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FCC Form 499 Filer Database: Map Filers, Brands, Affiliates

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In this article

1. Executive Summary
2. Introduction and Background
3. Definition and Taxonomy: What Form 499 Registration Covers
4. Identifier and Field Crosswalk
5. Names: Legal, DBA, Affiliate, Common Control and Consolidated Filings
6. Verification Paths: Identity, Control, Service and Geography
7. Lifecycle: Deactivations, Acquisitions, Renames, Duplicates and Date Stamps
8. Worked Example (Hypothetical Example)
9. Data Analysis and Evidence
10. Implementation Guidance for Research Operations
11. Implications and Future Directions
12. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
13. Conclusion

Executive Summary

A hit in the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Form 499 filer database is an evidence lead, not an acquisition target record. The database lists registrants from the annual Form 499-A, which USAC (the Universal Service Administrative Company) describes as the form providers use to register for the first time and to report prior-year revenues (www.usac.org). The FCC's search page stated that its data came from USAC as of 20 October 2026 (apps.fcc.gov). The public listing exposes registration fields; the FCC's 2025 monitoring report notes that the filings themselves are not publicly available (docs.fcc.gov). No live record count is claimed in this report, because the retrieved search page does not state one.

The core analytical point is that each identifier names a different object. The 499 Filer ID is a six-digit USAC number for a filing entity (www.usac.org), the 498 ID is a separate nine-digit number, and the FCC Registration Number (FRN) is a 10-digit number for an entity doing business with the Commission (www.law.cornell.edu). One entity can hold more than one FRN (apps.fcc.gov). Names are equally distinct: the legal name comes from formation documents, the doing-business-as (DBA) name is the customer-facing name, and the affiliate name is a common identifier for affiliated filers. The Broadband Data Collection (BDC) asks separately for a holding-company or common-control name, and where no holding company exists the commonly controlled entities decide on the name themselves (help.bdc.fcc.gov).

Consolidated filings and shared managers create the main false-merge risks. Affiliates may file on a consolidated basis, with a separate FRN for the consolidated filer (www.usac.org), and a management company is reported in its own line. The 499 jurisdiction line records states where service was provided in the past 15 months or is expected in the next 12, which is not a footprint. Footprint evidence for facilities-based broadband belongs to the National Broadband Map, where fixed providers report location by location (help.bdc.fcc.gov).

The report supplies an ID-and-claim matrix (Table 1), a reversible join worksheet (Table 2) and a fully fictional three-record example (Table 3) that ends with 3 source rows, 2 verified legal entities and 1 to 2 target groups. Official counts differ by unit: 6,771 Form 499-A filers for 2024 (docs.fcc.gov), versus 3,191 contributors with quarterly data in the fourth-quarter 2026 base. Neither is a market denominator. The recommended practice is to capture every record with its date stamps, confirm identity in a state registry, test control in transaction filings, test service and geography in sources built for them, and leave unresolved relationships marked unresolved.

Introduction and Background

Private equity origination teams that screen US voice, voice over internet protocol (VoIP) and wider telecom businesses meet the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Form 499 filer database early, because it is the most visible public list of providers. A search returns a name, a six-digit identifier and a status. It does not return a target. This report examines what a Form 499 search hit establishes, what it leaves open, and how an analyst should convert a hit into a decision about a legal entity, an operating brand or a group. The same problem is best framed as an evidence question: each field is a lead with an issuer, a date and a limit. For the broader treatment of identifier choice, see the related guide on entity identifiers for private equity target records; this report covers only the telecom-specific crosswalk.

Define the target unit before searching

A mandate can point at four different units, and a Form 499 record maps cleanly to only one of them.

- **Legal entity:** the registrant that signs contracts and holds authorizations. A Form 499 record is filed per legal entity, with named exceptions.
- **Operating brand:** the name customers see. The form captures it in a doing-business-as (DBA) field and in a trade-name list.
- **Group:** several entities under common ownership or control. The form carries an affiliate or holding-company name, but that is a filer-chosen label.
- **Service territory:** where customers can actually buy service. The 499 jurisdiction list is a registration-level statement, not a footprint.

