



PUBLIC NOTICE

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Proposed Fourth Quarter 2023 Universal Service Contribution Factor

CC Docket No. 96-45

In this Public Notice, the Office of Managing Director (OMD) announces that the proposed universal service contribution factor for the fourth quarter of 2023 will be 0.345 or 34.5 percent.¹

Rules for Calculating the Contribution Factor

Contributions to the federal universal service support mechanisms are determined using a quarterly contribution factor calculated by the Federal Communications Commission (Commission).² The Commission calculates the quarterly contribution factor based on the ratio of total projected quarterly costs of the universal service support mechanisms to contributors' total projected collected end-user interstate and international telecommunications revenues, net of projected contributions.³

USAC Projections of Demand and Administrative Expenses

Pursuant to section 54.709(a)(3) of the Commission's rules,⁴ the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) submitted projections of demand and administrative expenses for the fourth quarter of 2023.⁵ Pursuant to the Commission's direction and the Commission's rules,⁶ the Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB), in consultation with OMD, previously directed USAC to carry forward up to \$211.50 million in unused funds from prior funding years to the extent necessary to satisfy funding year 2023 Rural Health Care program demand.⁷ Further, for the fourth quarter 2023, OMD

¹ See 47 C.F.R. § 54.709(a).

² See *id.*

³ See 47 C.F.R. § 54.709(a)(2).

⁴ See 47 C.F.R. § 54.709(a)(3).

⁵ See Federal Universal Service Support Mechanisms Fund Size Projections for the Fourth Quarter 2023, available at <<https://www.usac.org/fcc-filings>> (filed August 2, 2023) (*USAC Filing for Fourth Quarter 2023 Projections*); See also Federal Universal Service Support Mechanisms Quarterly Contribution Base for Fourth Quarter 2023, available at <<https://www.usac.org/fcc-filings>> (filed September 1, 2023) (*USAC Filing for Fourth Quarter 2023 Contribution Base*).

⁶ See 47 C.F.R. § 54.619(a)(5).

instructed USAC to apply \$73.76 million of the \$211.50 million in unused funds to offset the \$163.81 million projected Rural Health Care program demand. This offset reduces the fourth quarter 2023 contribution factor to a level below what the contribution factor would be based on USAC’s filings.⁸

Accordingly, the projected demand and expenses, after application of the Rural Health Care offset, are as follows:

(\$ millions)

Program Demand	Projected Program Support	Admin. Expenses	Application of True-Ups & Adjustments	Total Program Collection (Revenue Requirement)
Schools and Libraries	631.45	19.42	1.17	652.04
Rural Health Care	90.05	6.78	0.39	97.22
High-Cost	1,067.60	18.14	(18.86)	1,066.88
Lifeline	302.20	24.08	(63.57)	262.71
Connected Care	0.04	0.08	(0.14)	(0.02)
TOTAL	2,091.34	68.50	(81.01)	2,078.83

USAC Projections of Industry Revenues

USAC submitted projected collected end-user telecommunications revenues for October 2023 through December 2023 based on information contained in the Fourth Quarter 2023 Telecommunications Reporting Worksheet (FCC Form 499-Q).⁹ The amount is as follows:

Total Projected Collected Interstate and International End-User Telecommunications Revenues for Fourth Quarter 2023: \$8.172483 billion.

Adjusted Contribution Base

⁷ See *Public Notice* (DA 23-440) released May 24, 2023, Wireline Competition Bureau Announces the Availability of Unused Funds to Fully Satisfy Demand for Rural Health Care Program Funding for Funding Year 2023.

⁸ See Federal Universal Service Support Mechanisms Fund Size Projections for the Fourth Quarter 2023, available at <<http://www.usac.org/fcc-filings>> (filed August 2, 2023) (*USAC Filing for the Fourth Quarter 2023 Projections*).

⁹ *USAC Filing for Fourth Quarter 2023 Contribution Base* at 4.

To determine the quarterly contribution base, we decrease the fourth quarter 2023 estimate of projected collected interstate and international end-user telecommunications revenues by the projected revenue requirement to account for circularity and decrease the result by one percent to account for uncollectible contributions. Accordingly, the quarterly contribution base for the fourth quarter of 2023 is as follows:

Adjusted Quarterly Contribution Base for Universal Service Support Mechanism

(Fourth Quarter 2023 Revenues - Projected Revenue Requirement) * (100% - 1%)

= (\$8.172483 billion – \$2.078830 billion) * 0.99

= \$6.032716 billion.

Unadjusted Contribution Factor

Using the above-described adjusted contribution base and the total program collection (revenue requirement) from the table above, the proposed unadjusted contribution factor for the fourth quarter of 2023 is as follows:

Contribution Factor for Universal Service Support Mechanisms

Total Program Collection / Adjusted Quarterly Contribution Base

= \$2.078830 billion / \$6.032716 billion

= 0.344593

Unadjusted Circularity Factor

USAC will reduce each provider's contribution obligation by a circularity discount approximating the provider's contributions in the upcoming quarter. Accordingly, the proposed unadjusted circularity factor for the fourth quarter of 2023 is as follows:

