

ORIGINAL

Commissioner	Yes	No	Not Participating
Zay	√		
Deig	√		
Swinger	√		
Veleta	√		
Ziegner			√

STATE OF INDIANA

INDIANA UTILITY REGULATORY COMMISSION

**IN THE MATTER OF THE COMMISSION’S 2026)
CERTIFICATION OF CARRIERS’ ELIGIBILITY)
TO RECEIVE FEDERAL HIGH-COST) CAUSE NO. 46408
UNIVERSAL SUPPORT, PURSUANT TO THE)
TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT OF 1996, THE) APPROVED: MAY 20 2026
FCC’S MAY 23, 2001 ORDER, AND OTHER)
RELATED FCC ORDERS.)**

ORDER OF THE COMMISSION

**Presiding Officers:
David E. Ziegner, Commissioner
Loraine L. Seyfried, Chief Administrative Law Judge**

On May 23, 2001, the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) issued an Order (“RTF Order”) assigning state commissions the responsibility of certifying that rural carriers or competitive eligible telecommunications carriers (“ETCs”) designated to receive high-cost support are using federal high-cost support in a manner consistent with the requirements of Section 254(e) of the Telecommunications Act of 1996.¹ Pursuant to Section 254(e), carriers must use universal service support “only for the provision, maintenance, and upgrading of facilities and services for which the support is intended.” The RTF Order states that state certifications should be submitted by October 1 each year for payments to be made during the following calendar year. If a carrier is not certified by its state commission, it will not receive federal high-cost support. Thus, the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (“Commission”) is opening this proceeding for the purpose of completing the 2026 FCC ETC recertification process.

1. Evolution of the ETC Recertification Process. On November 18, 2011, the FCC released a comprehensive order reforming the federal universal service fund (“USF”) and intercarrier compensation (“ICC”) system (“USF/ICC Order”).² The USF/ICC Order established uniform requirements for the information that ETCs must report to their respective states and the FCC. In this order, the FCC added new types of funding mechanisms to the term “high-cost support”³ to include, among others, Connect America Fund support for some price cap carrier service areas. Additionally, the FCC extended the federal annual reporting requirements to all ETCs, including those designated by states. The FCC concluded that these requirements should serve as a baseline requirement for all ETCs and enumerated these requirements in FCC Form 481.

¹ *Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service; Multi-Association Group (MAG) Plan for Regulation of Interstate Services of Non-Price Cap Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers and Interexchange Carriers*, (16 FCC Rcd. 11244) (2001).

² *Connect America Fund*, (26 FCC Rcd. 17663) (2011).

³ *See footnote 16 in Connect America Fund*, (26 FCC Rcd. 17663) (2011).

On December 18, 2014, the FCC issued its order *In the Matter of ETC Annual Reports and Certifications and a USTelecom Petition for Forbearance from Obsolete ILEC Regulatory Obligations that Inhibit Deployment of Next-Generation Networks* (“Connect America Order”) which requires recipients of high-cost and/or Connect America Fund support that are subject to broadband performance obligations to submit a broadband reasonable comparability rate certification with their annual report required by 47 C.F.R. § 54.313. In 2019, the FCC concluded the Connect America Fund Phase II Auction, and the Commission designated six winning bidders as ETCs on February 20, 2019.⁴ In 2021, the Commission designated several ETCs or approved expanded ETC service areas for provisional winning bidders of the FCC’s Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Phase I Auction. These ETCs are required to be recertified by the Commission to receive high-cost support in the coming year and submit the state-specific form in this Cause. In addition, the FCC requires ETCs to submit a completed FCC Form 481 to Universal Service Administrative Company (“USAC”) by July 1 of each year and provides state commissions with access to this information as discussed below.

On July 7, 2017, the FCC released a Report and Order streamlining annual reporting for ETCs that receive high-cost universal service support, by eliminating several rules considered either duplicative or no longer necessary.⁵ The FCC also eliminated the requirement that ETCs file duplicate copies of the FCC Form 481 with the FCC, state commissions, and/or tribal governments. However, the FCC eliminated this requirement contingent upon USAC’s completion of an online portal for the filings of recipients of high-cost support to be made accessible to state commissions.