The instructions for the form say the legal name is the name on articles of incorporation or formation (www.usac.org), the DBA is the principal customer-facing name (www.usac.org), and the affiliate field is a common identifier for all affiliated filers (www.usac.org). Three different questions therefore sit in three different fields, and the same string is rarely correct for all three.

Scope, date and limits of this report

The FCC filer database search page stated, when opened for this report, that its data came from the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) as of 20 October 2026 (apps.fcc.gov). The legacy FCC application can be unreachable from some networks, so a capture should record its retrieval date alongside the stated as-of date; no record count is claimed here, because the search page does not state one. The report relies on

regulator and administrator documents only. The instruction lines quoted here appear in both the 2025 edition hosted by the FCC and the 2026 edition hosted by USAC. Nothing here is legal advice; questions about filing obligations or transaction approvals belong with qualified telecom regulatory counsel.

Definition and Taxonomy: What Form 499 Registration Covers

What the form is

FCC Form 499-A is the Telecommunications Reporting Worksheet filed annually. USAC describes it as the form providers use to register for the first time and, each year, to report prior-year revenues (www.usac.org). The related Form 499-Q is the quarterly filing that reports prior-quarter revenues and forecasts the next quarter, with due dates of 1 February, 1 May, 1 August and 1 November (docs.fcc.gov).

The rule basis is in two places. Section 64.1195 of the FCC rules requires a carrier that will provide interstate telecommunications service to file registration information (www.law.cornell.edu), and it directs the FCC to make a comprehensive listing of registrants available to the public (www.law.cornell.edu). Section 54.711 ties universal service contributions to the Telecommunications Reporting Worksheet on a quarterly and annual basis (www.law.cornell.edu). The public filer database is therefore a registration listing. It is not an audit of revenue or a list of customers.

Who files

The 2026 instructions say that, with very limited exceptions, all intrastate, interstate and international providers of telecommunications must file (www.usac.org). Interconnected VoIP providers are in scope; the FCC rules define the service by three of its elements: it enables real-time two-way voice (www.law.cornell.edu), it requires a broadband connection from the user's location (www.law.cornell.edu), and it permits calls to and from the public switched telephone network (www.law.cornell.edu).

Filing is separate from paying. The contribution rule extends the duty to additional provider types and lists the interstate services covered (www.law.cornell.edu). The instructions set a de minimis test at an annual contribution below $10,000 (docs.fcc.gov), yet de minimis interconnected VoIP providers must still file the worksheet (docs.fcc.gov). A target can appear in the database and contribute nothing to the Universal Service Fund (USF). An analyst should read the database's direct-contributor flag as a contribution status, not as a size indicator.

Filer versus broadband deployment filer

A 499 filer is a registrant for telecommunications reporting. A broadband deployment filer is a different object: a provider that files location-level availability data in the FCC's Broadband Data Collection (BDC). The two populations overlap but are not the same.

- **BDC scope:** only facilities-based providers supplying internet access service must file availability data (help.bdc.fcc.gov).
- **Resale and network owners:** where a brand markets service exclusively over another provider's network, the network owner is the one required to file (help.bdc.fcc.gov). A marketed brand can be absent from the map as its own filer.

- **No voice, no 499 ID:** broadband-only providers may have no study area code or Form 499 filer ID (help.bdc.fcc.gov), so a BDC filer can lack a 499 record entirely.
- **Replacement of Form 477:** the BDC replaced the older Form 477 for broadband deployment data.

Conversely, a Form 499 registrant may be a reseller, a prepaid card seller or an interconnected VoIP provider with no BDC filing at all. A hit in one system says nothing about presence in the other.

