



Federal Communications Commission  
Washington, D.C. 20554  
Office of Native Affairs and Policy

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**Date: January 17, 2025**

**Subject: FCC Native News Digest – January 2025**

Greetings from the Federal Communications Commission.

To make it easy for Tribal Communities to engage with the FCC, the Office of Native Affairs and Policy (ONAP) publishes a monthly digest with updates and reminders that may be of interest to Tribal leaders, governments, businesses and other organizations. This list is not comprehensive of all FCC deadlines, programs, and initiatives, but includes certain items that might be important to the communities that you serve. Please reach out to [Native@fcc.gov](mailto:Native@fcc.gov) with any questions.

**RECENT UPDATES**

**FCC Guidance to USAC on E-Rate Competitive Bidding Rules**

- As part of its ongoing oversight of the [Universal Service Administrative Company \(USAC\)](#), the FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB) provided guidance in a letter to USAC regarding its application of the FCC's E-Rate competitive bidding rules to requests for Wi-Fi hotspots and mobile wireless Internet service delivered via Wi-Fi hotspots.

[>>> Read More Here](#)

**Request for Contact Information: Lifeline Survivor Benefit Outreach**

- USAC and the FCC are committed to providing critical information to survivors and advocates about the Lifeline Survivor Benefit. USAC is updating contact information for outreach about the survivor benefit, such as trainings on how survivors can apply for Lifeline and available resources to help survivors through the application process. USAC recently requested updated contact information from organizations and their specific team members that may work with the survivor community. Please read the announcement link below for more information.

On November 15, 2023, the FCC issued a Report and Order implementing the Safe Connections Act of 2022 to help survivors of domestic violence, human trafficking, and related crimes stay connected to phone and internet service. As of September 4, 2024, survivors who have attempted a line separation request and are experiencing financial hardship may apply for the [Lifeline Survivor Benefit](#) that is administered by [USAC](#). Qualifying survivors may receive a monthly discount of up to \$9.25 (or up to \$34.25 per month if residing on Tribal lands) off the cost of phone, internet, or bundled services for up to six months.

[>>> Read More in USAC's December 9 announcement](#)

## **FCC Adopts Stricter Robocall Mitigation Database Filing Requirements**

- The FCC announced on January 8, 2025, that it has adopted new rules to further tighten filing requirements for the Robocall Mitigation Database to better ensure widespread compliance and heightened awareness of provider responsibilities to protect consumers. The Robocall Mitigation Database is a critical tool used by the FCC and state and federal law enforcement to combat illegal robocalls.

The [Report and Order](#) (FCC 24-135) increases accountability by requiring timely updates to company information, and instituting base fines of \$10,000 for submitting false or inaccurate information, and \$1,000 for failure to keep information current. The Report and Order also requires providers to re-certify annually to the accuracy of their submissions and adopts a \$100 filing fee. In order to further improve the reliability and security of the database, the Report and Order directs the WCB to establish a dedicated reporting mechanism to facilitate shared oversight of the Database among all stakeholders, issue additional guidance and “best practices” for filers, and establish two-factor authentication protocols for access to the database.

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### **OPEN COMMENT PERIODS**

*The FCC seeks comment from the public in its rulemakings, typically through a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. Visit the FCC’s website at <https://www.fcc.gov/>, or go to “Proposed FCC Rulemakings” at <https://www.fcc.gov/proposed-rulemakings> for more information on open proceedings.*

## **Alaska Connect Fund - FCC Seeks Comment on Tribal Consent and Other Issues (WC Docket No. 23-328)**

- The Alaska Connect Fund (ACF) [Report and Order](#) (FCC 24-116) was released on November 4, 2024 and becomes effective on January 30, 2025.
- In the [Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#) (FNPRM) in the ACF proceeding, the FCC (Commission) seeks comment on Tribal Consent issues for the ACF. Separately, the FNPRM seeks comment on how best to award support in areas where more than one mobile provider is receiving support (duplicate support areas) for ACF Mobile Phase II, which could occur from January 1, 2030, through December 31, 2034. The FNPRM also seeks comment on a reverse auction that would award additional support to unserved areas, as well as other issues that would impact the ACF.

**Comments on WC Docket No. 23-328 are due on or before February 3, 2025, and reply comments are due on or before March 4, 2025.**

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- Regarding the Tribal consent requirements for the ACF, the FCC seeks comment on whether ACF providers of mobile or fixed service must obtain the consent of the relevant Tribal government(s) for new deployments prior to being authorized to receive support for those areas. To promote and support Tribal sovereignty and self-determination, the Commission tentatively concluded that adopting a Tribal consent requirement in Alaska Connect Fund

rules is consistent with long-standing recognition of engagement between Tribal governments and communications providers, and the Commission recognized that early engagement is a particularly important element to promote the successful deployment and provision of service on Tribal lands. The Commission seeks comment generally on this tentative conclusion and how it may be implemented.

*Interested parties may file comments and reply comments on FCC proceedings through the FCC's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS) at <https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/filings>. Please check the docket number for the proceeding and select it as part of your submission.*

## **REMINDERS**

### **E-Rate FY2025 Application Filing Window**

- The E-Rate application filing window for funding year (FY) 2025 opened on January 15, 2025, and will close on March 26, 2025 at 11:59 PM ET. Review the [Special Edition of the E-Rate News Brief](#) issued on December 30, 2024 for a list of resources.

### **USDA Seeks Applications for Grants to Build Community-Oriented High-Speed Internet Networks for People in Rural Areas**

- Our USDA Rural Development colleagues reached out to ONAP on January 10<sup>th</sup> to share that the Rural Utilities Service (RUS), a Rural Development agency of the United States Department of Agriculture, has announced that beginning February 20, 2025, it will be accepting applications for grants to build community-oriented, high-speed internet networks for people in rural areas. Completed applications are due by April 21, 2025. The Public Notice (RUS-24-TELECOM-0037) is available [here](#).

RUS is expecting to make approximately \$26 million in grants available under the [Community Connect Program](#). This program provides funds to establish high-speed internet networks that will foster economic growth and deliver enhanced educational, health care and public safety benefits.

[>>> Read More Here](#)

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