



**FCC NEWS** from the Federal Communications Commission

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**For Immediate Release**

**FCC SEEKS TO TARGET USF SUPPORT FOR RURAL WIRELESS BROADBAND SERVICES BY LEVERAGING IMPROVED MAPS**

***Further Notice Lays the Groundwork to Advance the \$9 Billion 5G Fund***

WASHINGTON, September 21, 2023—The Federal Communications Commission today took action to seek further comment on the 5G Fund for Rural America to reignite the Commission’s plan to expand the deployment of 5G service to rural communities that remain trapped on the wrong side of the digital divide. Taking advantage of the agency’s new and improved broadband coverage map, which shows that over 14 million homes and businesses lack mobile 5G coverage, the Commission seeks comment on how to define the areas that will be eligible for support in the 5G Fund Phase I auction and proposes to modify the metric used to accept bids and identify winning bids, in order to target support to places where people live, work, and travel in rural America.

The 5G Fund, a Universal Service Fund-supported program, was established in 2020 to distribute up to \$9 billion to bring voice and 5G mobile broadband service to rural areas of the country unlikely to otherwise see unsubsidized deployment of 5G-capable networks. As adopted, the 5G Fund will use multi-round reverse auctions to distribute support, in two phases, to target mobile universal service in the high-cost program using the Commission’s more precise, verified mobile coverage data gathered through its Broadband Data Collection.

The Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking adopted today will refresh the record on the 5G Fund. Among the other issues raised are whether to modify the \$9 billion 5G Fund budget, how to best aggregate areas eligible for support to minimum geographic areas for bidding, whether to make 5G Fund support available to areas in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands that meet the eligible areas definition, whether to require 5G Fund support recipients to implement cybersecurity and supply chain risk management plans, and whether the 5G Fund should be used to encourage the deployment of Open Radio Access Networks.

Action by the Commission September 21, 2023 by Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 23-74). Chairwoman Rosenworcel, Commissioners Carr and Starks approving. Commissioner Simington concurring. Chairwoman Rosenworcel, Commissioners Starks and Simington issuing separate statements.

GN Docket No. 20-32

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*This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).*