Access and limits of the FCC search

The FCC filer database is a search form, and a detail record is headed "Filer Identification Information" in state-agency printouts (www.mass.gov). It accepts a Filer ID (apps.fcc.gov), a Registration Number, which is the FRN, entered in full (apps.fcc.gov), an operational status filter (apps.fcc.gov) and a state selector (apps.fcc.gov). The name search returns all results containing the entry (apps.fcc.gov) and supports percent-sign wildcards (apps.fcc.gov). The page also advertises that the search can be accessed as a RESTful web service (apps.fcc.gov). Two access limits matter for research operations. First, the FCC's own 2025 Universal Service Monitoring Report states that Form 499-A filings are not publicly available, while registration information is searchable (docs.fcc.gov). The database exposes registration fields, not revenue. Second, the legacy application can be unreachable from some networks, so teams should record the retrieval date and the "as of" stamp on every capture.

Identifier and Field Crosswalk

The identifiers, one by one

499 Filer ID. USAC's glossary defines it as a six-digit identification number assigned to each entity filing Forms 499-A and 499-Q (www.usac.org). It is a USAC-issued registration key and it names a filing entity.

498 ID or SPIN. The glossary describes the 498 ID, also called the Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN), as a unique nine-digit number USAC assigns to a service provider (www.usac.org). A company can hold a 498 ID without a 499 ID and the reverse. A nine-digit number in a USF program document should not be keyed into a six-digit 499 field.

FRN. The FCC Registration Number is a 10-digit number assigned to entities doing business with the Commission (www.law.cornell.edu), and the form instructions describe it as used to identify an entity within all Commission licensing and filing systems (docs.fcc.gov). The CORES (Commission Registration System) help page says the FRN identifies the registrant's business dealings with the FCC (apps.fcc.gov). It does not identify ownership or service areas, although the public FRN search shows the FRN, business name and registration date (apps.fcc.gov). The CORES FAQ also states that an entity can have more than one FRN (apps.fcc.gov), so one company may carry several.

BDC Provider ID. The FCC assigns a Provider ID to each service provider that completes a BDC filing (help.bdc.fcc.gov), and the BDC data-download specification describes it as a six-digit identifier (www.fcc.gov). Because it is also six digits, it can be confused with a 499 Filer ID. The FCC's published provider list pairs each Provider ID with the filing entity's FRN (help.bdc.fcc.gov), which makes the FRN the most direct bridge between BDC and 499 records.

State entity key. A state registry assigns its own number. The Delaware Division of Corporations search returns the entity name, file number, formation date and registered agent (corp.delaware.gov), and California publishes the agent for service of process (www.sos.ca.gov). These numbers are issued by each state and are not interchangeable with the FCC identifiers.

Table 1: the ID-and-claim matrix

Table 1 below lists each field an analyst meets, who issues it, what object it represents, how current it is, and what it can and cannot support. It is built from the sources cited in this section and in the verification section that follows.

Field	Issuer	Object represented	Currentness	Can support	Cannot support
499 Filer ID	USAC	One filing entity (or a consolidated filer)	Detail record carries a "Registration Current as of" stamp (www.mass.gov)	A lead that a registrant exists and registered as a telecom or VoIP provider	Current operations, ownership, or size
498 ID / SPIN	USAC	A service provider in USF programs	Maintained on request; USAC lets a provider merge, consolidate or deactivate 498 IDs, with deactivation forms for a sale, merger or consolidation (Manage Your 499 ID)	Participation in USF support programs	Equivalence with a 499 record
FRN	FCC (CORES)	A registrant doing business with the FCC	Updated in CORES by the registrant	A candidate join key across FCC systems	One FRN per company; corporate control
Legal name	Filer, held by USAC	Name on formation documents	Changed only by USAC staff on request (www.usac.org)	A search string for the state registry	Identity without a state registry match
DBA / trade names	Filer (changed by USAC)	Customer-facing names, past three years (www.usac.org)	Requested through USAC and changed by USAC staff; no documents required (www.usac.org)	Brand-to-entity leads	A brand's current owner
Affiliated filers / holding name	Filer	A label shared by affiliates	Revised with Form 499-A (www.usac.org)	A candidate group hypothesis	Verified ownership
Jurisdiction list	Filer	States where service was provided in the past 15 months or is expected in the next 12 (www.usac.org)	Annual, with revisions	Which states to research next	Customer counts or network footprint

