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the carrier shall receive monthly support in the amount of its Rural Digital Opportunity Fund winning bid.

(2) Starting the first day of the month following the release of the final eligible areas list for the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund auction, as determined by the Wireline Competition Bureau, no price cap carrier that receives monthly baseline support pursuant to this section shall receive such monthly baseline support for areas that are ineligible for the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund auction.

(3) Starting the first day of the month following the close of Phase I of the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund auction, no price cap carrier that receives monthly baseline support pursuant to this section shall receive such monthly baseline support for areas where Rural Digital Opportunity Fund auction support is not awarded at auction for an eligible area.

(4) Starting the first day of the month following the authorization of Rural Digital Opportunity Fund auction support to a winning bidder other than the price cap carrier that receives monthly baseline support pursuant to this section for such area, the price cap carrier shall no longer receive monthly baseline support pursuant to this section.

[76 FR 73872, Nov. 29, 2011, as amended at 77 FR 31536, May 29, 2012; 78 FR 38233, June 26, 2013; 78 FR 48624, Aug. 9, 2013; 84 FR 8624, Mar. 11, 2019; 85 FR 13797, Mar. 10, 2020]

§ 54.313 Annual reporting requirements for high-cost recipients.

(a) Any recipient of high-cost support shall provide the following:

(1) Certification that the carrier is able to function in emergency situations as set forth in § 54.202(a)(2);

(2) A certification that the pricing of the company's voice services is no more than two standard deviations above the applicable national average urban rate for voice service, as specified in the most recent public notice issued by the Wireline Competition Bureau and Wireless Telecommunications Bureau;

(3) A certification that the pricing of a service that meets the Commission's broadband public interest obligations is no more than the applicable bench-

mark to be announced annually in a public notice issued by the Wireline Competition Bureau, or is no more than the non-promotional price charged for a comparable fixed wireline service in urban areas in the states or U.S. Territories where the eligible telecommunications carrier receives support;

(4) The recipient's holding company, operating companies, affiliates, and any branding (a "dba," or "doing-business-as company" or brand designation), as well as universal service identifiers for each such entity by Study Area Codes, as that term is used by the Administrator. For purposes of this paragraph, "affiliates" has the meaning set forth in section 3(2) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended;

(5) To the extent the recipient serves Tribal lands, documents or information demonstrating that the ETC had discussions with Tribal governments that, at a minimum, included:

(i) A needs assessment and deployment planning with a focus on Tribal community anchor institutions;

(ii) Feasibility and sustainability planning;

(iii) Marketing services in a culturally sensitive manner;

(iv) Rights of way processes, land use permitting, facilities siting, environmental and cultural preservation review processes; and

(v) Compliance with Tribal business and licensing requirements. Tribal business and licensing requirements include business practice licenses that Tribal and non-Tribal business entities, whether located on or off Tribal lands, must obtain upon application to the relevant Tribal government office or division to conduct any business or trade, or deliver any goods or services to the Tribes, Tribal members, or Tribal lands. These include certificates of public convenience and necessity, Tribal business licenses, master licenses, and other related forms of Tribal government licensure.

(6) The results of network performance tests pursuant to the methodology and in the format determined by the Wireline Competition Bureau, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, and Office of Engineering and Technology.

(b) In addition to the information and certifications in paragraph (a) of this section:

(1) Any recipient of incremental Connect America Phase I support pursuant to § 54.312(b) and (c) shall provide:

(i) In its next annual report due after two years after filing a notice of acceptance of funding pursuant to § 54.312(b) and (c), a certification that the company has deployed to no fewer than two-thirds of the required number of locations; and

(ii) In its next annual report due after three years after filing a notice of acceptance of funding pursuant to § 54.312(b) and (c), a certification that the company has deployed to all required locations and that it is offering broadband service of at least 4 Mbps downstream and 1 Mbps upstream, with latency sufficiently low to enable the use of real-time communications, including Voice over Internet Protocol, and with usage allowances, if any, associated with a specified price for a service offering that are reasonably comparable to comparable offerings in urban areas.

