



# PUBLIC NOTICE

Federal Communications Commission  
45 L Street NE  
Washington, DC 20554

News Media Information 202 / 418-0500  
Internet: <https://www.fcc.gov>  
TTY: 1-888-835-5322

DA 21-279

Released: March 8, 2021

## WIRELINE COMPETITION BUREAU SEEKS COMMENT ON RURAL DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY FUND PETITIONS FOR DESIGNATION AS AN ELIGIBLE TELECOMMUNICATIONS CARRIER

WC Docket No. 09-197

Comment Date: April 7, 2021

Reply Comment Date: April 22, 2021

The Wireline Competition Bureau seeks comment on multiple petitions for designation as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC), as described in the Attachment to this Public Notice, for the purpose of becoming eligible to receive universal service support. The petitioners are winning bidders, or those assigned support through the division of winning bids, in the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) auction (Auction 904).<sup>1</sup> ETC designation is a prerequisite to receiving universal service support available through the high-cost and Lifeline programs. Recipients of high-cost support, including recipients of RDOF support awarded pursuant to Auction 904, must offer the Lifeline discount on all qualifying services in areas where an ETC receives high-cost support, deploy a network capable of delivering service that meets the Lifeline program's minimum service standards, and commercially offer such service pursuant to their high-cost obligations.<sup>2</sup> To the extent that a petition specifically includes areas outside of RDOF-eligible census blocks, the Bureau will treat the petition as a request for Lifeline-only designation in those areas (although the petitioner will be obligated to provide Lifeline services throughout its entire designation area).<sup>3</sup>

All Commission ETC designations of RDOF support recipients will be conditioned upon successful completion of the RDOF long-form application (FCC Form 683). By June 7, 2021, all long-form applicants must upload documentation of ETC designation(s) and a certification letter to their FCC Form 683.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See *Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Phase I Auction (Auction 904) Closes; Winning Bidders Announced; FCC Form 683 Due January 29, 2021*, Public Notice, 35 FCC Rcd 13888, 13890-91, paras. 9-15 (RBATF, OEA, WCB 2020) (*RDOF Closing Public Notice*); *Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Phase I Auction Scheduled for October 29, 2020; Notice and Filing Requirements and Other Procedures for Auction 904*, AU Docket No. 20-34 et al., Public Notice, 35 FCC Rcd 6077, 6164-65, paras. 288-93 (2020) (*Auction 904 Procedures Public Notice*).

<sup>2</sup> 47 CFR Part 54, Subparts D, K, L, M.

<sup>3</sup> See *RDOF Closing Public Notice*, 35 FCC Rcd at n.72 (stating that Auction 904 petitioners may, in addition to seeking a high-cost designation in winning bid areas, seek a Lifeline-only ETC designation in areas not eligible for high-cost support for the limited purpose of becoming eligible to receive only Lifeline support in such areas). See, e.g., *Connect America Fund et al.*, Fourth Order on Reconsideration, 27 FCC Rcd 8814, 8821-22, paras. 19-20 (2012) (explaining that a Lifeline-only ETC designation does not enable a carrier to receive high-cost support and noting distinctions between the obligations of such carriers).

<sup>4</sup> 47 CFR § 54.804(b)(5); *RDOF Closing Public Notice*, 35 FCC Rcd at 13894, 13900-01.

### Requirements for FCC ETC Designation

Section 254(e) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended (the Act), provides that “only an eligible telecommunications carrier designated under section 214(e) shall be eligible to receive specific federal universal service support.”<sup>5</sup> Congress gives primary authority for ETC designations to state commissions.<sup>6</sup> The FCC has authority only when “a common carrier [is] providing telephone exchange service and exchange access that is not subject to the jurisdiction of a State commission.”<sup>7</sup> The petitioning carrier must demonstrate that the FCC has jurisdiction and may do so by submitting an “affirmative statement from the state commission or a court of competent jurisdiction that the carrier is not subject to the state commission’s jurisdiction.”<sup>8</sup> The Commission has delegated authority to the Bureau to consider appropriate ETC designation requests.<sup>9</sup>