Field	Issuer	Object represented	Currentness	Can support	Cannot support
BDC holding name	Filer	A name chosen to associate commonly owned or controlled filings (help.bdc.fcc.gov)	Semiannual filing cycle (help.bdc.fcc.gov)	A second, independent group hypothesis	Verified ownership
BDC brand name	Filer	The marketing name on availability records (help.bdc.fcc.gov)	Per BDC vintage	Brand-level footprint lead	The legal entity behind a reseller
State entity number	Secretary of State	A registered entity in one state	Status via state lookup or certificate (www.sos.ca.gov)	Legal existence and standing	Parentage

The matrix has one structural lesson. No single field identifies a target, because each field names a different object, and the objects are issued by different bodies on different clocks. The practical consequence is that a join between two fields is a hypothesis with a stated basis, not a merge.

The worksheet: a reversible join record

A reversible join worksheet keeps every source row as it was captured and records the analyst's decision beside it, so a later reviewer can undo a merge without re-collecting data. *Table 2* below specifies the columns.

Column	What goes in it	Rule
raw_filer_id	The six-digit 499 Filer ID as displayed	Never edit; one row per source record
frn	FRN from the detail record	Treat as a candidate key, not a unique company key
legal_name / dba / trade_names	Verbatim strings	Keep separate; do not concatenate
jurisdictions	States ticked on the record	Label as "reported", with the record date
comm_type	Reported principal communications type	Label as filer-reported
affiliate_name_499	The affiliated-filers name	Group lead only
bdc_holding_name / bdc_provider_id	BDC values where available	Second group lead; check for FRN agreement
state_entity_key	State and entity number from the registry	Required before any "verified entity" count
source_url / capture_date / record_asof	Where, when, and the stamp on the record	All three are mandatory
match_decision	`distinct`, `same_entity`, `same_group_candidate`, or `unresolved`	Reversible; carries a reason code
reviewer / next_evidence	Initials and the next evidence request	Unresolved rows must name the request

The table makes the decision vocabulary explicit. `same_group_candidate` is deliberately weaker than `same_entity`, and `unresolved` is a legitimate end state. Keeping the raw columns untouched means a false merge can be reversed by changing one decision cell, not by rebuilding the dataset.

Names: Legal, DBA, Affiliate, Common Control and Consolidated Filings

Legal name versus DBA

The legal name is the formation-document name, which a detail record labels "Legal Name of Reporting Entity" (www.mass.gov); the DBA is the principal name under which the filer conducts telecom activities, typically the name on customer bills. A separate trade-name line asks for all names used in the past three years, so renamed brands are preserved for a limited window. The list is filer-supplied, so absence of a name proves nothing. A DBA change needs no supporting documentation. The DBA field is therefore easier to change than the legal name, which is a reason to prefer the legal name for first-pass entity matching.

Affiliate name versus BDC common-control name

The 499 affiliate field is a common identifier for all affiliated filers, typically a holding or controlling entity; in a large group it may be the predominant commonly owned or controlled entity (www.usac.org).

The BDC asks a similar question with different wording. Its holding-company or common-control field takes a parent company name or other name used to associate the filings. If there is a holding company structure, the single name should cover all entities (help.bdc.fcc.gov), and where there is none the commonly controlled entities should decide on the single name to use (help.bdc.fcc.gov). That last sentence matters: the name can be a convention chosen by the filers, not an ownership finding.

- **Two fields, two clocks:** the 499 affiliate name moves with a Form 499-A revision, while the BDC name moves with a semiannual filing.
- **Agreement is evidence, disagreement is information:** if both fields carry the same group name and the same FRN appears in both systems, the group hypothesis is stronger. If they differ, record both and do not choose.
- **Neither is an ownership register:** the FCC pages describe these as names, not as percentages or control tests.

Management company is not an owner

The instructions provide a separate management company line, to be completed if the filer is managed by an entity other than itself (www.usac.org). A shared manager links records operationally, and it can sit beside entirely separate ownership. The practical rule: a shared management company supports a `same_group_candidate` flag only when a second independent field agrees, such as an identical affiliate name or a documented ownership interest. A management company appearing alone yields `unresolved`.