(2) In addition to the information and certifications required in paragraph (b)(1) of this section, any recipient of incremental Connect America Phase I support pursuant to § 54.312(c) shall provide:

(i) In its annual reports due after one, two, and three years after filing a notice of acceptance of funding pursuant to § 54.312(c), a certification that, to the best of the recipient's knowledge, the locations in question are not receiving support under the Broadband Initiatives Program or the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program for projects that will provide broadband with speeds of at least 4 Mbps/1 Mbps; and

(ii) In its annual reports due after one, two, and three years after filing a notice of acceptance of funding pursuant to § 54.312(c), a statement of the total amount of capital funding expended in the previous year in meeting Connect America Phase I deployment obligations, accompanied by a list of census blocks indicating where funding was spent.

(c) In addition to the information and certifications in paragraph (a) of this section, price cap carriers that receive frozen high-cost support pursuant to § 54.312(a) shall provide:

(1) *By July 1, 2013.* A certification that frozen high-cost support the company received in 2012 was used consistent with the goal of achieving universal availability of voice and broadband;

(2) *By July 1, 2014.* A certification that at least one-third of the frozen-

high cost support the company received in 2013 was used to build and operate broadband-capable networks used to offer the provider's own retail broadband service in areas substantially unserved by an unsubsidized competitor;

(3) *By July 1, 2015.* A certification that at least two-thirds of the frozen-high cost support the company received in 2014 was used to build and operate broadband-capable networks used to offer the provider's own retail broadband service in areas substantially unserved by an unsubsidized competitor; and

(4) *By July 1, 2016 and in subsequent years.* A certification that all frozen-high cost support the company received in the previous year was used to build and operate broadband-capable networks used to offer the provider's own retail broadband service in areas substantially unserved by an unsubsidized competitor.

(d) In addition to the information and certifications in paragraph (a) of this section, beginning July 1, 2013, price cap carriers receiving high-cost support to offset reductions in access charges shall provide a certification that the support received pursuant to § 54.304 in the prior calendar year was used to build and operate broadband-capable networks used to offer provider's own retail service in areas substantially unserved by an unsubsidized competitor.

(e) In addition to the information and certifications in paragraph (a) of this section, the following requirements apply to Phase II and Remote Areas Fund recipients:

(1) Any price cap carrier that elects to receive Connect America Phase II model-based support shall provide:

(i) On July 1, 2016 a list of the geocoded locations already meeting the § 54.309 public interest obligations at the end of calendar year 2015, and the total amount of Phase II support, if any, the price cap carrier used for capital expenditures in 2015.

(ii) On July 1, 2017 and every year thereafter ending July 1, 2021, the following information:

(A) The number, names, and addresses of community anchor institutions to which the eligible telecommunications

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carrier newly began providing access to broadband service in the preceding calendar year;

(B) The total amount of Phase II support, if any, the price cap carrier used for capital expenditures in the previous calendar year; and

(C) A certification that it bid on category one telecommunications and Internet access services in response to all FCC Form 470 postings seeking broadband service that meets the connectivity targets for the schools and libraries universal service support program for eligible schools and libraries (as described in § 54.501) located within any area in a census block where the carrier is receiving Phase II model-based support, and that such bids were at rates reasonably comparable to rates charged to eligible schools and libraries in urban areas for comparable offerings.

(2) Any recipient of Phase II or Remote Areas Fund support awarded through a competitive bidding process shall provide:

(i) Starting the first July 1st after receiving support until the July 1st after the recipient's support term has ended:

(A) The number, names, and addresses of community anchor institutions to which the eligible telecommunications carrier newly began providing access to broadband service in the preceding calendar year;

(B) The total amount of support, if any, the recipient used for capital expenditures in the previous calendar year; and

(C) A certification that it bid on category one telecommunications and Internet access services in response to all FCC Form 470 postings seeking broadband service that meets the connectivity targets for the schools and libraries universal service support program for eligible schools and libraries (as described in § 54.501) located within any area in a census block where the carrier is receiving support awarded through auction, and that such bids were at rates reasonably comparable to rates charged to eligible schools and libraries in urban areas for comparable offerings.

