



Universal Service

Connecting Millions to Broadband Services



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Purpose

Working at the infrastructure, community and individual level, Universal Service Fund programs help connect Tribal communities to phone and broadband services. This session will introduce you to opportunities to further connect your community through USF programs.

A tall, lattice-structured metal communication tower stands on the right side of the frame. It is equipped with several large, circular parabolic antennas and smaller directional antennas at various heights. The tower is silhouetted against a vibrant sunset sky, which transitions from deep blue at the top to bright orange and yellow near the horizon. Below the horizon, a calm body of water reflects the sky's colors, and a range of low mountains is visible in the distance. The overall scene conveys a sense of connectivity and infrastructure in a natural setting.

Everyone. Connected.

Universal Service Administrative Company

The Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) is an independent, not-for-profit corporation designated by the FCC as the permanent administrator of the Universal Service Fund and the Congressional Response programs.

Works as a ***partner with the FCC*** to protect the integrity of universal service through:

- Informing and educating program audiences
- Collecting and distributing contributions
- Promoting program compliance

FCC Broadband Programs Administered by USAC



Affordable Connectivity Program

Discounted internet services and a one-time device discount to eligible consumers.



Lifeline Program

Discounted phone and internet services to eligible low-income consumers.



E-Rate Program

Funding for broadband services in eligible schools and libraries.



Rural Health Care Program

Funding for telecom and broadband services for eligible rural health care providers.



High Cost Program

Reduced rates for telecom and broadband services in eligible high-cost areas.

Universal Service Programs

A man with a beard, wearing a dark t-shirt and a vest, stands in profile on the left side of the frame, looking at a tablet computer he is holding with both hands. The background shows a rural landscape with several rows of solar panels installed in a field under a cloudy sky. The entire image has a blue color cast.

High Cost and the Connect America Fund

Expanding access to modern communications
networks across rural America



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High Cost Program

- Preserve and advance universal availability of voice service
- Drive universal availability of modern networks capable of providing voice and broadband service to homes, businesses and community anchor institutions
- Drive universal availability of modern networks capable of providing advanced mobile voice and broadband service
- Ensure that rates for broadband and voice services are reasonably comparable in all regions of the nation
- Contain administrative costs and minimize the universal service contribution for consumers and businesses through efficient, effective program management

High Cost Program: How It Works

- The FCC determines areas of the country that are unserved or underserved by broadband deployment
- Eligible service providers accept offers or submit bids to deploy network infrastructure on those areas and provide service
- Service providers use universal service funds to build out networks
- Service providers report progress on deployment
- USAC monitors compliance with build-out obligations

High Cost Program: Service Providers

- Eligibility criteria and fund processes vary from fund to fund
- To participate, service providers must be a registered Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC)
- Participating ETC must file an FCC Form 481 annual detailing financial and operational information and engagement with Tribal governments
- Many funds require participation providers to file build out data with the High Cost Universal Broadband (HUBB) portal each year
- Participating providers must submit to performance testing and verification reviews