Consolidated filings

Affiliates ordinarily file separately: each legal entity must separately complete and file a copy of the worksheet (docs.fcc.gov), and a subsidiary must identify its ultimate controlling parent or provide a common identifier for the group (docs.fcc.gov). The exception lets affiliates file on a consolidated basis if they certify each year that they meet all listed conditions (docs.fcc.gov).

For research the consolidated case is a trap in two directions:

- **One record, several entities.** The consolidated filer obtains a separate FRN from those assigned to the affiliated legal entities (www.usac.org), and the certification lists the Filer IDs of all the legal entities covered (docs.fcc.gov). Counting one record as one company undercounts.
- **Holding-company data attach.** Consolidated filers provide the holding company's Employer Identification Number (EIN) (docs.fcc.gov), which can anchor an ownership search but identifies the declared holding company, not its investors.

Verification Paths: Identity, Control, Service and Geography

A 499 hit raises four questions, and each is answered by a source designed for it.

Path 1: legal identity through a state registry

Search the state registry using the legal name from the record, and capture the entity number, status and registered agent. Delaware's free search returns the entity name, file number, formation date and registered agent, but its search returns both active and inactive entities without showing status (corp.delaware.gov). California offers a Certificate of Status that certifies an entity's current standing. Registries also do not answer ownership questions: Delaware states that shareholder and owner information is not on file with the Division of Corporations (corp.delaware.gov). Record the state, entity number and capture date in the worksheet's `state_entity_key`.

Path 2: control through transaction filings

Corporate control is better evidenced by filings made for approvals than by registration names. A domestic Section 214 transfer application must name each person or entity that directly or indirectly owns ten percent or more of the applicant (www.ecfr.gov) and include an ownership diagram showing pre-transaction and post-transaction ownership (www.ecfr.gov). The rules define control to include actual working control and not only majority stock ownership (www.ecfr.gov), and indirect interests are computed by successive multiplication along the ownership chain (www.ecfr.gov). International authorizations can be assigned or transferred only on prior approval (www.ecfr.gov). A streamlined domestic transfer may close on the 31st day after the notice that the application was accepted (www.ecfr.gov). Where the target holds wireless licenses, Form 602 collects ownership data about the filer (transition.fcc.gov). The Global Legal Entity Identifier Foundation offers another candidate: each LEI represents only one entity (www.gleif.org), and Level 2 data publish a parent's LEI with the child's record (www.gleif.org), although coverage of private operators should be confirmed case by case.

Path 3: service claims through current company and regulatory evidence

A claim that the target currently sells a service rests on the company's own current materials and on state authority. State certificates are tied to service type and geography. The California Public Utilities Commission separates facilities-based competitive local exchange providers (www.cpuc.ca.gov) from non-facilities-based or resale providers (www.cpuc.ca.gov). Texas requires certification for providers of local exchange service (www.puc.texas.gov). A state's published count of certificated competitive carriers is dated: the Florida report lists 231 competitive local exchange carriers as of 31 December 2023 (www.floridapsc.com). The FCC's Robocall Mitigation Database instructions are a useful cross-reference for aliases, because they ask filers to list other FRNs, DBA names and previous business names associated with the filing entity (www.fcc.gov).

Path 4: operating geography through footprint sources

A detail record also lists the jurisdictions in which the filing entity provides telecommunications services (www.mass.gov). The 499 jurisdiction line records where the filer provided service in the past 15 months or expects to provide it in the next 12. It is a checkbox of states. Footprint belongs to the National Broadband Map, whose availability data are submitted by internet service providers (help.bdc.fcc.gov), and fixed providers must report where they offer service on a location-by-location basis (help.bdc.fcc.gov). A map user can see which providers report service at a given location (help.bdc.fcc.gov) and can change the data as-of date (help.bdc.fcc.gov). Mobile coverage comes from propagation modeling (help.bdc.fcc.gov). Limits apply: the map covers facilities-based broadband, and the latest map iteration in the FCC's 2026 broadband report shows data as of December 2025 (2026 Section 706 Report). Voice-only, wholesale and resold services will not appear. For those, use state authority and company documents.