Unadjusted Circularity Factor for Universal Service Support Mechanisms

= Total Program Collection / Projected Fourth Quarter 2023 Revenues

= \$2.078830 billion / \$8.172483 billion

= 0.254369

Proposed Contribution Factor

The Commission has directed OMD to announce the contribution factor as a percentage rounded up to the nearest tenth of one percent.¹⁰ Accordingly, the proposed contribution factor for the fourth quarter of 2023 is as follows:

34.5%

Proposed Circularity Discount Factor

The Commission also has directed OMD to account for contribution factor rounding when calculating the circularity discount factor.¹¹ Accordingly, the proposed circularity factor for the fourth quarter of 2023 is as follows:

0.255250¹²

Conclusion

If the Commission takes no action regarding the projections of demand and administrative expenses and the proposed contribution factor within the 14-day period following release of this Public Notice, they shall be deemed approved by the Commission.¹³ USAC shall use the contribution factor to calculate universal service contributions for the fourth quarter of 2023. USAC will reduce each provider's contribution obligation by a circularity discount approximating the provider's contributions in the upcoming quarter.¹⁴ USAC includes contribution obligations less the circularity discount in invoices sent to contributors. Contribution payments are due on the dates shown on the invoice. Contributors will pay interest for each day for which the payments are late. Contributors failing to pay contributions in a timely fashion may be subject to the enforcement provisions of the Communications Act of 1934, as

¹⁰ See *Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service, 1998 Biennial Regulatory Review – Streamlined Contributor Reporting Requirements Associated with Administration of Telecommunications Relay Service, North American Numbering Plan, Local Number Portability, and Universal Service Support Mechanisms, Telecommunications Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Administration of the North American Numbering Plan and North American Numbering Plan Cost Recovery Contribution Factor and Fund Size, Number Resource Optimization, Telephone Number Portability, Truth-in-Billing and Billing Format*, CC Docket Nos. 96-45, 98-171, 90-571, 92-237, 99-200, 95-116, 98-170, Order and Second Order on Reconsideration, 18 FCC Rcd 4818, 4826, para. 22 (2003) (*Second Order on Reconsideration*).

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² The proposed circularity discount factor = $1 + [(unadjusted\ circularity\ discount\ factor - 1) * (unadjusted\ contribution\ factor / proposed\ contribution\ factor)]$. The proposed circularity discount factor is calculated in a spreadsheet program, which means that internal calculations are made with more than 15 decimal places.

¹³ See 47 C.F.R. § 54.709(a)(3).

¹⁴ USAC will calculate each individual contributor's contribution in the following manner: $(1 - Circularity\ Factor) * (Contribution\ Factor * Revenue)$

amended, and any other applicable law. In addition, contributors may be billed by USAC for reasonable costs of collecting overdue contributions.¹⁵

We also emphasize that carriers may not markup federal universal service line-item amounts above the contribution factor.¹⁶ Thus, carriers may not, during the fourth quarter of 2023, recover through a federal universal service line item an amount that exceeds 34.5 percent of the interstate telecommunications charges on a customer's bill.

In addition, under the limited international revenues exception (LIRE) in section 54.706(c) of the Commission's rules, a contributor to the universal service fund whose projected collected interstate end-user telecommunications revenues comprise less than 12 percent of its combined projected collected interstate and international end-user telecommunications revenues shall contribute based only on projected collected interstate end-user telecommunications revenues, net of projected contributions.¹⁷ The rule is intended to exclude from the contribution base the international end-user telecommunications revenues of any entity whose annual contribution, based on the provider's interstate and international end-user telecommunications revenues, would exceed the amount of its interstate end-user revenues.¹⁸ The proposed contribution factor exceeds 12 percent, which we recognize could result in a contributor being required to contribute to the universal service fund an amount that exceeds its interstate end-user telecommunications revenue. Should a contributor face this situation, the contributor may petition the Commission for waiver of the LIRE threshold.¹⁹

For further information, contact Thomas Buckley at (202) 418-0725 or Kim Yee at (202) 418-0805, TTY (888) 835-5322, in the Office of Managing Director.

¹⁵ See 47 C.F.R. § 54.713.

¹⁶ See 47 C.F.R. § 54.712.

¹⁷ See 47 C.F.R. § 54.706.

¹⁸ See *Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service*, Sixteenth Order on Reconsideration, CC Docket No. 96-45, Eighth Report and Order, CC Docket No. 96-45, Sixth Report and Order, Docket No. 96-262, 15 FCC Rcd 1679, 1687-1692, paras. 17-29 (1999) (*Fifth Circuit Remand Order*).

¹⁹ Generally, the Commission's rules may be waived for good cause shown. 47 C.F.R. § 1.3. The Commission may exercise its discretion to waive a rule where the particular facts make strict compliance inconsistent with the public interest. *Northeast Cellular Telephone Co. v. FCC*, 897 F.2d 1164, 1166 (D.C. Cir. 1990) (*Northeast Cellular*). In addition, the Commission may consider considerations of hardship, equity, or more effective implementation of overall policy on an individual basis. *WAIT Radio v. FCC*, 418 F.2d 1153, 1159 (D.C. Cir. 1969); *Northeast Cellular*, 897 F.2d at 1166. Waiver of the Commission's rules is therefore appropriate only if special circumstances warrant a deviation from the general rule, and such deviation will serve the public interest. *Northeast Cellular*, 897 F.2d at 1166; 47 C.F.R. § 54.802(a).