A petition for ETC designation by the FCC must include: (1) a certification that the petitioner offers or intends to offer all services designated for support by the Commission pursuant to section 254(c) of the Act; (2) a certification that the petitioner offers or intends to offer the supported services either using its own facilities or a combination of its own facilities and resale of another carrier’s services;<sup>10</sup> (3) a description of how the petitioner advertises the availability of the supported services and the charges therefor using media of general distribution;<sup>11</sup> (4) a detailed description of the geographic service area for which the petitioner requests to be designated as an ETC;<sup>12</sup> and (5) a certification that neither the petitioner, nor any party to the application, is subject to a denial of federal benefits pursuant to the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988.<sup>13</sup>

In addition, petitioners must demonstrate their ability to meet certain service standards. A petitioner seeking an ETC designation for purposes of becoming eligible to receive RDOF support must: (1) certify that it will comply with the service requirements applicable to the support that it receives; (2) demonstrate its ability to remain functional in emergency situations; and (3) demonstrate its ability to satisfy applicable consumer protection and service quality standards.<sup>14</sup> In addition, prior to designating a carrier as an ETC pursuant to section 214(e)(6) of the Act, the Commission must determine whether such designation is in the public interest.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> 47 U.S.C. § 254(e).

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* § 214(e)(2).

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* § 214(e)(6).

<sup>8</sup> See *Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service et al.*, CC Docket No. 96-45, Twelfth Report and Order, Memorandum Opinion and Order, and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 15 FCC Rcd 12208, 12267, para. 120 (2000); 47 U.S.C. § 214(e)(6).

<sup>9</sup> See *Procedures for FCC Designation of Eligible Telecommunications Carriers Pursuant to Section 214(e)(6) of the Communications Act*, CC Docket No. 96-45, Public Notice, 12 FCC Rcd 22947, 22948 (1997).

<sup>10</sup> 47 U.S.C. § 214(e)(1); 47 CFR § 54.201(d)(1).

<sup>11</sup> 47 U.S.C. § 214(e)(1); 47 CFR § 54.201(d)(2).

<sup>12</sup> An ETC’s “service area” is set by the designating authority and is the geographic area within which an ETC has universal service obligations and may receive universal service support. 47 U.S.C. § 214(e)(5); 47 CFR § 54.207(a). Although section 214(e)(5) of the Act, 47 U.S.C. § 214(e)(5), requires conformance of a competitive ETC’s service area and an incumbent rural telephone company’s service area, the Commission has separately forbore from imposing such requirements on Auction 904 support recipients. See *Rural Digital Opportunity Fund; Connect America Fund*, WC Docket Nos. 19-126, 10-90, Report and Order, 35 FCC Rcd 686, 728, para. 93-94 (2000).

<sup>13</sup> 21 U.S.C. § 862; 47 CFR § 1.2002(a)–(b).

<sup>14</sup> See 47 CFR § 54.202(a).

<sup>15</sup> 47 U.S.C. § 214(e)(6); 47 CFR § 54.202(b). The Bureau has extended to Auction 904 support recipients the same waivers of certain requirements in section 54.202 of the Commission’s rules and the same presumption that

(continued....)

### Comment Filing Requirements

Interested parties may file **comments on or before April 7, 2021** and **replies on or before April 22, 2021**. All pleadings must reference **WC Docket No. 09-197**. Comments may be filed using the Commission's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS) or by filing paper copies.<sup>16</sup>

- *Electronic Filers:* Comments may be filed electronically using the Internet by accessing the ECFS: <https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs>.
- *Paper Filers:* Parties who choose to file by paper must file an original and one copy of each filing.
- Filings can be sent by commercial overnight courier, or by first-class or overnight U.S. Postal Service mail. All filings must be addressed to the Commission's Secretary, Office of the Secretary, Federal Communications Commission.
- Commercial overnight mail (other than U.S. Postal Service Express Mail and Priority Mail) must be sent to 9050 Junction Drive, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701. U.S. Postal Service first-class, Express, and Priority mail must be addressed to 45 L Street NE Washington, DC 20554.
- Effective March 19, 2020, and until further notice, the Commission no longer accepts any hand or messenger delivered filings. This is a temporary measure taken to help protect the health and safety of individuals, and to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19.<sup>17</sup>

*Additional Copies.* Parties should send a copy of their filings to Nissa Laughner, Telecommunications Access Policy Division, Wireline Competition Bureau, 445 12th Street, SW, Room 5-B444, Washington D.C. 20554, or by e-mail to [Nissa.Laughner@fcc.gov](mailto:Nissa.Laughner@fcc.gov).