Lifecycle: Deactivations, Acquisitions, Renames, Duplicates and Date Stamps

Deactivations and inactive status

USAC's glossary lists the deactivation triggers as a company sale, merger, consolidation, termination of business, and similar events (www.usac.org). Companies must also update their information in the FCC CORES database. In a state-agency printout of the database, an inactive record displays a status banner, for example a "No Longer Active as of" line (pscdocs.utah.gov), and the record still carries a registration-current stamp (pscdocs.utah.gov). Inactive is a state of the registration, not a statement about the business: a company can deactivate a filer ID after a restructuring and keep operating under a successor.

Acquisitions and successors

When an operating company is sold, the registration trail is thin. The instructions say filers should not file revised revenue data to reflect mergers, acquisitions or sales of operating units (docs.fcc.gov), and if a filer no longer exists its successor company is responsible for continuing obligations (docs.fcc.gov). The consequence: after a deal, an old Filer ID may persist under new ownership, vanish, or move to a successor, and the registration alone will not say which.

Renames and duplicate brands

USAC changes the legal name, DBA and EIN only through its own staff; its guidance does not spell out how the Filer ID is treated on a rename, so confirm continuity on the record rather than assuming the ID persists. Address and billing-contact changes are made through a Form 499-Q, and other registration data are updated by revising the most recent Form 499-A. The trade-name line and predecessor names help trace a rename for up to three years. Duplicate brands arise when one DBA appears on several legal-entity records, or when unrelated companies use similar marketing names; the BDC's brand-name field is the name used in marketing the service (help.bdc.fcc.gov), and nothing requires uniqueness across providers.

Missing IDs

A missing 499 ID is not a missing company. A broadband-only provider may have no 499 ID. If a target's website lists voice service and no 499 record is found, log it as `unresolved` with the next evidence request: a search under alternate legal names, a state authority check, or a question to the company.

Date stamps

Three clocks run at once. The detail record has a "Registration Current as of" date, which in one 2021 state-agency printout was April 2021. The same printout carries a line stating the database reflects filings received by USAC as of a stated date (www.mass.gov). The search page itself states its source data date. A capture is only as good as its oldest stamp, so the worksheet records all three.

Worked Example (Hypothetical Example)

The following records are invented for illustration. No real company, identifier or relationship is described, and all identifiers are placeholders.

Three source rows

(Hypothetical Example) An analyst searches for a brand called NorthVoice and captures three records. *Table 3* below shows the fields as captured and the decision recorded for each.

Field	Record A	Record B	Record C
Filer ID	ID-A	ID-B	ID-C
FRN	FRN-1	FRN-2	FRN-3
Legal name	Northfield Voice Holdings, Inc.	Northfield Voice Services LLC	Lantern Cable & Voice LLC
DBA	NorthVoice	NorthVoice	NorthVoice Business
Affiliate name	Meridian Telecom Group	Meridian Telecom Group	Lantern Holdings
Management company	Meridian Management LLC	Meridian Management LLC	Meridian Management LLC
Reported type	Interconnected VoIP	Competitive local exchange carrier	Interconnected VoIP
State registry	Match found, active	Match found, active	Not yet searched

Field	Record A	Record B	Record C
Decision	`same_group_candidate` with B	`same_group_candidate` with A	`unresolved`

The table shows the hard cases. Records A and B share a DBA, an affiliate name and a manager, but they are different legal entities with different FRNs, so they remain two entities in one candidate group. Record C shares the manager but not the affiliate name, and its DBA is similar to the brand rather than identical. The worksheet keeps C separate and states the next evidence request: a state registry search and a review of any transaction filings that list ownership.

Counts at three levels

(Hypothetical Example) The same data produce different counts depending on the unit.

- **Source rows:** 3 records.
- **Verified legal entities:** 2, because only A and B have a state registry match; C is unverified and is not counted.
- **Target groups:** between 1 and 2. A and B form one candidate group pending control evidence; C is either part of that group or its own group.