Pursuant to 47 C.F.R. § 54.313, ETCs are to submit the information requested in FCC Form 481 and related forms and attachments to USAC. Therefore, the Commission will not require a copy of the completed FCC Form 481 and related forms and attachments to be filed directly with the Commission. However, all forms and attachments required by 47 C.F.R. § 54.313 provide necessary baseline information for state commissions to recertify ETCs to continue receiving high-cost support; therefore, if the Commission is unable to access all applicable information, the Commission may request a copy of the FCC Form 481 and related attachments and forms to be filed directly in this Cause. To further aid the Commission in the recertification process, the Commission requires ETCs to complete and submit the form and affidavit attached to this Order as Attachments A and B, respectively. The Commission may request clarifying or supplemental information related to its review of the FCC Form 481 and state specific form.

2. Exception for Certain ETCs. ETCs that do not receive federal high-cost support and are only reimbursed from the federal Lifeline fund are not subject to this Cause.

3. Due Date for 2026 ETC Recertification. ETCs that receive federal high-cost support must complete and file the attached form and any necessary attached sheets by July 1, 2026, in order to receive certification to receive universal service high-cost support for the upcoming fiscal year.

⁴ See *FCC Public Notice DA 19-414*, released May 14, 2019.

⁵ Federal Communications Commission, *Report and Order, In the Matter of Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No. 10-90, *ETC Annual Reports and Certifications*, WC Docket No. 14-58, FCC 17-87, released July 7, 2017.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED BY THE INDIANA UTILITY REGULATORY COMMISSION that:

1. ETCs must file the attached form and any necessary attached sheets by July 1, 2026.
2. The information required for ETC recertification pursuant to the FCC's rules in 47 CFR § 54.313 and the completed FCC Form 481 shall be accessible to Commission Staff through USAC's website, which are to be submitted to USAC by the deadline established by the FCC and USAC.
3. The Commission's Communications Division shall forward a copy of this Order to all Indiana ETCs designated to receive high-cost support.
4. This Order shall be effective on and after the date of its approval.

ZAY, DEIG, SWINGER, AND VELETA CONCUR; ZIEGNER ABSENT:

APPROVED: MAY 20 2026

I hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of the Order as approved.

**Dana Kosco
Secretary of the Commission**

Attachment A

**2026 High Cost Universal Service Funding Certification
For Eligible Telecommunications Carriers
IURC Cause No. 46408**

Each Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (“ETC”) that receives federal high-cost support¹ is required to provide the information requested below to receive certification by the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission that the responding carrier is eligible to receive such federal support for the coming year. The Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) requires state commissions to certify ETCs for high-cost support for the coming year pursuant to 47 C.F.R § 54.314. If you have any questions, please contact Kendall Querry at 317-233-5249. **This information must be provided to the Commission by July 1, 2026.**²

Information submitted to the Universal Service Administrative Company (“USAC”) pursuant to 47 C.F.R. § 54.313 (FCC Form 481) is also reviewed in the recertification process. However, it is not necessary to submit a copy of the Form 481 in this cause. USAC permits state commissions to have access to the Form 481 submitted by your company. If for any reason, Commission Staff is unable to access this form, including both public and confidential information and related attachments, the Commission may request submission of this information directly in this cause. The Commission may also request clarifying or supplemental information related to its review of the information submitted to the USAC on FCC Form 481 and/or the related attachments.

Note to Lifeline-only ETCs: Lifeline-only ETCs are **not** required to file information in this cause.

Carrier Name: _____

Study Area Code _____

Carrier Address: _____

Contact Name: _____

Contact Email: _____

Position: _____

Phone: _____ **FAX:** _____

¹ For the purpose of this application, the term “high-cost” includes FCC support mechanisms including, high-cost loop support, safety net support, safety valve support, local switching support, interstate common line support, high cost model support, and interstate access support, as well as the Connect America Fund, which includes funding to support and advance networks that provide voice and broadband services, such as Alternative Connect America Fund, Connect America Fund II, and Rural Digital Opportunity Fund.

