

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

This collection is being submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to seek approval for revised information collection requirements as a result of recent Federal Communications Commission (FCC or Commission) orders as explained below. This collection also revises FCC Form 481 and its instructions, as well as the projected burdens associated with other forms necessary for carriers to receive high-cost universal service support under the various Connect America Fund (CAF) and Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) mechanisms.

A. Justification:**1. *Circumstances that make the collection necessary.***

The requirements in this information collection are used to determine the amount of, and eligibility for, high-cost universal service support received by incumbent and competitive eligible telecommunications carriers (ETCs) under the CAF and RDOF mechanisms.

The Communications Act of 1934, as amended, (the Act) requires the “preservation and advancement of universal service.” The information collection requirements reported under this control number are the result of various Commission actions to promote the Act’s universal service goals, while minimizing waste, fraud, and abuse.

On November 18, 2011, the Commission adopted an order reforming its high-cost universal service support mechanisms. *Connect America Fund; A National Broadband Plan for Our Future; Establish Just and Reasonable Rates for Local Exchange Carriers; High-Cost Universal Service Support; Developing a Unified Intercarrier Compensation Regime; Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service; Lifeline and Link-Up; Universal Service Reform – Mobility Fund*, WC Docket Nos. 10-90, 07-135, 05-337, 03-109; GN Docket No. 09-51; CC Docket Nos. 01-92, 96-45; WT Docket No. 10-208, Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 26 FCC Rcd 17663 (2011) (*USF/ICC Transformation Order*). The Commission and Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB or the Bureau) have since adopted a number of orders that implement the *USF/ICC Transformation Order*; see also *Connect America Fund et al.*, WC Docket No. 10-90 et al., Third Order on Reconsideration, 27 FCC Rcd 5622 (2012); *Connect America Fund et al.*, WC Docket No. 10-90 et al., Order, 27 FCC Rcd 605 (WCB 2012); *Connect America Fund et al.*, WC Docket No. 10-90 et al., Fifth Order on Reconsideration, 27 FCC Rcd 14549 (2012); *Connect America Fund et al.*, WC Docket No. 10-90 et al., Order, 28 FCC Rcd 2051 (WCB 2013); *Connect America Fund et al.*, WC Docket No. 10-90 et al., Order, 28 FCC Rcd 7227 (WCB 2013); *Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No. 10-90, Report and Order, 28 FCC Rcd 7766 (WCB 2013); *Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No. 10-90, Report and Order, 28 FCC Rcd 7211 (WCB 2013); *Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No. 10-90, Report and Order, 28 FCC Rcd 10488 (WCB 2013); *Connect America Fund et al.*, WC Docket No. 10-90 et al., Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 29 FCC Rcd 8769 (2014); *Connect America Fund et al.*, WC Docket No. 10-90 et al., Report and Order, Order and Order on Reconsideration and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 31 FCC Rcd 3087 (2016); *Connect America Fund, et al.*, WC Docket No. 10-90, et al., Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 31 FCC Rcd 5949 (2016); *Connect America Fund et al.*, WC Docket Nos. 10-90, 16-271; WT Docket No. 10-208, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 31 FCC Rcd 10139 (2016); *Connect America Fund; ETC Annual Reports and Certifications*, WC Docket Nos. 10-90, 14-58, Order, 32 FCC Rcd 968 (2017); *Connect America Fund et al.*, WC Docket No. 10-90 et al., Report and Order, Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, and Order

on Reconsideration, 33 FCC Rcd 11893 (2018); *Connect America Fund; ETC Annual Reports and Certifications*, WC Docket Nos. 10-90, 14-58, Report and Order, 32 FCC Rcd 5944 (2017).

In 2019, the Commission adopted an order establishing the Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund (PR Fund) and the Connect USVI Fund, a separate, parallel high-cost program for the U.S. territories suffering extensive infrastructure damage due to Hurricanes Irma and Maria. *The Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund and the Connect USVI Fund, et al.*, WC Docket No. 18-143, et al., Report and Order and Order on Reconsideration, 34 FCC Rcd 9109 (2019) (*Puerto Rico and USVI Stage 2 Order*). Also, in the 2019 *Supply Chain Order*, the Commission adopted a rule prohibiting the use of Universal Service Fund (USF) support, including high-cost universal service support, to purchase or obtain any equipment or services produced or provided by a covered company posing a national security threat to the integrity of communications networks or the communications supply chain. *Protecting Against National Security Threats to the Communications Supply Chain Through FCC Programs*, WC Docket No. 18-89, Report and Order, Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, and Order, 34 FCC Rcd 11423, 11433, para. 26 (WCB 2019). *See also* 47 CFR § 54.9.

On January 30, 2020, the Commission adopted an order establishing the framework for the RDOF, building on the successful CAF Phase II auction. *Rural Digital Opportunity Fund; Connect America Fund*, WC Docket Nos. 19-126 and 10-90, Report and Order, 35 FCC Rcd 686 (2020) (*RDOF Order*). Later that year, the Commission adopted two additional supply chain rules associated with newly required certifications. *Protecting Against National Security Threats to the Communications Supply Chain Through FCC Programs*, WC Docket No. 18-89, Second Report and Order, 35 FCC Rcd 14284 (2020) (*2020 Supply Chain Order*).

Through several orders, the Commission has reconfigured and extended certain high-cost programs, adding obligations applicable to these particular programs, and has changed, modified, and eliminated certain other obligations for high-cost support. These changes are outlined below:

First, the Bureau announced that, as of March 1, 2018, and continuing with annual reports due March 1 in subsequent years, recipients of Rural Broadband Experiments (RBE) support would no longer submit location information and associated evidence with their annual FCC Form 481, as previously required, but would instead submit this information using the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC or the Administrator)'s High-Cost Universal Broadband (HUBB) portal. *See Wireline Competition Bureau Provides Guidance to Carriers Receiving Connect America Fund Support Regarding their Broadband Location Reporting Obligations*, Public Notice, 31 FCC Rcd 12900, 12908 (WCB 2016). OMB approved the collection of this location information through the HUBB in OMB Control No. 3060-1228, *Connect America Fund - High Cost Portal Filing*. This collection now reflects that this obligation is being collected under OMB Control No. 3060-1228.

Second, the Commission established the Enhanced Alternative Connect America Cost Model (A-CAM) program, the next iteration of the A-CAM programs. *See Connect America Fund: A National Broadband Plan for Our Future High-Cost Universal Service Support et al.*, WC Docket No. 10-90 et al., Report and Order, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, and Notice of Inquiry, FCC 23-60 (rel. July 24, 2023) (*Enhanced A-CAM Order*). Under the Enhanced A-CAM program, carriers electing to receive Enhanced A-CAM support will receive such support for a term ending in 2038, for broadband deployment with speeds of at least 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload, and will be subject to reporting and certification obligations associated with Enhanced A-CAM support. *See Enhanced A-CAM Order* at 24-27, paras. 52-59. On October 30, 2023, the Bureau announced that 368 carriers electing Enhanced A-CAM will receive \$18.28 billion in total over the 15-year term. *See Wireline Competition Bureau Authorizes 368 Companies in 44 States to Receive Enhanced Alternative Connect America Cost Model Support to Expand Rural Broadband*, WC Docket No. 10-90, Public Notice, DA 23-1025 (WCB 2023).

Third, the Commission adopted an order, that among other things, modified and clarified certain requirements associated with FCC Form 481 and similar filings. See *Connect America Fund et al.*, WC Docket No. 10-90 et al., Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and Report and Order, FCC 23-87 (rel. Oct. 20, 2023) (*Administrative Order*). The *Administrative Order* updated the rules to properly state that duplicate copies of the annual high-cost reports and certifications, i.e., the FCC Form 481, as described in sections 54.313 and 54.314 of the Commission's rules, need not be filed with more than one entity; carriers must now only file the FCC Form 481 with USAC. See *Administrative Order* at 60-62, paras. 133-34; 47 CFR §§ 54.313-14. See also *Connect America Fund; ETC Annual Reports and Certifications*, WC Docket Nos. 10-90, 14-58, Report and Order, 32 FCC Rcd 5944, 5948, para. 15 (2017) (*ETC Reporting Streamlining Order*) (“[C]ontingent upon USAC’s completion of the rollout of an online portal for recipients of high cost services, we will no longer require ETCs to file duplicate copies of Form 481 with the FCC and with states, U.S. Territories, and/or Tribal governments beginning in 2018.”). The *Administrative Order* also made explicit that the required certification of compliance with voice and broadband benchmarks in FCC Form 481 covers the calendar year preceding the date that the FCC Form 481 is due, and is based on benchmarks released by the Commission before that calendar year (two years before the year that the FCC Form 481 is due to be submitted). See *Administrative Order* at 67, para. 150.