Reporting "3 filers" as a market count would overstate the number of independent operating companies, while reporting "1 company" would hide the fact that C is unresolved. The honest statement is "3 source rows, 2 verified entities, 1 to 2 groups".

The false-merge example

(Hypothetical Example) A fuzzy-name match on "NorthVoice" would fold Record C into the group because its DBA contains the brand and its manager matches. That merge would add C's reported jurisdictions to the group's apparent footprint and would attribute C's contribution base to the wrong parent. Three controls prevent it: the affiliate names differ, the manager is a shared operational link and not an ownership finding, and the registry step has not been done. Reversing a false merge is a one-cell change in `match_decision`, which is the reason the worksheet never overwrites raw columns.

Currentness checklist

- **Capture stamps:** record the retrieval date, the "Registration Current as of" value, and the database's filings-received date.
- **Status:** note active or inactive status and any closure banner text, verbatim.
- **Name history:** compare legal name, DBA and trade names with the company's current materials.
- **Registry:** confirm entity number, status and registered agent in the state registry.
- **Control:** look for transaction filings or company documents that disclose ownership interests.
- **Service:** confirm the service in current company material and, where relevant, state authority.
- **Footprint:** use the broadband map vintage for facilities-based broadband and state or company evidence for voice.

- **Re-check:** set a re-check date, because a Form 499-A revision can change registration data at any time.

Data Analysis and Evidence

Counts from official sources, and why they differ

Official counts depend on the question asked, and the numbers below should not be added together. The FCC's 2025 Universal Service Monitoring Report counted 6,771 Form 499-A filers for 2024, of which 2,712 were interconnected VoIP providers (docs.fcc.gov). The USAC fourth-quarter 2026 contribution base filing used complete Form 499-Q revenue data from 3,191 contributors (www.usac.org) and estimated revenue for another 199 non-de minimis providers (USAC Q4 2026 contribution base filing). An older FCC publication, the Telecommunications Provider Locator (January 2010, covering companies that operated and collected revenue during 2007), listed 6,493 Form 499-A filers and noted that only 2,773 of them contributed to universal service (Telecommunications Provider Locator).

Simple ratios show the denominator problem. Interconnected VoIP providers were about 40.1 percent of the 6,771 filers (2,712 divided by 6,771). The 3,191 reporting contributors plus 199 estimated providers equal 3,390, roughly 50.1 percent of the 2024 filer count; this cross-period comparison is illustrative only, because the figures come from different periods and different forms. The 2,773 contributors among 6,493 filers in the older publication were about 42.7 percent. These ratios are arithmetic on official counts, not market share, and none of them estimates the number of operating companies.

Dollar context

For 2024 the monitoring report's tables show total telecommunications revenues of $108,759 million and a universal service contribution base of $32,859 million (docs.fcc.gov), so the base was roughly 30.2 percent of reported telecommunications revenues. For the fourth quarter of 2026, the FCC's public notice proposes a contribution factor of 42.0 percent (Proposed Q4 2026 contribution factor notice) over projected collected end-user revenues of $6.909925 billion (Proposed Q4 2026 contribution factor notice). Those figures describe the contribution system, and they do not size any individual target.

Four counts, four units

- **6,771:** Form 499-A filers for 2024, a registration count.
- **3,191 plus 199:** contributors with Form 499-Q data plus estimated providers in the fourth-quarter 2026 base, a contribution-base count.
- **6,493:** registered filers in an older locator publication, a historical illustration from a January 2010 report covering companies that operated in 2007, with filings received through October 2008.
- **Over 2,000:** residential fixed-service providers in BDC data through June 2025, a broadband footprint population (2026 Section 706 Report).

These are four counts, four units and four periods. A research team that needs a denominator should construct it at the verified-legal-entity or target-group level from its own worksheet, with its screening rules applied, instead of borrowing a raw filer count.