(ii) Starting the first July 1st after receiving support until the July 1st after the recipient's penultimate year

of support, a certification that the recipient has available funds for all project costs that will exceed the amount of support that will be received for the next calendar year.

(iii) Starting the first July 1st after meeting the final service milestone in § 54.310(c) of this chapter until the July 1st after the Phase II recipient's support term has ended, a certification that the Phase II-funded network that the Phase II auction recipient operated in the prior year meets the relevant performance requirements in § 54.309 of this chapter, or that the network that the Remote Areas Fund recipient operated in the prior year meets the relevant performance requirements for the Remote Areas Fund.

(f) In addition to the information and certifications in paragraph (a) of this section, any rate-of-return carrier shall provide:

(1) On July 1, 2016, a list of the geocoded locations already meeting the § 54.309 public interest obligations at the end of calendar year 2015, and the total amount of Phase II support, if any, the price cap carrier used for capital expenditures in 2015.

(i) If the rate-of-return carrier is receiving support pursuant to subparts K and M of this part, a certification that it is taking reasonable steps to provide upon reasonable request broadband service at actual speeds of at least 25 Mbps downstream/3 Mbps upstream, with latency suitable for real-time applications, including Voice over Internet Protocol, and usage capacity that is reasonably comparable to comparable offerings in urban areas as determined in an annual survey, and that requests for such service are met within a reasonable amount of time; if the rate-of-return carrier receives CAF-ACAM support, a certification that it is meeting the relevant reasonable request standard; or if the rate-of-return carrier is receiving Alaska Plan support pursuant to § 54.306, a certification that it is offering broadband service with latency suitable for real-time applications, including Voice over Internet Protocol, and usage capacity that is reasonably comparable to comparable offerings in urban areas, and at speeds committed to in its approved performance plan to the locations it

has reported pursuant to §54.316(a), subject to any limitations due to the availability of backhaul as specified in paragraph (g) of this section.

(ii) The number, names, and addresses of community anchor institutions to which the ETC newly began providing access to broadband service in the preceding calendar year; and

(iii) A certification that it bid on category one telecommunications and Internet access services in response to all reasonable requests in posted FCC Form 470s seeking broadband service that meets the connectivity targets for the schools and libraries universal service support program for eligible schools and libraries (as described in §54.501) within its service area, and that such bids were at rates reasonably comparable to rates charged to eligible schools and libraries in urban areas for comparable offerings.

(2) *Privately held rate-of-return carriers only.* A full and complete annual report of the company's financial condition and operations as of the end of the preceding fiscal year.

(i) Recipients of loans from the Rural Utility Service (RUS) shall provide copies of their RUS Operating Report for Telecommunications Borrowers as filed with the RUS. Such carriers must make their underlying audit and related workpapers and financial information available upon request by the Commission, USAC, or the relevant state commission, relevant authority in a U.S. Territory, or Tribal government, as appropriate.

(ii) All privately held rate-of-return carriers that are not recipients of loans from the RUS and whose financial statements are audited in the ordinary course of business must provide either: A copy of their audited financial statement; or a financial report in a format comparable to RUS Operating Report for Telecommunications Borrowers, accompanied by a copy of a management letter issued by the independent certified public accountant that performed the company's financial audit. A carrier choosing the latter option must make its audit and related workpapers and financial information available upon request by the Commission, USAC, or the relevant state commission, relevant authority in a U.S.

Territory, or Tribal government, as appropriate.

(iii) All other privately held rate-of-return carriers must provide either: A copy of their financial statement which has been subject to review by an independent certified public accountant; or a financial report in a format comparable to RUS Operating Report for Telecommunications Borrowers, with the underlying information subjected to a review by an independent certified public accountant and accompanied by an officer certification that: The carrier was not audited in the ordinary course of business for the preceding fiscal year; and that the reported data are accurate. If the carrier elects the second option, it must make the review and related workpapers and financial information available upon request by the Commission, USAC, or the relevant state commission, relevant authority in a U.S. Territory, or Tribal government, as appropriate.