We therefore propose to revise this information collection, as well as the FCC Form 481 and its accompanying instructions, to reflect these additional, modified, and eliminated requirements.

New requirements for which we are seeking OMB approval:

(1) Enhanced A-CAM Reporting and Certifications (See 12.a):

Existing rate-of-return carriers that elect Enhanced A-CAM will be required to certify regarding certain obligations unique to the Enhanced A-CAM program. See *Enhanced A-CAM Order* at 24-27, paras. 52-59.

First, Enhanced A-CAM carriers must certify that, in the previous calendar year, they participated, in good faith, in any relevant BEAD Program challenge processes or other processes conducted by states or other BEAD Program eligible entities to determine the eligibility of locations for the BEAD Program, and that they otherwise coordinated with states, Tribes, and other eligible entities to help avoid duplicative federal broadband funding. Additionally, Enhanced A-CAM carriers must certify that, in the previous calendar year, they complied with the obligation not to receive or use BEAD Program funding or other future federal grant funding, unless otherwise specified by the Commission or Bureau, that supports broadband deployment for those locations for which they are receiving Enhanced A-CAM support. See *Enhanced A-CAM Order* at 24-25, paras. 52-53; 47 CFR § 54.313(f)(6)(i).

Second, Enhanced A-CAM carriers must describe how and certify that, in the previous calendar year, they participate in any substantially similar successor program to the Affordable Connectivity Program, as required by the terms of their Enhanced A-CAM offers. See *Enhanced A-CAM Order* at 25-26, paras. 55-57; 47 CFR § 54.313(6)(ii).

Third, Enhanced A-CAM carriers must certify that they have maintained their cybersecurity and supply chain risk management plans pursuant to 47 CFR § 54.308(e), report whether they filed any substantive modifications pursuant to 47 CFR § 54.308(e)(6) in the prior year, and report the date they filed any substantive modifications. See *Enhanced A-CAM Order* at 48-49, para. 112.

Currently approved requirements that are being revised:

(2) Annual Reporting Requirements for All Funding Recipients (See 12.b):

All ETCs must include in their annual reports the information that is required by section 54.313, as appropriate. See 47 CFR § 54.313. It is necessary and appropriate for the Commission to obtain such information from all ETCs, both federal and state-designated, to ensure the continued availability of high-quality voice services and monitor progress in achieving the Commission's broadband goals and to assist the FCC in determining whether the funds are being used appropriately. This reporting requirement ensures that ETCs comply with the conditions of the ETC designation and that universal service funds are used for their intended purposes.

(i) Annual Reporting. 47 CFR § 54.313(a)(4) (See 12.b):

To help the Commission reduce waste, fraud, and abuse, increase accountability in its universal service programs, and ensure compliance with various requirements that take into account holding company structure, support recipients are required to report the holding company, operating companies, affiliates, and any branding (a "dba" or "doing-business-as company" or brand designation), for each such entity by Study Area Codes.

(ii) Annual Reporting. 47 CFR § 54.313(a)(1) (See 12.b):

ETCs are required to submit information and data required by 47 CFR § 54.313(a)(1) separately broken out for both voice and broadband service. ETCs must certify that they are able to function in emergency situations as set forth in 47 CFR § 54.202(a)(2). 47 CFR § 54.313(a)(1).

(iii) Annual Reporting. 47 CFR § 54.313(a)(2) (See 12.b):

To ensure parity between urban and rural rates, ETCs are required to submit a self-certification that the pricing of their voice services is no more than two standard deviations above the national average urban rate for voice services. As clarified in the *Administrative Order*, ETCs certify compliance with the annual benchmark "adopted in the prior calendar year ending the last day of December," regarding their voice services offered in the calendar year preceding the year in which the FCC Form 481 is filed. "For example, the support recipient submitting a Form 481 on July 1, 2024 will certify compliance during 2023 with voice and broadband benchmarks set for the 2023 calendar year (as announced in 2022)." *Administrative Order* at 67, para. 150.

Competitive ETCs participating in the Alaska Plan must certify that their required stand-alone voice plan is (1) substantially similar to a service plan offered by at least one mobile wireless service provider in the cellular market area (CMA) for Anchorage, Alaska, and (2) offered for the same or a lower rate than the matching plan in the CMA for Anchorage. See 47 CFR § 54.308(d).

We are revising the requirement to make clear that the certification of compliance with the annual voice benchmark relates to rates adopted for the prior calendar year.

(3) Reasonably Comparable Rate Certification for Broadband and High-Cost Recipients (See 12.c):

The Commission requires high-cost recipients to certify in their FCC Form 481 reports that the pricing of a service that meets the Commission's broadband public interest obligations is no more than the applicable benchmark 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. 47 CFR § 54.313(a)(3). Recipients also are required to provide a detailed description of how they did or did not meet this requirement. This certification requirement will enable the Commission to monitor the use of high-cost support and confirm that consumers have access to rates that are reasonably comparable to those offered in urban areas for comparable services.

As clarified in the *Administrative Order*, ETCs certify compliance with the annual benchmark “adopted in the prior calendar year ending the last day of December,” regarding their broadband services offered in the calendar year preceding the year in which the FCC Form 481 is filed. “For example, the support recipient submitting a Form 481 on July 1, 2024 will certify compliance during 2023 with voice and broadband benchmarks set for the 2023 calendar year (as announced in 2022).” *Administrative Order* at 67, para. 150.

Competitive ETCs participating in the Alaska Plan shall certify that one service plan that offers broadband data services, if they offer such plans, is (1) substantially similar to a service plan offered by at least one mobile wireless service provider in the CMA for Anchorage, Alaska, and (2) offered for the same or a lower rate than the matching plan in the CMA for Anchorage. See 47 CFR § 54.308(d). In addition to this annual certification, competitive ETCs participating in the Alaska Plan must also demonstrate compliance with the requirement at the end of the competitive ETC’s five-year and 10-year milestones. See *id.*

We are revising the requirement to make clear that the certification of compliance with the annual broadband benchmark relates to rates adopted for the prior calendar year.

(4) Connect America Fund Phase II Requirements, Rate-of-Return Carrier Requirements. 47 CFR § 54.313(e)(1), and (f)(1) (See 12.d & 12.e):

Price cap carriers and rate-of-return carriers must report the number, names, and addresses of community anchor institutions to which they newly began providing access to broadband service in the preceding calendar year in the required template associated with FCC Form 481. To the extent applicable, rate-of-return carriers additionally must certify they are offering broadband meeting the Commission’s requirements upon reasonable request. Rate-of-return carriers participating in the Alaska Plan must instead certify that they are offering broadband service consistent with their approved performance plans. Rate-of-return carriers receiving A-CAM I or A-CAM II support must certify that they are meeting the relevant reasonable request standard, and rate-of-return ETCs receiving legacy high-cost support must now certify that they are meeting a 25 Mbps/3 Mbps reasonable request standard. 47 CFR § 54.313(f)(1) (i). Rate-of-return carriers receiving Enhanced A-CAM must certify that they are offering broadband service with latency suitable for real-time applications, including Voice over Internet Protocol, and with usage capacity that is reasonably comparable to offerings in urban areas. 47 CFR § 54.313(f)(1).

We are revising these reporting obligations to include the requirement that rate-of-return carriers receiving Enhanced A-CAM must certify that they are offering broadband service with latency suitable for real-time applications, including Voice over Internet Protocol, and with usage capacity that is reasonably comparable to offerings in urban areas.

(5) Additional Reporting Requirements for Rural Broadband Experiment Support Recipients (See 12.f):

RBE support recipients are required to deploy service meeting the Commission's public interest obligations to a set number of locations by specific build-out milestones. *Connect America Fund et al.*, WC Docket No. 10-90 et al., Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 29 FCC Rcd 8769 (2014).

