

WAC 480-123-020 Definitions. As used in ((~~WAC 480-123-030 through 480-123-080~~)) this chapter:

"Applicant" means any person applying to an ETC for new service or reconnection of discontinued service.

"Communications provider" or "provider" means a company providing communications service that assigns a working telephone number to a final consumer for intrastate wireline or wireless communications services or interconnected voice over internet protocol service, and includes local exchange carriers.

"Communications services" includes telecommunications services and information services and any combination of these services.

"Eligible telecommunications carrier" and "ETC" mean a carrier designated by the commission as eligible to receive support from federal universal service mechanisms in exchange for providing services supported by federal universal service mechanisms.

"Facilities" means for the purpose of WAC 480-123-030 (1)(b) any physical components of the telecommunications network that are used in the transmission or routing of the services that are supported by federal universal service mechanisms.

".shp format" means the format used for creating and storing digital maps composed of shape files capable of being opened by the computer application ArcGIS™.

"Program" means the state universal communications services program created in RCW 80.36.650.

"Service outage" means a significant degradation in the ability of an end user to establish and maintain a channel of voice communications as a result of failure or degradation in the performance of a communications provider's network.

"Substantive" means sufficiently detailed and technically specific to permit the commission to evaluate whether federal universal service support has had, or will have, benefits for customers. For example, information about investments and expenses that will provide, increase, or maintain service quality, signal coverage, or network capacity, and information about the number of customers that benefit, and how they will benefit is sufficient to enable evaluation.

"Telecommunications" has the same meaning as defined in 47 U.S.C. Sec. 153(43).

NEW SECTION

WAC 480-123-100 Prerequisites for requesting program support.

(1) **Wireline communications providers.** A wireline communications provider may seek support from the program if the provider satisfies all of the following requirements:

(a) The provider is a local exchange company as defined in WAC 480-120-021 that serves less than forty thousand access lines within the state;

(b) The provider is an incumbent local exchange carrier as defined in 47 U.S.C. Sec. 253(h);

(c) The provider offers basic residential and business exchange telecommunications services as set forth in WAC 480-120-021 and RCW 80.36.630;

(d) The provider's rates for residential local exchange service, plus mandatory extended area service charges, are no lower than the local urban rate floor established by the commission as the benchmark rate based on the Federal Communications Commission's most current calculation of a national local urban rate floor pursuant to 47 C.F.R. Sec. 54.318 in the year in which the provider files a petition for support; provided that, if the provider's rates exceed the benchmark, the provider may not seek support from the program for the purpose of reducing those rates towards or to the benchmark; and

(e) The provider has been designated by the commission as an eligible telecommunications carrier for purposes of receiving federal universal service support pursuant to 47 C.F.R. Part 54 Subpart D - Universal Service Support for High Cost Areas, with respect to the service areas for which the provider is seeking program support.

(2) **Wireless communications providers.** A wireless communications provider may seek support from the program if the provider satisfies all of the following requirements:

(a) The provider is licensed by the Federal Communications Commission to offer commercial mobile radio service within the state of Washington;

(b) The provider serves fewer than the equivalent of forty thousand access lines in Washington; and

(c) The provider has been designated by the commission as an eligible telecommunications carrier for purposes of receiving federal universal service support pursuant to 47 C.F.R. Part 54 Subpart D - Universal Service Support for High Cost Areas, with respect to the service areas for which the provider is seeking program support.

(3) In calculating access lines or equivalents under this section, the access lines or equivalents of all affiliates must be counted as a single threshold, if the lines or equivalents are located in Washington; provided that only the wireline access lines of the affiliates of a provider seeking support as a wireline carrier will count toward the single threshold for that provider, and only the wireless access line equivalents of the affiliates of a provider seeking support as a wireless carrier will count toward the single threshold for that provider.