*People with Disabilities:* To request materials in accessible formats for people with disabilities (braille, large print, electronic files, audio format), send an e-mail to [fcc504@fcc.gov](mailto:fcc504@fcc.gov) or call the Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau at 202-418-0530 (voice), 202-418-0432 (TTY).

*Permit but Disclose Ex Parte Communications.* For the purposes of the Commission's *ex parte* rules, each petition submitted pursuant to section 214(e)(6) will be treated as initiating a permit-but-disclose proceeding under the Commission's rules.<sup>18</sup> Persons making *ex parte* presentations must file a copy of any written presentation or a memorandum summarizing any oral presentation within two business days after the presentation (unless a different deadline applicable to the Sunshine period applies).<sup>19</sup> Persons making oral *ex parte* presentations are reminded that memoranda summarizing the presentation must (1) list all persons attending or otherwise participating in the meeting at which the *ex parte* presentation was made, and (2) summarize all data presented and arguments made during the presentation.<sup>20</sup> If the presentation consisted in whole or in part of the presentation of data or arguments

(Continued from previous page) \_\_\_\_\_

designation will serve the public interest as it had previously extended to Auction 903 support recipients. *RDOF Closing Public Notice*, 35 FCC Rcd at 13901, n.71; *WCB Reminds Connect America Fund Phase II Auction Applicants of the Process for Obtaining a Federal Designation as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier*, WC Docket Nos. 09-197 and 10-90, Public Notice, 33 FCC Rcd 6696, 6699-6700 (WCB 2019).

<sup>16</sup> See *Electronic Filing of Documents in Rulemaking Proceedings*, GC Docket No. 97-113, Report and Order, 13 FCC Rcd 11322 (1998); 63 FR 24121 (1998).

<sup>17</sup> See *FCC Announces Closure of FCC Headquarters Open Window and Change in Hand-Delivery Policy*, Public Notice, 35 FCC Rcd 2788 (OMD 2020), <https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-closes-headquarters-open-window-and-changes-hand-delivery-policy>.

<sup>18</sup> See 47 CFR § 1.1206.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.* § 1.2016(b)(2)(iii).

<sup>20</sup> *Id.* § 1.1206(b)(1).

already reflected in the presenter's written comments, memoranda or other filings in the proceeding, the presenter may provide citations to such data or arguments in his or her prior comments, memoranda, or other filings (specifying the relevant page and/or paragraph numbers where such data or arguments can be found) in lieu of summarizing them in the memorandum.<sup>21</sup> Documents shown or given to Commission staff during *ex parte* meetings are deemed to be written *ex parte* presentations and must be filed consistent with rule 1.1206(b).<sup>22</sup> In proceedings governed by rule 1.49(f) or for which the Commission has made available a method of electronic filing, written *ex parte* presentations and memoranda summarizing oral *ex parte* presentations, and all attachments thereto, must be filed through the electronic comment filing system available for that proceeding, and must be filed in their native format (e.g., .doc, .xml, .ppt, searchable.pdf).<sup>23</sup> Participants in this proceeding should familiarize themselves with the Commission's *ex parte* rules.

For additional information on this proceeding, please contact Nissa Laughner (Nissa.Laughner@fcc.gov) of the Wireline Competition Bureau, Telecommunications Access Policy Division, (202) 418-7400.

-FCC-

---

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

<sup>22</sup> *Id.* § 1.1206(b)(2).

<sup>23</sup> *Id.* § 1.1206(b)(2)(i); *see also id.* § 1.49(f).