(3) For rate-of-return carriers participating in the Alaska Plan, funding recipients must certify as to whether any terrestrial backhaul or other satellite backhaul became commercially available in the previous calendar year in areas that were previously served exclusively by performance-limiting satellite backhaul. To the extent that such new terrestrial backhaul facilities are constructed, or other satellite backhaul become commercially available, or existing facilities improve sufficiently to meet the relevant speed, latency and capacity requirements then in effect for broadband service supported by the Alaska Plan, the funding recipient must provide a description of the backhaul technology, the date at which that backhaul was made commercially available to the carrier, and the number of locations that are newly served by the new terrestrial backhaul or other satellite backhaul. Within twelve months of the new backhaul facilities becoming commercially available, funding recipients must certify that they are offering broadband service with latency suitable for real-time applications, including Voice over Internet Protocol, and usage capacity that is reasonably comparable to comparable offerings in

urban areas. Funding recipients' minimum speed deployment obligations will be reassessed as specified by the Commission.

(4) If applicable, the name of any cost consultant and cost consulting firm, or other third-party, retained to prepare financial and operations data disclosures submitted to the National Exchange Carrier Association (NECA), the Administrator or the Commission pursuant to subpart D, K, or M of this part.

(5) Rate-of-return carriers receiving support pursuant to the Alternative Connect America Model or the Alaska Plan, that are not otherwise required to file count data pursuant to § 54.903(a)(1) of this subpart, must file the line count data required by § 54.903(a)(1).

(g) *Areas with no terrestrial backhaul.* Carriers without access to terrestrial backhaul that are compelled to rely exclusively on satellite backhaul in their study area must certify annually that no terrestrial backhaul options exist. Any such funding recipients must certify they offer broadband service at actual speeds of at least 1 Mbps downstream and 256 kbps upstream within the supported area served by satellite middle-mile facilities. To the extent that new terrestrial backhaul facilities are constructed, or existing facilities improve sufficiently to meet the relevant speed, latency and capacity requirements then in effect for broadband service supported by the Connect America Fund, within twelve months of the new backhaul facilities becoming commercially available, funding recipients must provide the certifications required in paragraphs (e) or (f) of this section in full. Carriers subject to this paragraph must comply with all other requirements set forth in the remaining paragraphs of this section. These obligations may be modified for carriers participating in the Alaska Plan.

(h) In their annual reporting due by July 1, 2019 and July 1, 2020, all incumbent local exchange carrier recipients of high-cost support must report all of their rates for residential local service for all portions of their service area, as well as state regulated fees, to the extent the sum of those rates and fees are

below \$18, and the number of lines for each rate specified. Carriers shall report lines and rates in effect as of June 1. For purposes of this subsection, state regulated fees shall be limited to state subscriber line charges, state universal service fees and mandatory extended area service charges.

(i) All reports pursuant to this section shall be filed with the Office of the Secretary of the Commission clearly referencing WC Docket No. 14-58, with the Administrator, and with the relevant state commissions or relevant authority in a U.S. Territory, or Tribal governments, as appropriate.

(j) *Filing deadlines.* (1) In order for a recipient of high-cost support to continue to receive support for the following calendar year, or retain its eligible telecommunications carrier designation, it must submit the annual reporting information required by this section annually by July 1 of each year. Eligible telecommunications carriers that file their reports after the July 1 deadline shall receive a reduction in support pursuant to the following schedule:

(i) An eligible telecommunications carrier that files after the July 1 deadline, but by July 8, will have its support reduced in an amount equivalent to seven days in support;

(ii) An eligible telecommunications carrier that files on or after July 9 will have its support reduced on a pro-rata daily basis equivalent to the period of non-compliance, plus the minimum seven-day reduction.