In each FCC Form 481 annual report, RBE support recipients must certify that the recipient is offering broadband meeting the requisite public interest obligations consistent with the category for which they were selected, including broadband speed, latency, usage capacity, and rates that are reasonably comparable to rates for comparable offerings in urban areas. *Connect America Fund et al.*, WC Docket No. 10-90 et al., Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 29 FCC Rcd 8769 (2014). This certification requirement enables the Commission to monitor RBE support recipients to ensure they are using the support for its intended purposes and are meeting the relevant public interest obligations.

Each recipient of RBE support must also report in its FCC Form 481 annual reports the number, names, and addresses of community anchor institutions to which the recipients newly began providing access to broadband service in the preceding calendar year. This requirement is a valuable way for the Commission to monitor how recipients are engaging with community anchor institutions and learn how the networks supported by the experiments will impact anchor institutions and the communities they serve. This requirement no longer includes the submission of RBEs' location information, as that is now collected under OMB Control No. 3060-1228.

We are revising this requirement to exclude the requirement that recipients of RBE support report deployed location information as part of their FCC Form 481, as this reporting is now part of OMB Control No. 3060-1228.

(6) State Certification Letter under 254(e) of the Act (See 12.g):

The Commission requires that states (or ETCs where the state lacks jurisdiction over ETCs) file annual certifications with USAC to ensure that carriers use universal service support "only for the provision, maintenance and upgrading of facilities and services for which the support is intended" consistent with section 254(e). Accordingly, the Commission requires states that wish to receive federal universal service high-cost support for carriers within their boundaries (or ETCs where the state lacks jurisdiction over ETCs) to file a certification with USAC stating that all federal to high-cost funds flowing to carriers in that state has been and will be used in a manner consistent with section 254(e). Absent such certification, carriers will not receive such support. See 47 CFR § 54.314.

The Commission recognizes that some state commissions may have only limited regulatory oversight to ensure that federal support is reflected in intrastate rates. States nonetheless may certify to USAC that a carrier in the state has accounted to the state commission for its receipt of federal support and that such support has been and will be used "only for the provision, maintenance and upgrading of facilities and services for which the support is intended." Incumbent and competitive ETCs serving lines in the state may formulate plans to ensure compliance with section 254(e), and present those plans to the state, so that the state may make the appropriate certification to the Commission. Absent the filing of such certification, carriers will not receive support. See 47 CFR § 54.314.

We are revising this requirement to make clear the state certification need only be filed with the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC).

Currently approved requirements in this information collection (no changes to requirements):

Through the Commission's high-cost universal service programs, the Commission provides substantial amounts of funding to private entities in order to deploy advanced voice and broadband networks throughout the country. To ensure these funds are properly used, various reporting requirements are imposed on funding recipients. The reports, information, and certifications discussed in this section must be submitted annually to the Administrator.¹

(7) Capital Expenditure Reporting for Phase II Model-Based Support Recipients (See 12.h):

Each year, price cap carriers are required to report the total amount of Phase II support, if any, the price cap carrier used for capital expenditures in the previous calendar year. The Commission requires that price cap carriers submit this information so that it can monitor price cap carriers' progress in meeting buildout milestones associated with their accepted support. 47 CFR § 54.313(e).

(8) E-rate Certification Requirement for Phase II Model-Based Support Recipients and Rate-of-Return Carrier High-Cost Recipients (See 12.i):

The Commission requires price cap carriers that elect Phase II model-based support and rate-of-return carriers that receive high-cost support to bid on category one telecommunications and Internet access services in response to all FCC Form 470 postings seeking broadband service that meets connectivity targets for the schools and libraries universal service support program for eligible schools and libraries located within any area in a census block where the price cap carrier is receiving Phase II model-based support or in the service area of a rate-of-return carrier. Such bids must be at rates reasonably comparable to rates charged to eligible schools and libraries in urban areas for comparable offerings. Once this requirement has been fully implemented, price cap carriers that accepted Phase II model-based support and rate-of-return carriers that receive high-cost support will be required to certify in their annual FCC Form 481 reports that they have met this requirement. 47 CFR § 54.313(e)(1)(ii)(C), (f)(1)(iii). This certification requirement enables the Commission to monitor price cap carriers' and rate-of-return carriers' compliance with this requirement.

(9) Carriers Lacking Terrestrial Backhaul Certification. 47 CFR § 54.313(g) (See 12.j):

The Commission recognizes that satellite backhaul may limit the performance of broadband networks as compared to terrestrial backhaul; thus, carriers that are compelled to rely exclusively on satellite backhaul in their study area must certify annually that no terrestrial backhaul options exist. The annual certifications must indicate that the carriers 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. Latency and capacity requirements do not apply to these providers. To the extent that new terrestrial backhaul facilities are constructed, or existing facilities improved sufficiently to meet the relevant speed, latency, and capacity requirements then in effect for broadband service supported by Connect America, within twelve months of the new backhaul facilities becoming commercially available, funding recipients must provide the certifications required in 47 CFR § 54.313(e) or (f) in full. Rate-of-return carriers participating in the Alaska Plan must certify whether, in any portions of a carrier's study area relying

¹ With the adoption of the *ETC Reporting Streamlining Order* in 2017, the Commission no longer required these annual reports to be submitted to the Commission and the relevant state commission or relevant authority in a U.S. Territory or Tribal Government, as appropriate, in addition to USAC. See *ETC Reporting Streamlining Order*, 32 FCC Rcd at 5948, para. 15. Accordingly, on July 2, 2018, OMB approved revisions to this information collection stating that these reports must be submitted annually to the Administrator only. See Notice of Action, OMB Control No. 3060-0986 (July 2, 2018); Federal Communications Commission, Information Collection Approved by the Office of the Management and Budget (OMB), 83 Fed. Reg. 39090 (Aug. 8, 2018). However, the Commission did not modify the corresponding rule, 47 CFR § 54.313(i), to conform with this change until it adopted the *Administrative Order*. See *Administrative Order* at 133, para. 60; 47 CFR § 54.313(i).

exclusively on satellite backhaul, the carrier provides service consistent with its approved performance plan. See 47 CFR § 54.313(g).

(10) Tribal Engagement Reporting. 47 CFR § 54.313(a)(5) (See 12.k):

To ensure the effective exchange of information that will lead to a common understanding between Tribal governments and ETCs on the deployment and improvement of communications on Tribal lands, to the extent an ETC serves Tribal lands, it is required to provide documents or information that the ETC engaged with Tribal governments. The *ETC Reporting Streamlining Order* moved this requirement from 47 CFR § 54.313(a)(9) to 47 CFR § 54.313(a)(5), but the requirement remains the same.

(11) Price Cap Carrier Frozen High-Cost Support Certification. 47 CFR § 54.313(c) (See 12.l):

The Commission froze support under its high-cost support mechanisms – high-cost loop support (HCLS), safety net additive (SNA), safety valve support (SVS), high-cost model support (HCMS), local switching support (LSS), interstate access support (IAS), and interstate common line support (ICLS) – for price cap carriers and their rate-of-return affiliates, and called it “frozen high-cost support.” Recipients of frozen high-cost support must annually certify that increasing levels of support have been used to achieve the goal of universal availability of voice and broadband. Recipients must certify that all funding 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.

(12) Voice Certification for Phase-Down Support Recipients (See 12.m):

The Commission requires that any price cap carriers and fixed competitive ETCs that receive support pursuant to sections 54.312(d) or 54.307(e)(2)(iii) must certify 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 at rates that are reasonably comparable to comparable offerings in urban areas. 47 CFR § 54.313(m).

(13) Price Cap Carrier High-Cost Support for Access Charges Certification. 47 CFR § 54.313(d) (See 12.n):

All price cap carriers that receive support pursuant to 47 CFR § 54.304, to offset reductions in access charges, must use such support to build and operate broadband-capable networks used to offer the provider’s own retail service in areas substantially unserved by an unsubsidized competitor. To monitor the use of such support and hold recipients accountable to their public interest obligations, recipients of such support must annually certify that they are doing so.