² Attachment A requests only publicly available information, therefore, please file the completed application publicly in Cause No 46408.

1. Does your company offer voice telephony services as described in 47 C.F.R. § 54.101³ throughout its designated service area (ETC study area)? Yes or No

If the answer is no, please demonstrate that an FCC waiver, forbearance order, or rule applies to your company by providing a citation to the waiver, order, or rule exempting your company from this requirement.

2. Please report your monthly rates for local exchange or voice telephony service to residential customers as of June 1, 2026, pursuant to 170 IAC 7-1.2-4. (Also note the FCC's 2026 reasonable comparability benchmarks announced for fixed voice services referenced in *Public Notice DA-25-1088*, Released, Dec. 19, 2025) (Please attach additional sheets if necessary.)
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3. Check the boxes below to confirm the following:

Please confirm that your company offers the federal Lifeline discount of \$5.25 per month⁴ for voice telephony services or \$9.25 per month for bundled voice and broadband, meeting the FCC's minimum service standards, to eligible customers and publicizes the availability of Lifeline service in a manner reasonably designed to reach those likely to qualify for the service.

Pursuant to 47 CFR 54.101(c), "An eligible telecommunications carrier (ETC) subject to a high-cost public interest obligation to offer broadband internet access services and not receiving Phase I frozen high-cost support must offer broadband services within the areas where it receives high-cost support consistent with the obligations set forth in [*in federal rules*]."⁵ Further, ETC recipients of funding through reverse auctions, such as CAF II and Rural Digital Opportunity Fund auctions, have broadband deployment and pricing

³ Voice telephony services shall be supported by Federal universal service support mechanisms. Eligible voice telephony services must provide voice grade access to the public switched network or its functional equivalent; minutes of use for local service provided at no additional charge to end users; access to the emergency services provided by local government or other public safety organizations, such as 911 and enhanced 911, to the extent the local government in an eligible carrier's service area has implemented 911 or enhanced 911 systems; and toll limitation services to qualifying low-income consumers.

⁴ See 47 C.F.R. §§ 54.401 and 54.408, and *In the Matter of Lifeline and Link up Reform and Modernization WC Docket No. 11-42, Telecommunications Carriers Eligible for Universal Service Support, WC Docket No. 09-197, Connect America Fund WC Docket No. 10-90* (DA-24-642), released July 3, 2024.

⁵ "this subpart and subparts D [*Universal Service Support for High-Cost Areas*], K [*Connect America Fund Broadband Loop Support*], L [*Mobility Fund and 5G*], and M [*High-Cost Loop Support for Rate of Return Carriers*] of this part."

obligations consistent with 47 CFR 54.313(a)(3). Please confirm that your company understands and is fulfilling the public interest obligations applicable to your company.

My company has completed and submitted the Form 481 to USAC as required pursuant to 47 CFR § 54.313 by July 1, 2026.

Attachment B

AFFIDAVIT
IURC Cause No. 46408

As an authorized corporate officer of _____ (company name), I, _____ (print name), under penalty of perjury, hereby affirm familiarity with and understanding of the requirements of the Communications Act of 1934 as amended by the Telecommunications Act of 1996 with respect to the receipt of funds from the Universal Service Fund and affirm that such funds received will be used only for the provision, maintenance, and upgrading of facilities and services for which the support is intended pursuant to 47 U.S.C. 254(e). As a common carrier designated as an eligible telecommunications carrier, the services supported by the federal Universal Service Fund are offered throughout the company's designated service area and are advertised using media of general distribution pursuant to 47 U.S.C. 214(e).

(Signature)

(Title)

(Date)

Subscribed and Sworn to before me, a Notary Public, this _____ day of _____, 2026.

(Signature)

(Printed Name)

NOTARY PUBLIC

My Commission Expires _____

My County of Residence _____