(2) *Grace period.* An eligible telecommunications carrier that submits the annual reporting information required by this section after July 1 but before July 5 will not receive a reduction in support if the eligible telecommunications carrier and its holding company, operating companies, and affiliates as reported pursuant to paragraph (a)(8) of this section have not missed the July 1 deadline in any prior year.

(k) This section does not apply to recipients that solely receive support from Phase I and Phase II of the Mobility Fund.

(l) In addition to the information and certifications in paragraph (a) of this

section, any competitive eligible telecommunications carrier participating in the Alaska Plan must provide the following:

(1) Funding recipients that have identified in their approved performance plans that they rely exclusively on satellite backhaul for a certain portion of the population in their service area must certify as to whether any terrestrial backhaul or other satellite backhaul became commercially available in the previous calendar year in areas that were previously served exclusively by satellite backhaul. To the extent that new terrestrial backhaul facilities are constructed or other satellite backhaul become commercially available, the funding recipient must:

(i) Provide a description of the backhaul technology;

(ii) Provide the date on which that backhaul was made commercially available to the carrier;

(iii) Provide the number of the population within their service area that are served by the newly available backhaul option; and

(iv) To the extent the funding recipient has not already committed to providing 4G LTE at 10/1 Mbps to the population served by the newly available backhaul by the end of the plan term, submit a revised performance commitment factoring in the availability of the new backhaul option no later than the due date of the Form 481 in which they have certified that such backhaul became commercially available.

(2) [Reserved]

(m) Any price cap carrier or fixed competitive eligible telecommunications carrier that elects to continue receiving support pursuant to § 54.312(d) or § 54.307(e)(2)(iii) shall provide certifications, starting July 1, 2020 and for each subsequent year they receive such support, that all such support the company received in the previous year was used to provide voice service throughout the high-cost and extremely high-cost census blocks where they continue to have the federal high-cost eligible telecommunications carrier obligation to provide voice service pursuant to § 54.201(d) at rates that are reasonably comparable to comparable offerings in urban areas. Any price cap carrier or fixed competitive eligible tele-

communications carrier that solely receives support pursuant to § 54.312(d) or § 54.307(e)(2)(iii) in its designated service area shall not be subject to reporting requirements in any other paragraphs in this section for such support.

[76 FR 73873, Nov. 29, 2011, as amended at 77 FR 14302, Mar. 9, 2012; 77 FR 30914, May 24, 2012; 78 FR 22201, Apr. 15, 2013; 78 FR 29656, May 21, 2013; 78 FR 3843, Jan. 17, 2013; 78 FR 38233, June 26, 2013; 79 FR 11336, Feb. 28, 2014; 79 FR 39189, July 9, 2014; 80 FR 4477, Jan. 27, 2015; 81 FR 24341, Apr. 25, 2016; 81 FR 44449, July 7, 2016; 81 FR 69713, Oct. 7, 2016; 82 FR 15450, Mar. 28, 2017; 82 FR 39969, Aug. 23, 2017; 83 FR 18964, May 1, 2018; 84 FR 4732, Feb. 19, 2019; 84 FR 8624, Mar. 11, 2019; 84 FR 19876, May 7, 2019]

EFFECTIVE DATE NOTES: 1. At 77 FR 14302, Mar. 9, 2012, § 54.313(a)(9) introductory text and (f)(2) were revised. These paragraphs contain information collection and record-keeping requirements and will not become effective until approval has been given by the Office of Management and Budget.

2. At 79 FR 11336, Feb. 28, 2014, § 54.313(e)(1), (e)(2), and (e)(3) introductory text were revised. These paragraphs contain information collection and recordkeeping requirements and will not become effective until approval has been given by the Office of Management and Budget.

3. At 80 FR 4476, Jan. 27, 2015, § 54.313 (a)(12) was added and (e) was revised. These paragraphs contain information collection and record keeping requirements and will not become effective until approval has been given by the Office of Management and Budget.

4. At 84 FR 59963, Nov. 7, 2019, § 54.313 was amended by revising paragraphs (e) introductory text and (e)(2) introductory text and adding paragraphs (n) and (o). These paragraphs have a delayed effective date. For the convenience of the user, the added and revised text is set forth as follows:

§ 54.313 Annual reporting requirements for high-cost recipients.