## ATTACHMENT

## ETC Petitions Covering RDOF-Eligible Areas Only

Bidder Name	Petitioner Name(s)	Date Filed	State
CCO Holdings, LLC	Bright House Networks Information Services (Alabama), LLC; Charter Fiberlink – Alabama, LLC; Time Warner Cable Information Services (Alabama)	01/06/2021	AL
RDOF USA Consortium	Broadlife Communications, LLC	01/21/2021	AL
RDOF USA Consortium	Central Alabama Electric Cooperative	02/04/2021	AL
Connect Everyone, LLC	Connect Everyone, LLC	01/06/2021	AL
RDOF USA Consortium	Coosa Valley Technologies, Inc.	02/04/2021	AL
RDOF USA Consortium	Covington Electric Cooperative, Inc.	02/04/2021	AL
Mediacom Communications Corporation	Mediacom Wireless of Alabama LLC	01/06/2021	AL
RDOF USA Consortium	North Alabama Electric Cooperative	02/04/2021	AL
Pine Belt Communications, Inc.	Pine Belt RDOF Holdings, L.L.C.	02/10/2021	AL
Point Broadband Fiber Holding, LLC	Point Broadband Fiber Holding, LLC	01/06/2021, as supplemented, 01/25/2021	AL
Bay Springs Telephone Company, Inc.	Roanoke Telephone Company, Inc.	01/19/2021	AL
Space Exploration Technologies Corporation	Starlink Services, LLC	02/03/2021	AL
Consortium 2020	Wavelength LLC	01/07/2021, as amended, 01/08/2021, 01/26/2021	AZ
Space Exploration Technologies Corporation	Starlink Services, LLC	02/03/2021	CT
Talkie Communications, Inc.	Talkie Communications, Inc.	01/06/2021	DE
Rural Electric Cooperative Consortium	Conexon Connect, LLC	01/04/2021	FL

<b>Bidder Name</b>	<b>Petitioner Name(s)</b>	<b>Date Filed</b>	<b>State</b>
Hotwire Communications, Ltd.	Hotwire Communications, Ltd.	01/05/2021	FL
Mediacom Communications Corporation	Mediacom Wireless of Florida, LLC	01/06/2021	FL
Talkie Communications, Inc.	Talkie Communications, Inc.	01/06/2021	MD
Consolidated Communications, Inc.	Consolidated Communications of Northern New England Company, LLC	01/05/2021, as amended, 01/12/2021	NH
NRTC Phase I RDOF Consortium	East Central Vermont Telecommunications District dba EC Fiber	01/06/2021	NH
Space Exploration Technologies Corporation	Starlink Services, LLC	02/03/2021	NH
CCO Holdings, LLC	Time Warner Cable Information Services (New Hampshire), LLC	01/06/2021	NH
DTC Cable, Inc.	DTC Cable, Inc.	01/06/2021	NY
Heart of the Catskills Comm. Inc., dba MTC Cable	Heart of the Catskills Communication Inc., dba MTC Cable	01/06/2021	NY
Point Broadband Fiber Holding, LLC	Point Broadband Fiber Holding, LLC	01/06/2021, as supplemented, 01/25/2021	NY
Space Exploration Technologies Corporation	Starlink Services, LLC	02/03/2021	NY
Snake River Solutions, LLC	Snake River Solutions, LLC	01/06/2021	OR
Tennessee Cooperative Group Consortium	Advantage Cellular Systems, Inc.	01/29/2021	TN
CCO Holdings, LLC	Charter Fiberlink – Tennessee, LLC, Time Warner Cable Information Services (Tennessee)	01/06/2021	TN
Rural Electric Cooperative Consortium	Conexion Connect, LLC	01/04/2021	TN
Rural Electric Cooperative Consortium	HolstonConnect, LLC	12/31/2020	TN
Next Tier Consortium	MegaWatt Communications, LLC	01/04/2021	TN
RDOF USA Consortium	Meriwether Lewis Connect, LLC	02/04/2021	TN