(14) Privately Held Rate-of-Return Carrier Financial Information. 47 CFR § 54.313(f)(2) (See 12.o):

The Commission can obtain publicly available financial information from publicly traded companies. To ensure that support is sufficient but not excessive, privately held rate-of-return carriers that receive high-cost support must submit various forms of financial statements. Those companies that borrow funds from the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) must submit a copy of their RUS Operating Report for Telecommunications Borrowers. Carriers that do not borrow from RUS, but that undergo financial audits in the ordinary course of business, must either file a copy of their audited financial statements or provide financial information in a form consistent with the RUS Operating Report for Telecommunications Borrowers. Carriers that are not audited in the ordinary course of business must either file a financial statement that has been subject to review by a certified public accountant or file financial information in a

format consistent with the RUS Operating Report for Telecommunications Borrowers. These financial disclosures may be filed pursuant to a protective order.

(15) Cost Consultant Information for Rate-of-Return Carriers (See 12.p):

The Commission requires that rate-of-return carriers provide the name of any cost consultant and cost consulting firm, or other third-party, retained to prepare financial and operations data disclosures submitted to NECA, USAC, or the Commission. 47 CFR § 54.313(f)(4).

(16) Newly Available Backhaul Reporting for Alaska Plan Participants (See 12.q):

To help the Commission monitor the availability of infrastructure for Alaska Plan participants, rate-of-return carriers and competitive ETCs participating in the Alaska Plan must certify in their FCC Form 481 whether any terrestrial backhaul or other satellite backhaul became commercially available in the previous calendar year in areas that previously were served exclusively by satellite backhaul, if the funding recipient identified in its approved performance plans that it exclusively relied on satellite backhaul for a certain portion of the population in its service area. To the extent that new terrestrial backhaul facilities are constructed or other satellite backhaul become commercially available, the funding recipient must provide a description of the backhaul technology; and provide the date on which that backhaul was made commercially available to the carrier. Rate-of-return carriers participating in the Alaska Plan must provide the number of locations within their service area that are served by the newly available backhaul option. Competitive ETCs participating in the Alaska Plan must instead provide the number of the population within their service area that is served by the newly available backhaul option. 47 CFR §§ 54.313(f)(3), 54.313(l).

Separate from Alaska Plan participants' FCC Form 481 reporting, within 12 months of backhaul facilities becoming commercially available to those locations served by the new backhaul reported pursuant to 47 CFR § 54.313(f)(3), rate-of-return carriers 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. Competitive ETCs must, 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. 47 CFR §§ 54.313(f)(3), 54.313(l).

(17) Capital Expenditure Documentation for Rate-of-Return and Competitive ETC Alaska Plan Participants (See 12.r):

Alaska Plan rate-of-return participants that propose to maintain their existing networks throughout the 10-year support term without newly deploying or upgrading service to locations within their service area and all Alaska Plan competitive ETC participants are required to retain documentation on how much of their Alaska Plan support was spent on capital expenses and operating expenses and be prepared to produce such documentation upon request. We do not expect that this requirement will unduly burden recipients because they track their capital and operating expenditures in the regular course of business.

(18) Connect America Fund Phase II Auction, Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund Stage 2, Connect USVI Fund Stage 2, and Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Reporting and Certifications (See 12.s):

Recipients of Connect America Phase II auction support, Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund Stage 2 fixed support, or Connect USVI Fund Stage 2 fixed support must report (A) the number, names, and addresses

of community anchor institutions to which the carrier began providing access to broadband service in the preceding calendar year, (B) the total amount of support 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 located within any area in a census block where the carrier is receiving support awarded through the auction, and that such bids were at rates reasonably comparable to rates charged to eligible schools and libraries in urban areas for comparable offerings. 47 CFR § 54.313(e)(2)(i)(A)-(C).

Additionally, these carriers must certify that the recipient has available funds for all project costs that will exceed the amount of support received for the next calendar year and, after the recipient's final deployment milestone, that the Phase II-funded, Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund Stage 2-funded, Connect USVI Fund Stage 2-funded, or RDOF-funded network the recipient operated in the prior year meets the relevant performance requirements. 47 CFR § 54.313(e)(2)(ii), (e)(2)(iii). These disclosures provide the Commission assurance that Phase II auction, Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund Stage 2, Connect USVI Fund Stage 2, and RDOF support recipients use high-cost support for appropriate purposes and have obtained enough funding to meet their public service obligations.

(19) Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund and Connect USVI Fund Certification Requirements for Fixed and Mobile Providers (See 12.t):

The Commission requires that all recipients of Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund and/or Connect USVI Fund support certify that such support was not used for costs that are (or will be) reimbursed by other sources of support, that support was not used for other purposes not directly related to network restoration, hardening, and expansion, and that they have conducted an annual review of the documentation required by 47 CFR § 54.1515(a)-(c) to determine the need for and to implement changes or revisions to disaster preparation and response documentation. *Puerto Rico and USVI Stage 2 Order*, 34 FCC Rcd at 9149-50, para. 73.

(20) Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund and Connect USVI Fund Certification Requirements for Mobile Providers (See 12.u):

The Commission requires that mobile providers that receive Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund and/or Connect USVI Fund support shall certify that they are in compliance with all requirements for receipt of such support to continue receiving Stage II mobile disbursements.² *Puerto Rico and USVI Stage 2 Order*, 34 FCC Rcd at 9149-50, para. 73.

(21) Support in Competitive Study Areas (See 12.v):

Rural carriers and competitive ETCs, except Alaska Plan participants, are required to file line count data on a quarterly basis upon competitive entry in rural carrier study areas. The rural carrier line counts are used to determine the appropriate per-line support for competitive eligible telecommunications carriers

² In April 2023, the Commission granted fewer than 10 mobile and fixed carriers, combined, in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands limited high-cost support that will be used for resiliency and redundancy measures and to maintain voice and broadband services. *The Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund and the Connect USVI Fund et al.*, WC Docket Nos. 18-143, 10-90, Report and Order and Order on Review, FCC 23-32 (Apr. 19, 2023). While these carriers submit a certification and certain information regarding the use of support, the Commission determined that this submission is not an information collection subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act due to the limited number of respondents. Therefore, the Commission is not seeking OMB approval for such information as part of this information collection.

serving the same area. The competitive eligible telecommunications carrier's line counts (collected on FCC Form 525) are used to calculate their total support. See 47 CFR §§ 54.317(d).

(22) Safety Valve (See 12.w):

The "safety valve" mechanism enables rural carriers acquiring access lines to receive additional support over a period of five years to reflect post-transaction investment made by the acquiring carrier. Once relevant regulatory approvals are obtained and the transaction is closed, the rural carrier must provide written notice to USAC that they have acquired access lines that may become eligible for safety valve support and identify when the index year for determining eligibility began. See 47 CFR § 54.305(f).

(23) Recordkeeping Requirement (See 12.x):

Carriers receiving high-cost, CAF, or RDOF support are subject to random compliance audits and other investigations to ensure compliance with program rules and orders, and carriers must retain records required to demonstrate to auditors that the support received was consistent with the universal service high-cost program rules. The document retention period is ten years. The carriers must make these documents and records available to the Commission, any of its Bureaus or Offices, USAC, and to their respective auditors. See 47 CFR § 54.320(b).

(24) Supply Chain Certification for all High-Cost Recipients (See 12.y):

The Commission requires that all recipients of Connect America Fund, Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, or other high-cost USF support certify they have not used USF support to purchase, obtain, maintain, improve, modify, manage, or otherwise support Huawei or ZTE equipment or services in any way, including upgrades to existing Huawei or ZTE equipment and services. *2019 Supply Chain Order*, 34 FCC Rcd at 11454, para. 79; see also 47 CFR § 54.9.