NEW SECTION

WAC 480-123-110 Petitions for eligibility to receive program support. (1) **Wireline communications providers.** A wireline communications provider that satisfies the prerequisites in WAC 480-123-100 may petition the commission to receive support from the program. The provider must petition the commission each year to be eligible to receive support from the program the following year. The petition must include the following information:

(a) The name of the legal entity that provides communications services and is seeking program support;

(b) A corporate organization chart showing the relationship between the legal entity identified in (a) of this subsection and all affiliates as defined in RCW 80.16.010 and a detailed description of

any transactions between the provider and those affiliates recorded in the provider's operating accounts;

(c) A service area map or detailed reference to any maps on file with the commission showing the provider's Washington service area;

(d) A demonstration that the provider's customers are at risk of rate instability or service interruptions or cessation in the absence of support from the program;

(e) Detailed financial information and supporting documentation in a form prescribed by the commission for the provider's total Washington regulated operations for the two calendar years prior to the year in which the provider is filing the petition including, but not limited to, the following:

(i) The provider's balance sheet and statements of income and retained earnings or margin from, or in the same format and detail required in, Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Form 479;

(ii) The provider's consolidated audited financial statements; if the provider does not have consolidated audited financial statements prepared in the normal course of its business, the provider must submit financial statements reviewed by a certified public accountant;

(iii) Information demonstrating the provider's earned rate of return on a total Washington unseparated regulated operations basis for each of the two prior years;

(iv) Information demonstrating the provider's earned return on equity on a total company (regulated and nonregulated) Washington basis for each of the two prior years;

(v) Information detailing all of the provider's revenues from the statements of income and retained earnings or margin section of RUS Form 479 for the two prior years; if the provider does not submit RUS Form 479, the provider must file with the commission the same revenue information specified in this subsection that is required to complete the applicable portion of that form;

(vi) Information detailing the amounts of any corporate operations adjustments to existing high-cost loop and interstate common line support mechanisms the Federal Communications Commission required of the provider for the two prior years or a statement under penalty of perjury from a company officer of the provider with personal knowledge and responsibility certifying that no such adjustments apply to the provider;

(vii) Any additional supporting information the commission requests to enable it to analyze the provider's financial results for program purposes; and

(viii) A statement under penalty of perjury from a company officer of the provider with personal knowledge and responsibility certifying that the provider complies with state and federal accounting, cost allocation, and cost adjustment rules pertaining to incumbent local exchange companies;

(f) A complete copy of the FCC Form 481 the provider filed with the Federal Communications Commission for the calendar year preceding the year in which the provider is filing the petition; if the provider does not submit FCC Form 481 to the Federal Communications Commission, the provider must file with the commission the same information required to complete that form;

(g) Information detailing the number of residential and business local exchange access lines the provider served as of December 31st for each of the prior two years and the monthly rate charged to each customer category; and

(h) A statement under penalty of perjury from a company officer of the provider certifying that if it receives program support the provider will continue to provide communications services pursuant to its tariffs on file with the commission throughout its service territory in Washington for which it is seeking and receives program support during the entirety of the calendar year in which the provider is applying for support from the program.

(2) **Wireless communications provider.** A wireless communications provider that meets the requirements in WAC 480-123-100 may petition the commission to receive support from the program. The provider must petition the commission each year to be eligible to receive support from the program the following year. The petition must include the same type of information for the same periods required of wireline communications providers in subsection (1) of this section. The first time a wireless communications provider seeks to file such a petition, the provider must first submit its request to file the petition to the advisory board, pursuant to any guidelines the advisory board will adopt, detailing how the provider will compile and supply the information required by this rule. The advisory board will make a recommendation to the commission, and the commission will determine the precise information the provider must file in support of its petition.

(3) **Information already on file with the commission.** To the extent that the provider has filed any of the information required under this rule in conjunction with its application for certification as an eligible telecommunications carrier, the provider need not include that same information in its petition so long as the provider identifies the docket number, documents, and location within those documents in which the provider included that information.

