

ITCI Industry Watch

Website Privacy and Cookies

As privacy regulations evolve across the United States, many businesses are asking whether they must notify website visitors about cookies. Unlike some international jurisdictions, the U.S. does not currently have a single federal law specifically governing cookie consent. However, a growing number of state laws and regulatory guidance means that website operators should still take steps to disclose and manage the use of cookies.

Cookies are generally regulated under broader consumer privacy and data protection frameworks rather than a dedicated cookie law. Federal regulators such as the **Federal Trade Commission (FTC)** focus on transparency and unfair or deceptive practices. If a website collects or shares personal information through cookies, the FTC expects that practice to be clearly disclosed in the site's privacy policy. For most organizations, this means explaining: What types of cookies are used, the purpose of those cookies (for example, analytics, advertising, or functionality), whether third parties place cookies on the site, and how users can control or opt out of tracking. Failure to accurately disclose data practices could expose a business to enforcement actions under general consumer protection rules.

Recently, multiple states have adopted consumer privacy laws that affect how websites use cookies and tracking technologies. These laws typically focus on the collection and sharing of personal information, which can include identifiers gathered through cookies. The most influential law to date is the **California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA)**. These laws require businesses to disclose personal data collection practices and give consumers the ability to opt out of the "sale" or "sharing" of personal information, which can include advertising cookies. Other states with similar privacy laws include: Virginia, Colorado, Connecticut, and Utah. Several additional states have passed or are implementing comparable laws, expanding the expectation that businesses be transparent about online tracking practices. These include: Minnesota, Montana, New Jersey, and Oregon.

Given the evolving regulatory landscape, organizations operating websites should consider adopting several compliance practices: Maintain a clear and updated privacy policy that describes the use of cookies and tracking technologies, provide a cookie notice or banner that informs users that tracking technologies are used, and offer opt-out mechanisms where required, particularly for targeted advertising or data sharing.

NTCA Study on USF

The March 2026 study prepared by Cartesian for NTCA highlights the critical role of the Universal Service Fund (USF) in sustaining broadband and voice services in rural America. The analysis, based on real operational data from rural providers, demonstrates that ongoing USF support is essential to maintaining reliable connectivity in high-cost service areas.

Rural broadband networks face economic challenges due to low population density, long infrastructure distances, and labor-intensive operations. These conditions significantly increase operating costs. In extremely rural areas the costs can be more than 40% higher per location than in less dense areas. At the same time, revenue opportunities are limited because rural broadband adoption rates are lower and demand for higher-margin add-on services is more constrained. The study finds that without USF support, most rural providers would experience unsustainable operating margins and negative cash flow once operating expenses, network maintenance, and capital costs are considered. With USF funding, however, providers are generally able to maintain modest positive cash flow, allowing them to continue operating networks and invest in maintaining service for rural communities.

The report warns that significant reductions in USF support could jeopardize rural connectivity. Modeling shows that even a substantial reduction in funding could undermine the financial sustainability of rural networks, placing billions of dollars in existing rural infrastructure investments at risk. Maintaining USF support is essential to preserving rural connectivity, supporting local economies, and protecting past investments in rural broadband infrastructure.



ITCI Offices will be closed
Friday, April 3, 2026.

Have a Safe and Blessed
Easter Holiday!

SAVE the DATE



Wednesday & Thursday
November 18-19, 2026

Interstate
Telcom
Consulting, Inc.
Client Seminar

Embassy Suites by Hilton
Minneapolis Airport

Form Deadlines

March 31, 2026 - Form 508 CAF-BLS
March 31, 2026 - Form 507 CAF-BLS
April 1, 2026 - Form 499A
April 1, 2026 - Accessibility &
Recordkeeping Certification
April 15, 2026 - Performance Testing
Certification - 1st Qtr

ITCI Industry Events

March 23-25, 2026 - ICA
Annual Meeting & Expo
April 21-22, 2026 - WSTCA
Spring Conference
May 12-14, 2026 - TOC
Conference

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We're here for you!