Additionally, the Commission requires that recipients of USF support, including high-cost support, certify that they have complied with 47 CFR § 54.10, which prohibits the use of Federal subsidies for equipment and services on the Covered List. *2020 Supply Chain Order*, 35 FCC Rcd at 14329, para. 103. Recipients of USF support are also required to certify that they have complied with 47 CFR § 54.11, which requires the removal of equipment and services on the Covered List. The first such certification was required one year after the Wireline Competition Bureau announced the acceptance of applications filed during the initial filing window to participate in the Reimbursement Program. See *Wireline Competition Bureau Announces Applications Filed for the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Reimbursement Program*, WC Docket No. 18-89, Public Notice, DA 22-131 (WCB 2022). Going forward, ETCs receiving USF support need to certify that they are not using equipment or services identified on the Covered List before receiving USF support each funding year. *2020 Supply Chain Order*, 35 FCC Rcd at 14308, para. 49.

These disclosures are low-burden measures that help protect the integrity of the communications supply chain, and the Commission expects that the time required to make the supply chain certifications will be *de minimis*.

Statutory authority for this information collection is contained in 47 U.S.C. sections 151-154, 155, 201-206, 214, 218-220, 251, 252, 254, 256, 303(r), 332, 403, 405, 410, and 1302.

This information collection does not affect individuals or households; thus, there are no impacts under the Privacy Act.

2. *Use of information.* The Commission will use the information requirements to determine the eligibility for high-cost universal service support. The Commission will also use the information collections to conduct oversight and ensure that CAF funds are spent in accordance with the rules of the program.
3. *Technological collection techniques.* In an effort to reduce any burden created by these information collection requirements, the Commission shall permit all respondents to file responses using automated, electronic, mechanical or other technological collection techniques where feasible. Respondents must file Form 481 online through USAC's "E-File" portal at <https://forms.universalservice.org/usaclogin/login.asp>.
4. *Efforts to identify duplication.* There will be no duplication of information. The information sought is unique to each carrier or respondent and similar information is not already available.
5. *Impact on small entities.* The collection of information may affect small entities as well as large entities. The requirements in this collection are necessary to ensure compliance with high-cost universal service support requirements and are designed to limit the burden on small entities as much as possible.
6. *Consequences if information is not collected.* The information collected is used to determine eligibility for high-cost universal service support and to conduct oversight and ensure that high-cost universal service support is spent in accordance with the rules of the program. Without the requested information, the Commission and USAC will not be able to determine a carrier's eligibility or monitor compliance with high-cost universal service support requirements. This may result in partial or complete denial of high-cost universal service support for the carrier.
7. *Special circumstances.* We do not foresee any special circumstances with this information collection.
8. *Federal Register notice; efforts to consult with persons outside the Commission.* A 60-day notice was also published in the *Federal Register* pursuant to 5 CFR § 1320.8(d) on March 5, 2025. See [90 FR 11316]. No comments were received from the public.
9. *Payments or gifts to respondents.* The Commission does not anticipate providing any payment or gifts to respondents.
10. *Assurances of confidentiality.* Parties may submit confidential information in relation to sub-item p in Item 12 below pursuant to a protective order. We note that USAC must preserve the confidentiality of all data obtained from respondents and contributors to the universal service support program mechanism; must not use the data except for purposes of administering the universal service support program; and must not disclose data in company-specific form unless directed to do so by the Commission. Also, respondents may request materials or information submitted to the Commission or to the Administrator believed confidential to be withheld from public inspection under 47 CFR § 0.459 of the FCC's rules.
11. *Questions of a sensitive nature.* There are no questions of a sensitive nature with respect to the information collections described herein.
12. *Estimates of the hour burden of the collection to respondents.* The following represents the hour burden on the collections of information:

a. **Enhanced A-CAM Reporting and Certifications (new requirement):**

- (1) Number of Respondents: Approximately 368 rate-of-return carriers that have elected and are authorized for Enhanced A-CAM support will be required to submit certifications specific to the Enhanced A-CAM program.
- (2) Frequency of Response: Annually._
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: Approximately 1._
- (4) Estimated time per response: 2 hours._
- (5) Total annual hour burden: 736 hours._

2 hours per respondent for 368 respondents filing on an annual basis. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

368 respondents x 1 submission per respondent = 368 responses x 2 hours = **736 total annual hours.**

- (6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$29,440 (736 hours x \$40/hour).
- (7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that each carrier will spend a total of approximately 2 hours preparing and submitting the certifications regarding avoiding duplicative federal broadband funding, complying with the obligation not to receive or use federal grant funding for broadband deployment for those locations for which they are receiving Enhanced A-CAM support, participate in any substantially similar successor program to the Affordable Connectivity Program, and maintaining cybersecurity and supply chain risk management plans: 368 (responses) x 2 (hours preparing and submitting certifications) x \$40 per hour = \$29,440.

b. **Annual Reporting Requirements for All Funding Recipients (revised requirement):**

- (1) Number of Respondents: Approximately 2,229 telephone companies. Although this requirement is being revised, no changes to the associated burdens are expected.
- (2) Frequency of Response: Annually._
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: Approximately 1._
- (4) Estimated time per response: 5 hours._
- (5) Total annual hour burden: 11,145 hours._

5 hours per respondent for 2,229 respondents filing on an annual basis. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

2,229 respondents x 1 submission per respondent = 2,229 responses x 5 hours = **11,145 total annual hours.**

- (6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$445,800 (11,145 hours x \$40/hour).

- (7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that each carrier will spend a total of approximately 5 hours preparing and submitting the emergency certification and information regarding any holding companies, operating companies, and affiliates: 11,145 (responses) x 5 (hours preparing and submitting certification and company information) x \$40 per hour = \$445,800.

c. Reasonably Comparable Rate Certification for Broadband and High-Cost Recipients (FCC Form 481) (revised requirement) :

- (1) Number of respondents: Approximately 1,519. Although this requirement is being revised, no changes to the associated burdens are expected.
- (2) Frequency of response: Annually. Carriers will be required to file this certification with their annual reports.
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: Approximately 1.
- (4) Estimated time per response: 4 hours.
- (5) Total annual hour burden: 6,076 hours.

4 hours per respondent for 1,519 carriers filing on an annual basis. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

1,519 respondents x 1 report per respondent = 1,519 responses x 4 hours = **6,076 total annual hours**.

- (6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$243,040 (6,076 hours x \$40/hour).
- (7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that each recipient of high-cost support required to make the reasonably comparable rates certification will spend at least 4 hours certifying that it has met the reasonably comparable rates requirements: 1,519 (responses) x 4 (hours to confirm and certify compliance) x \$40/hour = \$243,040.

d. Connect America Fund Phase II Requirements (revised requirement):

- (1) Number of respondents: Approximately 9 carriers or holding companies receiving Connect America Phase II support will be required to report the number, names and, addresses of community anchor institutions to which they newly began providing access to broadband service.
- (2) Frequency of response: Annually.
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: Approximately 1.
- (4) Estimated time per response: 2 hours.
- (5) Total annual hour burden: 18 hours.

2 hours per respondent for 9 respondents filing annually. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

9 respondents x 1 report per respondent = 9 responses x 2 hours = **18 total annual hours.**

- (6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$720 (18 hours x \$40/hour).
- (7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that each Phase II funding recipient will spend at least 2 hours collecting and reporting data on newly served community anchor institutions. 9 (responses) x 2 (hours to track, tabulate, and prepare reporting requirements) x \$40/hour = \$720.

e. Rate-of-Return Carrier Requirements (revised requirement):

- (1) Number of respondents: Approximately 1,141 rate-of-return carriers will be required to certify that they are offering broadband upon reasonable request meeting the Commission's requirements and report the number, names, and addresses of community anchor institutions to which they newly began providing access to broadband service. Although this requirement is being revised, no changes to the associated burdens are expected.
- (2) Frequency of response: Annually.
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: Approximately 1._
- (4) Estimated time per response: 3 hours._
- (5) Total annual hour burden: 3,423 hours._

3 hours per respondent for 1,141 respondents filing annually. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

1,141 respondents x 1 report per respondent = 1,141 responses x 3 hours = **3,423 total annual hours.**

- (6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$136,920 (3,423 hours x \$40/hour).
- (7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that each rate-of-return carrier, including rate-of-return carriers participating in the Alaska Plan, will spend approximately 3 hours certifying they are offering the required broadband service and reporting data on newly served community anchor institutions. 1,141 (responses) x 3 (hours to track, tabulate, and prepare reporting requirements and confirm and certify compliance with broadband obligations) x \$40/hour = \$136,920.

f. Additional Reporting Requirements for Rural Broadband Experiment Support Recipients (FCC Form 481) (revised requirement):

- (1) Number of respondents: Approximately 20. RBE support recipients must report this data and make these certifications.
- (2) Frequency of response: Annually.
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: Approximately 1._
- (4) Estimated time per response: 2 hours.
- (5) Total annual hour burden: 40 hours.