(4) **Timing of petitions.** A provider must file a complete petition that fully complies with this section no later than August 1st if the company seeks support from the program for the following calendar year. Program support is available annually until the expiration of the program on June 30, 2019.

(5) **Certification.** One or more company officers responsible for the provider's business and financial operations must certify in the form of a statement under penalty of perjury that the information and representations made in the petition are accurate and that the provider has not knowingly withheld any information required to be provided to the commission pursuant to the rules governing the program. The provider must file this certification with its petition.

NEW SECTION

WAC 480-123-120 Eligibility and distributions from the program. The commission will authorize distributions from the program on a calendar year basis. Each eligible provider will receive a single distribution for the year after January 1st of that year.

(1) **Eligibility.** A wireline communications provider that complies with the requirements in this chapter is eligible to receive distributions from the program if the provider demonstrates that its financial circumstances are such that its customers are at risk of rate instability or service interruptions or cessations absent a distribution to the provider that will allow the provider to maintain rates reasonably close to the benchmark the commission has established. In making that

determination, the commission will consider the provider's earned rate of return on a total Washington company books and unseparated regulated operations basis, the provider's return on equity, the status of the provider's existing debt obligations, and other relevant factors including, but not limited to, the extent to which the provider is planning or implementing operational efficiencies and business plan modifications to transition or expand from primary provision of legacy voice telephone service to broadband service or otherwise reduce its reliance on support from the program.

(2) **Calculation of support amount.** The amount that a wireline communications provider eligible to receive support from the program may receive in a calendar year shall not exceed the sum of the following:

(a) The amount the provider received in 2012 from the former traditional USF fund established in Docket U-85-23, et al., and administered by the Washington exchange carrier association; and

(b) The cumulative reduction in support from the Connect America Fund incurred by the provider up through and including the year for which program support is distributed to the provider to the extent the program contains sufficient funds.

(3) **Distribution to wireless communications providers.** The advisory board will make a recommendation to the commission on eligibility and distribution calculations for any wireless communications provider that seeks support from the program, and the commission will determine that provider's eligibility and the amount of support, if any, the provider may receive consistent with RCW 80.36.650 and commission rules.

(4) **Total requests in excess of available funds.** If the total requests for support for a calendar year exceed the program funds available for that year, the commission will distribute the available funds to eligible carriers on a pro rata basis. The commission may seek a recommendation from the advisory board on the best pro rata distribution methodology to use.

(5) **Commission determination.** The commission will consider petitions from companies seeking support from the program and will make the necessary eligibility and distribution determinations in response to those petitions prior to January 1st of the calendar year in which funds from the program will be distributed.

NEW SECTION

WAC 480-123-130 Reporting requirements. (1) **Wireline communications provider reports.** A wireline communications provider that receives program support must submit the following information and reports to the commission on or before July 1st of the year following each calendar year in which the provider receives that support unless a different date is specified below:

(a) The number of residential and business access lines served within the state of Washington for which the provider used program support in the provision of basic telecommunications service (broken down to reflect beginning and end of year quantities);

(b) Detailed information on how the provider used program support the provider received during the preceding year;

(c) A list with detailed information of all consumer requests for new basic telecommunications service in the area for which the provider received program support during the preceding year that the provider denied or did not fulfill for any reason;

(d) A statement under penalty of perjury from a company officer of the provider with personal knowledge and responsibility certifying that, during the preceding year, the provider materially complied with all commission rules in chapter 480-120 WAC that are applicable to the provider and its provision of service within the area for which the provider received program support;

(e) Complete copies of the FCC Form 477 for the state of Washington that the provider filed with the Federal Communications Commission during and for the calendar year in which the provider receives support at the same time the provider submits those forms to the Federal Communications Commission; if the provider does not submit FCC Form 477 to the Federal Communications Commission, the provider must file with the commission the same information required to complete that form at the same time carriers that file FCC Form 477 are required to submit that form;

(f) A report on operational efficiencies and business plan modifications for the area for which the provider receives program support during the preceding year that the provider has undertaken to transition or expand from primary provision of legacy voice telephone service to broadband service or otherwise reduce its reliance on support from the program, and whether and how disbursements from the program were used to accomplish such outcomes;

(g) Detailed information on any other efforts the provider made to use program support to advance universal service and the public interest in Washington; and

(h) Any other information or reports the commission requires including, but not limited to, information the commission needs to provide a report to the legislature concerning the program.

