pilot Program (see [DA 24-968](#)).

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](#).

[E-Rate](#)

Funding Year (FY) 2025 FCC Form 470 is Now Available

On September 19, 2024, the FY2025 FCC Form 470 became available in the [E-Rate Productivity Center \(EPC\)](#). Please note that the FCC Form 470 changed from last year. To learn more about the changes, please review the [August 2024 E-Rate News Brief](#) and the [How to File an FCC Form 470](#) e-learning module.

Wi-Fi Hotspots/Wireless Mobile Internet Services Eligible for FY2025

The FCC released a Report and Order (FCC 24-76) on July 29, 2024 that permits eligible schools and libraries to receive E-Rate support for the off-premises use of Wi-Fi hotspots and wireless mobile Internet services by students, school staff, and library patrons. The FY 2025 FCC Form 470 includes options to request bids for Wi-Fi hotspot devices and wireless mobile Internet access services for these devices.

See the C1: Wi-Fi Hotspots for Off Premises Use (Equipment) and the C1: Wi-Fi Hotspots for Off Premises Use (Data Transmission) sections of the How to File an FCC Form 470 learning module for more information.

Recent Program Updates (FY 2024 and forward):

- **School Bus Wi-Fi Devices/Wireless Mobile Services.** School bus Wi-Fi equipment and services are eligible for buses that are school-owned, leased, or contracted, provided that the school buses are used primarily to transport students to and from school and school-related activities for educational purposes. More information is available on the [Wi-Fi on Buses – Summary Overview](#) page.
- **Competitive Bidding Exemption for Libraries.** For E-Rate eligible equipment and services within a library, the FCC implemented an exemption to the competitive bidding requirements for all libraries seeking E-Rate support for Category Two (C2) equipment/services that total a pre-discount price of \$3,600 or less per library per funding year.
- **Updated Tribal Definitions.** The FCC updated program definitions and defined Tribal entities, modified eligibility for Tribal college and university (TCU) libraries that serve the public, increased the discount rate for C2 services, and increased the C2 budget floor (now \$55,000).

To learn more about program updates and deadlines, including helpful video tutorials, webinar recordings, and trainings, please review the [September 2024 E-Rate News Brief](#).

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

Invoice Filing Deadline

The invoice filing deadline for most single-year FY 2023 funding commitments is October 28, 2024. 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 change request, or a successful appeal of a previously denied or reduced funding request. This invoice filing deadline applies to both RHC programs, the Telecommunications and Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) programs.

A single 120-day extension of the invoice filing deadline is available to health care providers (HCPs) that are 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 FY 2023 funding commitments is also October 28, 2024.

[Lifeline](#)

Lifeline Support for Survivors Now Available

On August 29, 2024, the Wireline Competition Bureau issued a [Public Notice](#) requiring compliance with the Safe Connections Act of 2022, enabling survivors of domestic violence, human trafficking, and related crimes to receive emergency Lifeline support.

On September 4, 2024, USAC updated its systems to allow survivors to enroll in Lifeline for an emergency six-month period. Survivors can apply online at [LifelineSupport.org](#) or mail in a completed [paper application](#) ([Spanish](#)). Qualifying survivors can receive a discount of up to \$9.25 on voice, Internet, or bundled services for up to six months, after which they may apply for the standard Lifeline benefit.

Survivors can participate in the Lifeline program if they attempt a mobile line separation request and can confirm they are experiencing financial hardship through one of the methods below:

- Based on the [existing Lifeline program qualification requirements](#),
- If their household income is at or below [200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines](#) (FPG),
- Enrollment in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC),
- Enrollment in the Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch or School Breakfast Program, including enrollment at a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) school or school district, or
- Received a Federal Pell Grant in the current award year.

Survivors will need to provide a document from their service provider showing proof of an attempted line separation request. **Survivors cannot successfully complete their application for emergency Lifeline support without this document.**

Resources

Service providers can reference USAC's [Safe Connections Act](#) webpage and the upcoming Safe Connections Act: Office Hours webinar for more information on how survivors can apply for the benefit.