2 hours per respondent for 20 carriers filing on an annual basis. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

20 respondents x 1 certification per respondent = 20 responses x 2 hours = **40 total annual hours.**

- (6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$1,600 (40 hours x \$40/hour).
- (7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that each RBE support recipient will take 2 hours to gather and submit the community anchor institution data to the Commission and make the required certification: 20 (responses) x 2 (hours to prepare certification) x \$40/hour = \$1,600.

g. State Certification Letter Under 254(e) of the Act (revised requirement):

- (1) Number of respondents: 61 respondents (51 states, plus approximately 10 carriers will have to file this certification). Although this requirement is being revised, no changes to the associated burdens are expected.
- (2) Frequency of response: Annual reporting requirement. Each state commission must file a letter with USAC certifying that a carrier within the state had accounted for its receipt of federal support in its rates or otherwise used the support for the “provision, maintenance, and upgrading of facilities and services for which the support is intended” in accordance with section 254(e). Carriers that are not under a state regulatory authority will have to file with USAC directly.
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: Approximately 1.
- (4) Estimated time per response: 3 hours.
- (5) Total annual hour burden: 183 hours.

3 hours per respondent for 61 respondents filing on an annual basis. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

61 respondents x 1 certification per respondent = 61 responses x 3 hours = **183 total annual hours.**

- (6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$7,320 (183 hours x \$40/hour).
- (7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that each respondent will spend 3 hours complying with this requirement: 61 (responses) x 3 (hours to confirm compliance and prepare certification letter) x \$40/hour = \$7,320.

h. Capital Expenditure Reporting for Phase II Model-Based Support Recipients (FCC Form 481) (no revisions):

- (1) Number of respondents: Approximately 9. Only price cap carriers that elect to receive Phase II model-based support must report this data.
- (2) Frequency of response: Annually. Each price cap carrier accepting funding must file the reports annually after accepting support.

(3) Total number of responses per respondent: Approximately 1.

(4) Estimated time per response: 1 hour._

(5) Total annual hour burden: 9 hours.

1 hour per respondent for 9 carriers filing on an annual basis. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

9 respondents x 1 report per respondent = 9 responses x 1 hour = **9 total annual hours.**

(6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$360 (9 hours x \$40/hour).

(7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that each Phase II model-based support recipient will take 1 hour to gather and submit the total amount of Phase II support paid for capital expenses to the Commission: 9 (responses) x 1 (hours to prepare report) x \$40/hour = \$360.

i. E-rate Certification Requirement for Phase II Model-Based Support Recipients and Rate-of-Return Carrier High-Cost Recipients (FCC Form 481) (no revisions):

(1) Number of respondents: Approximately 1,150. Only price cap carriers that elect to receive Phase II model-based support and rate-of-return carriers that receive high-cost support must make this certification.

(2) Frequency of response: Annually. Carriers accepting Phase II model-based support and rate-of-return carriers that receive high-cost support will be required to file this certification once the requirement has been fully implemented.

(3) Total responses per respondent: Approximately 1.

(4) Estimated time per response: 2 hours._

(5) Total annual hour burden: 2,300 hours._

2 hours per respondent for 1,150 carriers filing on an annual basis. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

1,150 respondents x 1 report per respondent = 1,150 responses x 2 hours = **2,300 total annual hours.**

Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$92,000 (2,300 hours x \$40/hour).

(6) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that each carrier that accepted Phase II model-based support and each rate-of-return carrier that receives high-cost support will spend at least 2 hours to confirm compliance and certify that it has met the E-rate requirements: 1,150 (responses) x 2 (hours to confirm and certify compliance) x \$40/hour = \$92,000.

j. Carriers Lacking Terrestrial Backhaul Certification (no revisions):

- (1) Number of respondents: Fewer than 20 carriers that receive funding but rely exclusively on satellite for backhaul or are Alaska Plan participants that rely exclusively on satellite backhaul in a portion of their study areas must certify as to the performance of their broadband service._
- (2) Frequency of response: Annually._
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: Approximately 1.
- (4) Estimated time per response: 15 hours._
- (5) Total annual hour burden: 300 hours._

15 hours per respondent for 20 respondents filing annually. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

20 respondents x 1 certification per respondent = 20 responses x 15 hours = **300 total annual hours.**

- (6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$12,000 (300 hours x \$40/hour).
- (7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that each carrier receiving funding but relying exclusively on satellite for backhaul will spend at least 15 hours to confirm and certify compliance as to the performance of its broadband service: 20 (responses) x 15 (hours to confirm and certify compliance) x \$40/hour = \$12,000.

k. Tribal Engagement Reporting (no revisions):

- (1) Number of Respondents: Approximately 300 carriers that serve Tribal lands.
- (2) Frequency of Response: Annually._
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: Approximately 1._
- (4) Estimated time per response: 4 hours._
- (5) Total annual hour burden: 1,200 hours._

4 hours per respondent for 300 respondents filing on an annual basis. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

300 respondents x 1 report per respondent = 300 responses x 4 hours = **1,200 total annual hours.**

- (6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$48,000 (1,200 hours x \$40/hour).
- (7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that each carrier serving Tribal lands will spend a total of at least 4 hours preparing, reviewing, and submitting its report on Tribal engagement: 300 (responses) x 4 (hours preparing, reviewing, and submitting report) x \$40/hour = \$48,000.

l. Price Cap Carrier Frozen High-Cost Support Certification (no revisions):

- (1) Number of respondents: Approximately 293 price cap carriers receiving Connect America frozen support will have to certify that they are using incrementally increasing portions of their frozen support to deploy broadband-capable networks and to offer their own retail broadband service in areas substantially unserved by an unsubsidized competitor._
- (2) Frequency of response: Annually._
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: Approximately 1._
- (4) Estimated time per response: 15 hours.
- (5) Total annual hour burden: 4,395 hours.

15 hours per respondent for 293 respondents filing annually. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

293 respondents x 1 certification per respondent = 293 responses x 15 hours = **4,395 total annual hours**.

- (6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$175,800 (4,395 hours x \$40/hour).
- (7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that each price cap carrier receiving frozen support will spend at least 15 hours confirming compliance and certifying that it is using incrementally increasing portions of its frozen support to deploy broadband-capable networks and to offer its own retail broadband service in areas substantially unserved by an unsubsidized competitor: 293 (responses) x 15 (hours to confirm and certify compliance) x \$40/hour = \$175,800.

m. Voice Certification for Phase-Down Support Recipients (no revisions):

- (1) Number of respondents: Approximately 101 price cap carriers and competitive ETCs must certify regarding the phase-down support they received._
- (2) Frequency of response: Annually._
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: Approximately 1._
- (4) Estimated time per response: 15 hours._
- (5) Total annual hour burden: 1,515 hours._

15 hours per respondent for 101 respondents filing annually. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

101 respondents x 1 report per respondent = 101 responses x 15 hours = **1,515 total annual hours**.

- (6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$60,600 (1,515 hours x \$40/hour).
- (7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that price cap carriers and competitive ETCs will spend, on average, approximately 15 hours confirming compliance and certifying that they are providing 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 at rates that are reasonably comparable to comparable offerings in urban areas. 101 (responses) x 15 (hours to confirm and certify compliance) x \$40/hour = \$60,600.

n. Price Cap Carrier High-Cost Support for Access Charges Certification (no revisions):

- (1) Number of respondents: Approximately 293 price cap carriers receiving high-cost support designed to offset access charges will have to certify that support received pursuant to 47 CFR § 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._
- (2) Frequency of response: Annually._
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: Approximately 1.
- (4) Estimated time per response: 15 hours._
- (5) Total annual hour burden: 4,395 hours._

15 hours per respondent for 293 respondents filing annually. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

293 respondents x 1 certification per respondent = 293 responses x 15 hours = **4,395 total annual hours**.