(2) **Wireless communications provider reports.** The advisory board will make a recommendation to the commission on the information and reports that any wireless communications provider that receives support from the program should provide, and the commission will determine the information and reports that provider must provide consistent with RCW 80.36.650 and commission rules.

(3) **Information already on file with the commission.** To the extent that the provider has filed any of the information required under this rule in conjunction with its application for certification as an eligible telecommunications carrier, the provider need not include that same information in its report so long as the provider identifies the docket number, documents, and location within those documents in which the provider included that information.

(4) **Comments from stakeholders.** Interested persons may submit information or comments on any of the issues on which the providers must report under this rule. Persons must submit such information or comments by July 1st of the year following each calendar year in which the commission distributes program support.

NEW SECTION

WAC 480-123-140 Commission compliance review of accounts and records. Communications providers that receive program support are subject to compliance reviews and other investigations by the commission to ensure compliance with program rules and orders. Each provider shall retain all records required to demonstrate to the commission that the support the provider received was consistent with RCW 80.36.650 and commission rules and orders. Providers shall retain all such documentation for at least five years from the distribution of program funds, and a provider shall make that documentation available to the commission upon request. Any eligible providers authorized to receive program support that fail to comply with public interest obligations under federal or Washington law or any other terms and conditions established by the commission may be subject to further action, including the commission's existing enforcement procedures and penalties, reductions in program support amounts, potential revocation of program eligibility designation, and suspension from, or disqualification to future participation in the program.

NEW SECTION

WAC 480-123-150 Advisory board. (1) Establishment. The commission will establish an industry and consumer advisory board to provide recommendations to the commission on the implementation and management of the program.

(2) **Membership.** The commission secretary is authorized to solicit nominations and approve membership on the board.

(a) The board will be comprised of members representing the following interests:

(i) One from incumbent local exchange companies serving fewer than forty thousand access lines in Washington;

(ii) One from incumbent local exchange companies serving more than forty thousand access lines in Washington;

(iii) One from competitive local exchange companies serving customers in Washington;

(iv) One from wireless communications providers offering service in Washington;

(v) One from the public counsel division of the office of the attorney general of Washington; and

(vi) One from the commission staff.

(b) Commission staff and public counsel shall have permanent membership on the board. The commission will appoint industry members for a term of three years, at the expiration of which the industry members are eligible for appointment to a subsequent three-year term.

(3) **Duties.** The board shall:

(a) Have a consultative role on matters directly referred to it by the commission;

(b) Conduct meetings no less than once per year;

(c) Conduct all meetings as public meetings in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, chapter 42.30 RCW; and

(d) Prepare and submit to the commission a written report on matters brought to it for consideration including, where appropriate, a

recommendation to the commission on potential resolution of such matters.

(4) **Initiating board action.** The commission alone may initiate board action other than the execution of administrative duties, which the board may conduct on its own initiative. Any person who seeks board participation in program issues or matters must petition the commission to initiate board action.

NEW SECTION

WAC 480-123-160 Resolution of disputes. An affected provider may petition the commission to resolve any disputed matter concerning the program including, but not necessarily limited to, the provider's eligibility to receive program support, the amount or timing of any distribution of support, and calculations of the provider's revenues and earnings levels. The commission may refer such requests to the advisory board as the initial point of review and consideration of the matter for which a carrier seeks resolution. The commission will make the final determination on any petition.

NEW SECTION

WAC 480-123-170 Operation of the program. The commission will authorize and process payments from the universal communications services account for providers that the commission determines have met the requirements of WAC 480-123-100 through 480-123-140.