

# USF Tracker - May 2022

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## Recent News

### Lifeline / Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)

- On May 25, 2022, the WCB released a [Public Notice](#) (DC 22-569) seeking comment on petition filed by Blue Casa Telephone, LLC requesting a waiver of the requirement for Lifeline Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (ETC) to undergo a biennial audit. Comments were due by May 31, 2022 and reply comments by June 7, 2022.
- On May 23, 2022, the WCB released a [Public Notice](#) (DA 22-574) seeking comment on a petition filed by the National Lifeline Association (NaLA), which seeks clarification of the WCB and Enforcement Bureau (EB) Chiefs' authority to suspend a participating provider's ACP enrollments and hold a participating provider's funding based on the "adequate evidence" standard, or in the alternative, reconsideration of the removal rule (47 C.F.R. § 54.1801(e)(2)).  
NaLA also seeks reconsideration or clarification of the requirement that an ACP participating provider offering connected devices provide price information for at least one of the analogous devices from a major retailer. Comments are due 30 days after publication in the Federal Register, and reply comments are due 45 days after publication in the Federal Register.
- On May 18, 2022, the WCB released a [Public Notice](#) (DA 22-538) seeking comments on a waiver petition relating to the ACP non-usage rules for small broadband participating providers serving Tribal consumers.
- The WCB previously announced via [Public Notice](#) (DA-22-352) that the FCC Form 481 Portal is now open for eligible telecommunications carriers (ETCs) required to file the FCC Form 481 annual reports, and granted a **limited waiver to all ETCs of the July 1, 2022 deadline** because the Office of Management and Budget approval of modifications to the associated information collection remains pending. WCB will announce the new filing deadline at a later date. USAC hosted a [webinar](#) on **May 17 at 2:00 PM EDT** for ETCs to learn more about the Form 481 filing process.
- On May 13, 2022, USAC announced that it will initiate automated eligibility database checks to

verify the eligibility of subscribers due for recertification in 2022. Subscribers who pass the automated check will complete the 2022 recertification requirement and will not need to take any action now or later this year; subscribers who fail the automated check will undergo recertification after the FCC's COVID waivers are lifted.

## High Cost Fund Programs

- On May 25, 2022, the WCB, in conjunction with the Rural Broadband Auctions Task Force (RBATF) and the Office of Economics and Analytics (OEA), issued a [Public Notice](#) (DA 22-581) announcing an additional 88 Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (Auction 904) winning bids that are ready to be authorized and that a series of bids defaulted.
- On May 20, 2022, the Commission released a [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#) (FCC 22-35) to establish an enhanced Alternative Connect America Model (A-CAM) to achieve faster speeds in rural areas and proposing targeted modifications to the high-cost program. Comments are due 30 days after publication in the Federal Register, and reply comments are due 45 days after publication in the Federal Register.
- On May 12, 2022, the WCB, in conjunction with the RBATF and the OEA, issued a [Public Notice](#) (DA 22-523) authorizing Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (Auction 904) support for 830 winning bids.
- Early in 2022, the Commission approved the transfer of domestic section 214 authorizations between AtLink Services, LLC (AtLink) and Cherokee Telephone Company (Cherokee) (together, the Parties) in relation to the exchange of Connect America Fund (CAF) Phase II auction support and obligations associated with 249 census blocks in Oklahoma. Consistent with this approval, on May 13, 2022, the WCB, in coordination with the Rural Broadband Auctions Task Force, released a [Public Notice](#) (DA 22-530) modifying the support and associated defined deployment obligations of AtLink and authorizes it to receive all remaining CAF Phase II auction support initially awarded to Cherokee.
- On May 10, 2022, the Commission released an [Order](#) (FCC 22-32) temporarily waiving, on its own motion, the application of the budget control mechanism for rate-of-return carriers that receive high-cost universal service support from legacy mechanisms. The Commission instead adopted a budget constraint of 0%, i.e. a full waiver of the budget constraint, for the July 2022 to June 2023 tariff year, and direct the WCB to work with the USAC, the to calculate the budget control mechanism using 0%.
- On May 3, 2022, the WCB, in conjunction RBATF and the OEA, issued a [Public Notice](#) (DA 22-483) announcing an additional 2,061 Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (Auction 904) winning bids that are ready to be authorized and that a series of bids defaulted.

- The WCB previously announced via [Public Notice](#) (DA-22-352) a **limited waiver to all ETCs of the July 1, 2022 deadline** because Office of Management and Budget approval of modifications to the associated information collection remains pending. WCB will announce the new filing deadline at a later date.

### **Schools and Libraries (E-Rate)/Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF)**

- The E-Rate program will host a webinar on Program Integrity Assurance (PIA) and Selective Review Process Webinar on **June 9, 2022 at 2:00 PM EDT**. Registration information is available [here](#).
- On May 25, 2022, the Commission [announced](#) that it has received requests for \$2,814,736,532 in the third application filing window of the ECF program to fund 5,120,453 connected devices and 4,285,794 broadband connections. Applications will be prioritized to fund schools and libraries with the greatest need first, with a preference for schools and libraries located in rural areas. With the estimated \$1.5 billion remaining in the program, the Commission expects to be able to fund requests from many of the 7,369 schools and school districts, 628 libraries and library systems, and 133 consortia which applied from across the country.
- On May 17, 2022, the Commission [committed](#) over \$50 million in the 15th wave of ECF program support, helping to close the Homework Gap. This latest round of funding is supporting 46 schools, 7 libraries, and 2 consortia across the country, including for students in American Samoa, Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Ohio, and the US Virgin Islands.
- On May 4, 2022, the Commission [committed](#) nearly \$39 million in the 14th wave of ECF program support, helping to close the Homework Gap. This latest round of funding is supporting 140 schools, 14 libraries, and 1 consortium across the country, including for students in California, Georgia, Hawaii, Kentucky, Michigan, New York, Puerto Rico, and Virginia.

### **Rural Health Care (RHC)**

- On May 25, 2022, the OMB and WCB established via [Public Notice](#) (DA 22-582) a **July 31, 2022** deadline for Round 2 COVID-19 Telehealth Program funding recipients and provide recipients with additional information for the post-program report which is due on **January 31, 2024**.
- On May 25, 2022, the WCB released on [Order](#) (DA 22-580) which extends the waiver of the Commission's rules extends the nationwide waiver of the Rates Database for funding year 2023 to include health care and telecommunication service providers nationwide.
- On May 20, 2022, the WCB issued a [Public Notice](#) (DA 22-560) that summarizes upcoming Connected Care Pilot Program deadlines, and waives and extends the end date of the Pilot Program to conduct a full three year Pilot project. The following Connected Care Pilot Program deadlines apply to all projects: **August 18, 2022** is the last day to post the initial FCC Form

461 to the USAC website; **September 16, 2022** is the deadline to submit initial Form 461 to USAC; and **December 31, 2025** is the last date for Pilot Program participants to end their project.

- Reply comments for a [Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#) (FCC 22-15) seeking comment on revisions to the Commission's Rural Health Care Program are due on or before **May 16, 2022**. The rules designed to ensure that rural healthcare providers receive funding necessary to access the broadband and telecommunications services necessary to provide vital healthcare services while limiting costly inefficiencies and the potential for waste, fraud, and abuse.
- On May 5, 2022, USAC released its RHC Program [Newsletter for April 2022](#).