- (6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$175,800 (4,395 hours x \$40/hour).
- (7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that each price cap carrier receiving support to offset reductions in access charges will spend at least 15 hours confirming compliance and certifying that it is using high-cost support received pursuant to 47 CFR § 54.304 to deploy broadband-capable networks and to offer its own retail broadband service in areas substantially unserved by an unsubsidized competitor: 293 (responses) x 15 (hours to confirm and certify compliance) x \$40/hour = \$175,800.

o. Privately Held Rate-of-Return Carrier Financial Information (no revisions):

- (1) Number of respondents: Approximately 625 privately held rate-of-return carriers will be required to submit financial statements._
- (2) Frequency of response: Annually._
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: Approximately 1._
- (4) Estimated time per response: 15 hours._
- (5) Total annual hour burden: 9,375 hours._

15 hours per respondent for 625 respondents filing annually. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

625 respondents x 1 financial statement per respondent = 625 responses x 15 hours = **9,375 total annual hours.**

- (6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$375,000 (9,375 hours x \$40/hour).
- (7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that each privately held rate-of-return carrier will spend at least 15 hours filing its RUS Operating Report for Telecommunications Borrowers, audited financial statements, or financial statements reviewed by a certified public accountant: 625 (responses) x 15 (hours to prepare and submit financial statements) x \$40/hour = \$375,000.

p. Cost Consultant Information for Rate-of-Return Carriers (Form 481) (no revisions):

- (1) Number of respondents: Approximately 1,141 rate-of-return carriers will be required to answer whether they retained a cost consultant and cost consulting firm, or other third-party, to prepare financial and operations data disclosures, and provide the applicable names, if any._
- (2) Frequency of response: Annually. _
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: Approximately 1.
- (4) Estimated time per response: 0.1 hours._
- (5) Total annual hour burden: 114 hours._

0.1 hour per respondent for 1,141 respondents filing annually. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

1,141 respondents x 1 report per respondent = 1,141 responses x 0.1 hours = **114 total annual hours.**

- (6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$4,560 (114 hours x \$40/hour).
- (7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that rate-of-return carriers will spend, on average, approximately 0.1 hours providing the name of any applicable cost consultants, cost consulting firms, and other third parties: 1,141 (responses) x 0.1 (hours to track and report this information) x \$40/hour = \$4,560.

q. Newly Available Backhaul Reporting for Alaska Plan Participants (Form 481) (no revisions):_

- (1) Number of respondents: Approximately 21 rate-of-return carriers and competitive ETCs participating in the Alaska Plan will be required to certify and submit information regarding the commercial availability of backhaul._
- (2) Frequency of response: Annually and occasionally._
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: Approximately 1.
- (4) Estimated time per response: 7 hours._
- (5) Total annual hour burden: 147 hours.

7 hours per respondent for 21 carriers filing on an annual basis. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

21 respondents x 1 report per respondent = 21 responses x 7 hours = **147 total annual hours.**

- (6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$5,880 (147 hours x \$40/hour).
- (7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that each Alaska Plan participant will take 7 hours preparing and submitting the relevant information regarding commercial availability of backhaul and the relevant certification: 21 (responses) x 7 (hours to prepare and submit information) x \$40/hour = \$5,880.

r. Capital Expenditure Documentation for Rate-of-Return and Competitive ETC Alaska Plan Participants (no revisions):

- (1) Number of respondents: Approximately 13 rate-of-return carriers and competitive ETCs participating in the Alaska Plan will be required to retain and provide information on capital and operating expenditures. The number of respondents is based on the combination of the rate-of-return carriers and wireless affiliates having combined records.
- (2) Frequency of response: Annually._
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: Approximately 1.
- (4) Estimated time per response: 2 hours._
- (5) Total annual hour burden: 26 hours.

2 hours per respondent for 13 carriers retaining documents on an annual basis. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

13 respondents x 1 report per respondent = 13 responses x 2 hours = **26 total annual hours.**

- (6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$1,040 (26 hours x \$40/hour).
- (7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that each carrier will spend at least 2 hours to track and retain documentation: 13 (responses) x 2 (hours to comply with document retention requirements) x \$40/hour = \$1,040._

s. Connect America Fund Phase II Auction, Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund Stage 2, Connect USVI Fund Stage 2, and Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Reporting and Certifications (no revisions):

- (1) Number of respondents: Approximately 352. Carriers that receive CAF Phase II auction support, Uniendo a Puerto Rico Stage 2 fixed support, Connect USVI Stage 2 fixed support, or Rural Digital Opportunity Fund support must submit these reports and make these certifications.
- (2) Frequency of response: Annually._
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: Approximately 1._

(4) Estimated time per response: 4 hours._

(5) Total annual hour burden: 1,408 hours._

4 hours per respondent for 352 respondents filing annually. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

352 respondents x 1 report per respondent = 352 responses x 4 hours = **1,408 total annual hours**.

(6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$56,320 (1,408 hours x \$40/hour).

(7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that CAF Phase II auction, Puerto Rico/U.S. Virgin Island Stage 2, and RDOF recipients will spend, on average, approximately 4 hours submitting these reports and making these certifications: 352 (responses) x 4 (hours to track, report, and certify this information) x \$40/hour = \$56,320.

t. Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund and Connect USVI Fund Certification Requirements for Fixed and Mobile Providers (no revisions):

(1) Number of respondents: Approximately 15. Approximately 10 fixed and 5 wireless providers who receive Uniendo a Puerto Rico and/or Connect USVI Stage 2 support will be required to certify regarding their use of support and that they have conducted an annual review of required disaster preparation and response documentation.

(2) Frequency of response: Annually.

(3) Total number of responses per respondent: 1.

(4) Estimated time per response: 3 hours.

(5) Total annual hour burden: 45 hours.

3 hours per respondent for 15 respondents filing annually. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

15 respondents x 1 report per respondent: 15 responses x 3 hours = **45 total annual hours**.

(6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$1,800 (45 hours x \$40/hour).

(7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that each mobile and fixed provider participating in the Uniendo a Puerto Rico and Connect USVI Stage II fund will spend approximately 3 hours certifying regarding their use of such support as well as whether they have conducted an annual review of required disaster preparation and response documentation: 15 (responses) x 3 (hours to track, tabulate, and prepare reporting requirements and confirm and certify compliance with broadband obligations) x \$40/hour = \$1,800.

u. Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund and Connect USVI Fund Certification Requirements for Mobile Providers (no revisions):

- (1) Number of respondents: Approximately 5. Approximately 5 wireless providers who receive Uniendo a Puerto Rico and/or Connect USVI Fund Stage 2 support will be required to certify that they are in compliance with all requirements for receipt of such support to continue receiving Stage II mobile disbursements.
- (2) Frequency of response: Annually.
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: 1.
- (4) Estimated time per response: 1 hour.
- (5) Total annual hour burden: 5 hours.

1 hour per respondent for 5 respondents filing annually. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

5 respondents x 1 report per respondent: 5 responses x 1 hour = **5 total annual hours**.

- (6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$200 (5 hours x \$40/hour).
- (7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that each mobile provider participating in the Uniendo a Puerto Rico and Connect USVI Stage II fund will spend approximately 1 hour certifying they are in compliance with all the requirements for receipt of such support: 5 (responses) x 1 (hour to confirm and certify compliance with broadband obligations) x \$40/hour = \$200.

v. Support in Competitive Study Areas: (FCC Form 525) (no revisions):

- (1) Number of respondents: 1. One tribally owned competitive ETC will have to submit line count data quarterly. Competitive ETCs participating in the Alaska Plan are no longer subject to this requirement.
- (2) Frequency of response: Quarterly reporting requirement. Each carrier must file line count data with USAC upon competitive entry in rural carrier study areas.
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: Approximately 4.
- (4) Estimated time per response: 6 hours.
- (5) Total annual hour burden: 24 hours.

6 hours per respondent for 1 respondent filing on a quarterly basis. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

1 respondent x 4 reports per respondent = 4 responses x 6 hours = **24 hours**.