* * * * *

(e) In addition to the information and certifications in paragraph (a) of this section, the requirements in paragraphs (e)(1) and (2) of this section apply to recipients of Phase II, Remote Areas Fund, Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund Stage 2 fixed support, and Connect USVI Fund Stage 2 fixed support:

* * * * *

(2) Any recipient of Phase II, Remote Areas Fund, Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund Stage 2 fixed, or Connect USVI Fund Stage 2 fixed

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support awarded through a competitive bidding or application process shall provide:

* * * * *

(n) Recipients of Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund Stage 2 fixed and mobile support and Connect USVI Fund Stage 2 fixed and mobile support shall certify that such support was not used for costs that are (or will be) reimbursed by other sources of support, including Federal or local government aid or insurance reimbursements; and that support was not used for other purposes, such as the retirement of company debt unrelated to eligible expenditures, or other expenses not directly related to network restoration, hardening, and expansion consistent with the framework of the Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund or Connect USVI Fund, respectively. Recipients of fixed and mobile support from Stage 2 of the Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund and the Connect USVI Fund shall certify that they have conducted an annual review of the documentation required by § 54.1515(a) through (c) to determine the need for and to implement changes or revisions to disaster preparation and recovery documentation.

(o) Recipients of Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund or Connect USVI Fund Stage 2 mobile support shall certify that they are in compliance with all requirements in this part for receipt of such support to continue receiving Stage 2 mobile disbursements.

5. At 85 FR 13797, Mar. 10, 2020, § 54.313 was amended by revising paragraphs (e) introductory text, (e)(2) introductory text and (e)(2)(iii). These paragraphs have a delayed effective date. For the convenience of the user, the revised text is set forth as follows:

§ 54.313 Annual reporting requirements for high-cost recipients.

* * * * *

(e) In addition to the information and certifications in paragraph (a) of this section, the requirements in paragraphs (e)(1) and (2) of this section apply to recipients of Phase II, Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund Stage 2 fixed support, and Connect USVI Fund Stage 2 fixed support:

* * * * *

(2) Any recipient of Phase II, Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund Stage 2 fixed, or Connect USVI Fund Stage 2 fixed support awarded through a competitive bidding or application process shall provide:

* * * * *

(iii) Starting the first July 1st after meeting the final service milestone in § 54.310(c) or § 54.802(c) of this chapter until the July 1st after the Phase II recipient's or Rural Digital Opportunity Fund recipient's support term has ended, a certification that the Phase II-funded network that the Phase II auction recipient operated in the prior year meets the relevant performance requirements in § 54.309 of this chapter, or that the network that the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund recipient operated in the prior year meets the relevant performance requirements in § 54.805 for the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund.

§ 54.314 Certification of support for eligible telecommunications carriers.

(a) Certification. States that desire eligible telecommunications carriers to receive support pursuant to the high-cost program must file an annual certification with the Administrator and the Commission stating that all federal high-cost support provided to such carriers within that State was used in the preceding calendar year and will be used in the coming calendar year only for the provision, maintenance, and upgrading of facilities and services for which the support is intended. High-cost support shall only be provided to the extent that the State has filed the requisite certification pursuant to this section.

(b) Carriers not subject to State jurisdiction. An eligible telecommunications carrier not subject to the jurisdiction of a State that desires to receive support pursuant to the high-cost program must file an annual certification with the Administrator and the Commission stating that all federal high-cost support provided to such carrier was used in the preceding calendar year and will be used in the coming calendar year only for the provision, maintenance, and upgrading of facilities and services for which the support is intended. Support provided pursuant to the high-cost program shall only be provided to the extent that the carrier has filed the requisite certification pursuant to this section.

(c) Certification format. (1) A certification pursuant to this section may be filed in the form of a letter from the appropriate regulatory authority for the State, and must be filed with both the Office of the Secretary of the Commission clearly referencing WC Docket