Consumer advocates should reference the Safe Connections Act: Consumer Advocates [webinar](#) to learn more about how survivors can apply for Lifeline. Additional information on the benefit is available on the [Survivor Benefit](#) webpage on LifelineSupport.org which includes paper and online [Application Instructions](#) (available in 10 languages). Consumer advocates can also refer to the [Tools](#) page for additional resources to help survivors apply for the benefit.

Enhancements to the Online Lifeline Application

In September, USAC released updates to the online Lifeline application in the National Verifier consumer portal. These changes are part of an ongoing effort to help improve the consumer experience and simplify the application process.

Key updates include:

- Providing a new Lifeline application landing page with key information on the program and how to sign up,
- Simplifying language and removing the alternative government ID option on the “fill out your information” page, and
- Clarifying language and adding tooltip guidance on the duplicate household pages to strengthen consumer understanding.

USAC and the FCC will continue making improvements to the Lifeline system that build upon feedback from stakeholders.

New Tools Page on LifelineSupport.org

USAC released a new [Tools](#) page on LifelineSupport.org to make it easier for consumers to find Lifeline forms, paper and online application instructions, and acceptable documentation guidelines. The paper and online application instructions are new resources that help consumers complete the Lifeline application and are available in English and 9 other languages. The titles for forms and instructions are listed in the same language that they are written in, so non-English speakers can easily find translated content. For example, the Spanish instructions are now listed as “Instrucciones-Español” to make it easily identifiable for Spanish-speaking consumers. The remaining languages (Arabic, Simplified Chinese, French, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Tagalog, Vietnamese) follow the same format.

For the latest Lifeline news and information, be sure to check out Lifeline’s [Announcements](#) page.

Upcoming Training

On **Thursday, October 17, at 3 p.m. ET**, the Lifeline program will be hosting Safe Connections Act Office Hours on Continued Eligibility. Service providers can [register here](#) to learn more about how continued eligibility will be conducted for survivors.

Recordings of previous webinars are available on the [Lifeline Webinars](#) page.

Key Dates and Trainings

Cybersecurity Pilot Program Webinars

- **October 15, 2024, at 3 p.m. ET** – Schools and Libraries Cybersecurity Pilot Program Overview for Service Providers - [Register](#).

Cybersecurity Pilot Program Office Hours

USAC will host a series of Cybersecurity Pilot Program office hours sessions where applicants can ask application-related questions and receive answers from USAC staff. USAC will not present new Pilot Program information during these sessions. Each office hour session will be targeted to specific applicant audiences and will have limited registration spots available. To allow all applicants an opportunity to have their questions answered, please only register for one office hours session, and please register for the session that reflects your entity type.

- October 1, 2024, at 3 p.m. E.T. – Office Hours – Individual Applicants – [Register](#).
- October 2, 2024, at 3 p.m. E.T. – Office Hours – New to EPC Applicants – [Register](#).
- October 3, 2024, at 3 p.m. E.T. – Office Hours – Consortia Applicants – [Register](#).

E-Rate

2024 In-Person E-Rate Trainings:

- **October 7, 2024**, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. ET in **Washington, DC** – [Register](#). Seats for this session are currently available for the *waitlist only*.
- **October 29, 2024**, from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. CT in **Fayetteville, Arkansas** – [Register](#).
- **Tribal-Focused E-Rate Training**: November 12, 2024, in Palm Springs, California. This Tribal-focused training will be held in conjunction with the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, & Museums' (ATALM) annual conference. To attend the E-Rate training, you must be registered for [ATALM](#).

E-Rate Webinars:

- **October 17, 2024, at 2 p.m. ET** – Category Two Budgets – [Register](#).
- **October 24, 2024, at 2 p.m. ET** – EPC Administrative Window – [Register](#).
- **October 31, 2024, at 2 p.m. ET** – Post-Commitment Process – [Register](#).

Rural Health Care

- **November 13, 2024, at 2 p.m. ET** – FY2025 HCF Program Funding Request Webinar – [Register](#).
- **November 20, 2024, at 2 p.m. ET** – FY2025 Telecom Program Funding Request Webinar – [Register](#).
- **December 11, 2024, at 2 p.m. ET** – HCF Consortium Best Practices Webinar – [Register](#)

Lifeline

- **October 17, 2024, at 3 p.m. ET** – SCA Office Hours – [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.

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