Rural Health Care Program

Connecting health care facilities across America



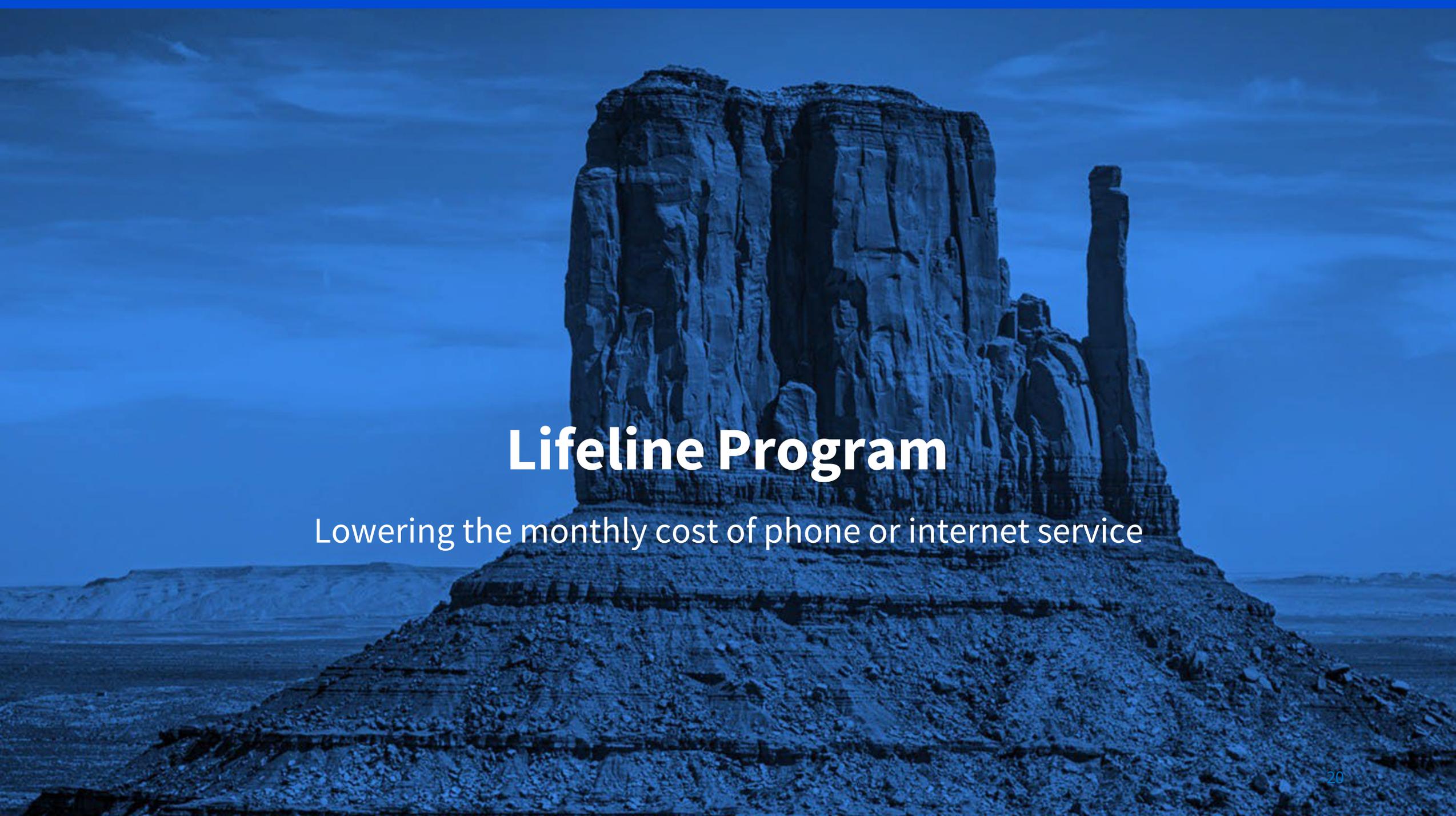
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Rural Health Care Program

- The Rural Health Care (RHC) program provides funding to eligible health care providers for telecommunications and broadband services needed to deliver health care
 - Telecommunications Program funds voice and other telecommunications services
 - Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) Program funds broadband services, network equipment and related costs.
- Eligible applicants: Must be a non-profit or public entity located in a rural area as defined by the FCC. Facility must meet program requirements for [facility type](#)

Rural Health Care Program: Service Providers

- Request an FCC Registration Number from the FCC
- Complete the FCC Form 498 through USAC
- Review and respond to RHC service requests
- If selected by the HCP, sign a service agreement with the HCP
- Credit the HCP for costs covered by the RHC program funding request
- Invoice USAC for the approved funding amount