- (6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$960 (24 hours x \$40/hour).
- (7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that 1 competitive ETCs will submit line count data quarterly x 6 hours to complete when preparing the worksheet: 4 (responses) x 6 (hours to prepare line count data worksheet) x \$40/hour = \$960.

w. Safety Valve (no revisions):

- (1) Number of respondents: 25 rural carriers will have to file a notice.
- (2) Frequency of response: On occasion reporting requirement and third party disclosure requirement. Rural carriers shall provide written notice to USAC when their index year has been established for purposes of calculating eligibility for safety valve support.
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: Approximately 1._
- (4) Estimated time per response: .5 hours.
- (5) Total annual hour burden: 13 hours._

.5 hours per respondent for 25 respondents filing on an occasional basis. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

25 respondents x 1 notice per respondent = 25 responses x .5 hours = 13 hours (rounded up).

- (6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$520 (13 hours x \$40/hour).
- (7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that each carrier will spend .5 hour drafting a notice to USAC indicating when their index year has been established for purposes of calculating eligibility for safety valve support: 25 (responses) x .5 (hours to prepare notice) = 13 (rounded up) x \$40/hour = \$520._

x. Recordkeeping Requirement (no revisions):

- (1) Number of Respondents: Approximately 2,229 telephone companies.
- (2) Frequency of Response: Annually._
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: Approximately 1._
- (4) Estimated time per response: 2 hours.
- (5) Total annual hour burden: 4,458 hours._

2 hours per respondent for 2,229 respondents retaining documents on an annual basis. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

2,249 respondents x 1 submission per respondent = 2,229 responses x 2 hours = **4,458 total annual hours.**

- (6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$178,320 (4,458 hours x \$40/hour).
- (7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that each carrier will spend at least 2 hours tracking document retention periods: 2,229 (responses) x 2 (hours to comply with document retention requirements) x \$40/hour = \$178,320.

y. Supply Chain Certification for All High-Cost Recipients (no revisions):

- (1) Number of respondents: Approximately 2,229. All high-cost support recipients will be required to certify that they have not used USF funds to purchase, obtain, maintain, improve, modify, manage, or otherwise support Huawei or ZTE equipment or services in any way, including upgrades to existing Huawei or ZTE equipment and services.
- (2) Frequency of response: Annually.
- (3) Total number of responses per respondent: 1
- (4) Estimated time per response: 0.1 hours.
- (5) Total annual hour burden: 223 hours.

0.1 hour per respondent for 2,229 respondents filing annually. Total annual hour burden is calculated as follows:

2,229 respondents x 1 report per respondent = 2,229 responses x 0.1 hours = **223 total annual hours.**

- (6) Total estimate of in-house cost to respondents: \$8,920 (223 hours x \$40/hour).
- (7) Explanation of calculation: We estimate that high-cost carriers will spend, on average, approximately 0.1 hours certifying their compliance with 47 CFR § 54.9: 2,229 (responses) x 0.1 (hours to track and report this information) x \$40/hour = \$8,920.

The estimated respondents and responses and burden hours are listed below:

Information Collection Requirements	Number of Respondents	Number of Responses Per Year	Estimated Time per Response (hours)	Total Burden Hours	In-house Cost to Respondents
<u>a. Enhanced A-CAM Reporting and Certifications</u>	368	1	2	736	\$29,440
<u>b. Annual Reporting Requirements for All Funding Recipients</u>	2,229	1	5	11,145	\$445,800

<u>c. Reasonably Comparable Rate Certification for Broadband and High-Cost Recipients</u>	1,519	1	4	6,076	\$243,040
<u>d. Connect America Fund Phase II Requirements</u>	9	1	2	18	\$720
<u>e. Rate-of-Return Carrier Requirements</u>	1,141	1	3	3,423	\$136,920
<u>f. Additional Reporting Requirements for RBE Support Recipients</u>	20	1	2	40	\$1,600
<u>g. State Certification Letter Under 254(e) of the Act</u>	61	1	3	183	\$7,320
<u>h. Capital Expenditure Reporting for Phase II Model-Based Support Recipients</u>	9	1	1	9	\$360

<u>i. E-Rate Certification Requirement for Phase II Model-Based Support Recipients and Rate-of-Return Carrier High-Cost Recipients</u>	1,150	1	2	2,300	\$92,000
<u>j. Carriers Lacking Terrestrial Backhaul Certification</u>	20	1	15	300	\$12,000
<u>k. Tribal Engagement Reporting</u>	300	1	4	1,200	\$48,000
<u>l. Price Cap Carrier Frozen High-Cost Support Certification</u>	293	1	15	4,395	\$175,800
<u>m. Voice Certification for Phase-Down Support Recipients</u>	101	1	15	1,515	\$60,600
<u>n. Price Cap Carrier High-Cost Support for Access Charges Certification</u>	293	1	15	4,395	\$175,800
<u>o. Privately Held Rate-of-Return Carrier Financial Information</u>	625	1	15	9,375	\$375,000

<u>p. Cost Consultant Information for Rate-of-Return Carriers</u>	1,141	1	.1 hrs	114	\$4,560
<u>q. Newly Available Backhaul Reporting for Alaska Plan Participants</u>	21	1	7	147	\$5,880
<u>r. Capital Expenditure Documentation for Rate-of-Return and Competitive ETC Alaska Plan Participants</u>	13	1	2	26	\$1,040
<u>s. Connect America Fund Phase II Auction, Uniendo a Puerto Rico Stage 2, Connect USVI Fund Stage 2, and Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Reporting and Certifications</u> -	352	1	4	1,408	\$56,320
<u>t. Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund and Connect USVI Fund Certification Requirements for Fixed and Mobile Providers</u>	15	1	3	45	\$1,800

<u>u. Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund and Connect USVI Fund Certification Requirements for Mobile Providers</u>	5	1	1	5	\$200
<u>v. Support in Competitive Study Areas (FCC Form 525)</u>	1	4	6	24	\$960
<u>w. Safety Valve</u>	25	1	.5	13	\$520
<u>x. Recordkeeping Requirement</u>	2,229	1	2	4,458	\$178,320
<u>y. Supply Chain Certification for all High-Cost Recipients</u>	2,229	1	.1	223	\$8,920

TOTALS:

Total Number of Respondents: 2,229 unique respondents filing multiple times.

Total Number of Responses Annually: 14,172

Total Annual Hourly Burden for requirements: (a) – (y): 51,573

Total Annual In-house Costs to respondents: \$2,062,920

13. *Estimates for the cost burden of the collection to respondents.* There are no outside contracting costs for this information collection. See the last column in the chart in item 12 above for the estimated in-house costs to respondents.

14. *Estimates of the cost burden to the Commission.* There will be few, if any, costs to the Commission because notice and enforcement requirements are already part of Commission duties. Moreover, there will be minimal cost to the federal government since an outside party will administer this program.

15. *Program changes or adjustments.* The Commission is reporting program changes as a result of new and revised requirements. First, RBE support recipients' obligation to file location information is now being collected under information collection 3060-1228, resulting in a

decrease in the number of annual burden hours from 60 to 40 (-20). Second, rate-of-return carriers that have elected to receive Enhanced A-CAM support will be required to submit certifications specific to the Enhanced A-CAM program, resulting in a new increases of responses (+368) and burden hours (+736). Other revisions to requirements discussed in this supporting statement do not result in any changes to the number of respondents, annual responses, or burden hours.

Together, the program changes resulted in an increase in the number of annual responses and total annual burden hours. The number of annual responses increased from 13,804 to 14,172 (+368), and the annual burden hours increased from 50,857 to 51,573 (+716). There is no change in the number of respondents.

There are no adjustments to this collection.

16. *Collections of information whose results will be published.* The Commission plans to make some non-proprietary information available publicly, including information included in recipients' annual reports.
17. *Display of expiration date for OMB approval of information collection.* The Commission seeks continued approval to not display the OMB expiration date on FCC Form 481 and FCC Form 525. The Commission will use an edition date in lieu of an OMB expiration date. This will prevent the Commission from having to repeatedly update the expiration date on the forms each time this collection is submitted to OMB for review and approval. OMB approval of the expiration date of the information collection will be displayed on OMB's website .
18. *Exceptions to certification statement for paperwork reduction act submissions.* There are no exceptions to the certification statement.

B. Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods:

The Commission does not anticipate that the collection of information will employ statistical methods.