<b>Bidder Name</b>	<b>Petitioner Name(s)</b>	<b>Date Filed</b>	<b>State</b>
Newport Utilities	Newport Utilities dba NU Connect	02/11/2021	TN
Bay Springs Telephone Company, Inc.	Peoples Telephone Company	01/19/2021	TN
Scott County Telephone Cooperative, Inc.	Scott County Telephone Cooperative, Inc.	01/29/2021	TN
Space Exploration Technologies Corporation	Starlink Services, LLC	02/03/2021	TN
RDOF USA Consortium	SVE Connect, LLC	02/04/2021	TN
Rural Electric Cooperative Consortium	United Communications, Inc.	01/06/2021, as amended, 01/12/2021	TN
Bay Springs Telephone Company, Inc.	West Tennessee Telephone Company, Inc.	01/19/2021	TN
NRTC Phase I RDOF Consortium	All Points Northern Neck, LLC	12/23/2020, as supplemented, 01/25/2021	VA
Atlantic Broadband Finance, LLC	Atlantic Broadband (Delmar), LLC	01/07/2021	VA
BARConnects, LLC	BARConnects, LLC	02/25/2021	VA
Connect Everyone, LLC	Connect Everyone, LLC	01/06/2021	VA
Rural Electric Cooperative Consortium	Empower Broadband Inc.	01/08/2021, as supplemented, 02/09/2021	VA
Fiberlight LLC	Fiberlight of Virginia, LLC	01/05/2021	VA
Next Tier Consortium	KINEX Telecom, Inc.	12/28/2020, as supplemented, 01/25/2021	VA
Rural Electric Cooperative	PGEC Enterprises, LLC	01/05/2021	VA
Point Broadband Fiber Holding, LLC	Point Broadband Fiber Holding, LLC	01/06/2021, as supplemented 01/25/2021	VA
Scott County Telephone Cooperative, Inc.	Scott County Telephone Cooperative, Inc.	01/29/2021	VA
Space Exploration Technologies Corporation	Starlink Services, LLC	02/03/2021	VA
Micrologic Inc.	Micrologic Inc.	01/04/2021	WV

Bidder Name	Petitioner Name(s)	Date Filed	State
Space Exploration Technologies Corporation	Starlink Services, LLC	02/03/2021	WV

**ETC Petitions Covering Both RDOF-Eligible Areas and Additional  
Areas Only Eligible for Lifeline Support**

Bidder Name	Petitioner Name	Date Filed	State
NRTC Phase I RDOF Consortium	Joe Wheeler Electric Membership Corporation	01/28/2021	AL
Rural Electric Cooperative Consortium	Carolina West Wireless, Inc.	02/17/2021	NC
NRTC Phase I RDOF Consortium	New Hampshire Electric Cooperative, Inc.	01/04/2021	NH
Rural Electric Cooperative	OEConnect, LLC	01/05/2021, as amended, 01/06/2021	NY
Aeneas Communications, LLC	Aeneas Communications, LLC	01/19/2021	TN
Rural Electric Cooperative	Cumberland Connect, LLC	12/29/2020	TN
Rural Electric Cooperative Consortium	Forked Deer Connect, LLC	01/05/2021	TN
Tennessee Cooperative Group Consortium	Foursight Communications, LLC d/b/a Trilight	02/10/2021	TN
Co-op Connections Consortium	Gibson Connect, LLC	01/05/2021	TN
Prospero Broadband Consortium	TEPA Connect, LLC	01/06/2021	TN
Tennessee Cooperative Group Consortium	Twin Lakes Communications, Inc.	02/12/2021	TN
Tennessee Cooperative Group Consortium	West Kentucky Rural Telephone Cooperative Corporation, Inc.	01/22/2021	TN
Rural Electric Cooperative Consortium	Central Virginia Services, Inc.	01/06/2021	VA
Shenandoah Cable Television, LLC	Shenandoah Cable Television, LLC	03/03/2021	WV
Northern Arapaho Tribal Industries, Inc. d/b/a Wind River Internet	Northern Arapaho Tribal Industries, Inc. d/b/a Wind River Internet	01/06/2021	WY