Lifeline Program

Lowering the monthly cost of phone or internet service

Lifeline Program

- Eligible low income receive a discount off their monthly broadband or telephone bill between \$5.25 - \$9.25 (depending on service type)
- Each eligible household can receive one Lifeline benefit
- Consumers must meet program eligibility criteria and apply through Lifeline [National Verifier](#)
 - Income at or below 135% of federal poverty limit
 - Medicaid
 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
 - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
 - Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
 - Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit

Lifeline Program Enhanced Tribal Benefit

- Lifeline offers an enhanced benefit to consumers who live on qualifying Tribal lands:
 - Up to \$25/month extra is available for subscribers on qualifying Tribal lands (\$34.25 total)
 - Up to \$100 “Link Up” benefit to connect telecommunications services from a carrier receiving high-cost support on qualifying Tribal lands once per residential address
- Additional Eligibility criteria for consumers living on Tribal lands:
 - Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance (BIA-GA)
 - Tribally-Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (Tribal TANF)
 - Tribal Head Start (must meet qualifying income standard)
 - Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

Lifeline Program: Service Providers

- Must be an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC)
- Create a Compliance Plan
- Obtain Study Area Code (SAC) and a Service Provider Identification Number (498 ID/SPIN)
- Set up Lifeline system access
- Begin enrolling consumers and provide Lifeline discounted service
- Invoice USAC for consumers' Lifeline discounts

E-Rate Program

Ensuring that schools and libraries across the U.S.
are connected to information and resources through
the internet



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E-Rate Program

- Provides support to schools and libraries across the nation to obtain affordable, high-speed broadband services and internal connections to connect students and library patrons with learning opportunities and services.
- Eligible applicants: Public or private schools (K-12), libraries, and groups of schools and libraries (e.g., consortia, districts, systems)
- Eligible services: Internet access, telecommunications services, and related equipment ([Full list available](#))

E-Rate Program: Tribal Libraries

- In 2022, the FCC clarified E-Rate rules to confirm that Tribal libraries are eligible for E-Rate funding
- A library may be designated as a Tribal library by a Tribal Council (e.g., pursuant to a Tribal Resolution)
- Tribal libraries designated by a Tribal Council should have three characteristics commonly associated with Institute of Museum & Library Services (IMLS) grants to Native American libraries:
 - Regularly scheduled hours,
 - Staff, and
 - Materials available for library users

E-Rate Program: Service Providers

- Obtain a Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN/498 ID)
- Submit bids in response to applicants requests for service
- If selected by an applicant, sign a contract with the school or library
- Provide agreed-upon services
- Invoice USAC for amount discounted from applicant's bill OR invoice the applicant so they can invoice USAC for the discounted amount

Congressional Response Program

Affordable Connectivity Program

Helps low-income households pay for broadband service and connected internet devices



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Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)

- Congress appropriated \$14.2B to create the Affordable Connectivity Program

- Consumers are eligible for the ACP if they meet any Lifeline program eligibility criteria or additional [ACP eligibility standards](#)
- ACP households can receive up to \$30/month discount for broadband services.
- A one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, tablet, or desktop computer (with a co-payment of more than \$10 but less than \$50)
- Eligible households can receive both Lifeline and the ACP

Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP): Tribal Benefits

- Eligible ACP households located on qualifying Tribal lands can receive a discount of up to \$75 per month
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Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP): Service Providers

- Service providers that are not Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (ETCs) can submit an application to the FCC to provide ACP service

- ETCs and other approved service providers submit an ACP election notice to USAC
- If offering connected devices, submit an ACP device information form
- Set up access to ACP systems
- Enroll eligible consumers
- Provide ACP discounted service and devices to eligible consumers
- Invoice USAC for reimbursement

Learn More

USAC Contacts and Information

- For program information, visit www.USAC.org
- Consumers interested in Lifeline and ACP can visit www.LifelineSupport.org and www.AffordableConnectivity.gov
- For general USAC Tribal information, visit www.usac.org/about/tribal-nations/
- USAC's Tribal Liaison can answer questions and connect you to resources- contact Gem Shandiin Labarta at TribalLiaison@USAC.org
- USAC representatives will be at NTTA all week – stop by our booth to learn more