Implementation Guidance for Research Operations

A sequence that holds up

1. **Fix the unit.** State whether the mandate targets an entity, brand, group or territory.
2. **Capture the 499 record.** Save the full detail view with all stamps, then record the raw columns.
3. **Search by multiple keys.** Search by legal name, DBA and wildcard variants, and by FRN, because the name search returns partial matches.
4. **Resolve the entity.** Match to the state registry and write the entity key.
5. **Test the group.** Compare the 499 affiliate name, the BDC holding name and FRN agreement; look for transaction filings for ownership.
6. **Test the service and territory.** Use current company material, state authority and, for broadband, the map.
7. **Decide and schedule.** Write the decision, the reviewer and the next evidence request.

Numbering as a second identifier family

For voice carriers, the FCC's numbering rules offer another cross-check. The North American Numbering Plan Administrator may not issue numbering resources to a carrier without an Operating Company Number (www.ecfr.gov), and applications list the applicant's headquarters address, OCN and parent company's OCN (www.ecfr.gov). That makes the OCN a further candidate identifier for parent relationships, to be treated like the others: a lead, with an issuer and a date.

Roles and review

Analysts capture and propose joins, and an independent reviewer signs off on any `same_entity` decision. Regulatory status, licensing and transaction approvals are questions for qualified telecom counsel.

Implications and Future Directions

For origination teams, the main implication is that the Form 499 database is best used as a discovery index with a strict evidence ladder above it. A hit moves from lead to candidate entity once a state registry confirms identity, from candidate to group member once an independent source supports the relationship, and from group member to mandate-fit target only after current service and geography are evidenced. Each step needs a source that was designed for the claim.

Three developments are worth monitoring. First, providers file BDC data semiannually, with data as of 30 June due the following 1 September and data as of 31 December due the following 1 March (BDC FAQs), so footprint evidence refreshes on a known schedule that registration data do not follow. Second, the study area code lists in the BDC are not updated in real time (help.bdc.fcc.gov), so recently changed incumbent carriers may need a manual check. Third, USAC publishes the instructions by year, and this report read both the 2025 and 2026 editions, so a team should recheck the live instructions before each research cycle.

A sound practice is to preserve the conflict between sources, label every join with its basis, and let an unresolved relationship stay unresolved.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

How to look up a 499 Filer ID

Use the FCC Form 499 Filer Database search described above. Search by Filer ID, FRN, name or state, and record the capture date and the "as of" stamp.

Can a filer be searched by company name?

Yes. The name search returns all results containing the entry, and percent signs act as wildcards. Search legal name, DBA and likely variants.

What are the affiliate and holding-company names?

The 499 field is a common identifier for all affiliated filers; the BDC field is a name used to associate commonly owned or controlled filings. Both are filer-supplied labels.

How to map a telecom brand to a legal entity

Start with the DBA and trade-name fields, search the legal names that result in the state registry, and test any group hypothesis with the affiliate name, the BDC holding name and transaction filings. Keep each link as a candidate with its basis until an independent source supports it.

Is the USAC filer database the same as the FCC database?

USAC administers the registration data, and the FCC hosts the public search. The FCC page states that its data came from USAC as of a stated date.

Can Form 499 data map a service footprint?

Only weakly. The state checkbox is a registration statement; use the National Broadband Map for facilities-based broadband footprint, and state or company evidence for voice.

Conclusion

A Form 499 search hit is an evidence lead. It establishes that a registrant with a six-digit USAC identifier exists in a database whose data carry a stated date, and that the registrant reported a legal name, a DBA, an affiliate label and a set of states. It does not establish a distinct operating company, a current customer base, a service territory or a controlling owner. Four field families (499 identifiers, FRNs, BDC identifiers and state keys) are issued by different bodies on different clocks, so every join between them should be recorded as a candidate with its basis and a reviewer.

Counts must follow the same discipline. Raw filers, verified legal entities and target groups are three separate numbers, and the official aggregate counts measure registrations and contributors, not companies. The practical standard is simple: capture with stamps, resolve identity in the state registry, test control in transaction and ownership filings, test service and geography in footprint sources, and keep unresolved relationships visible until evidence closes them.

Source links

Links cited in this article, in order of first appearance. Full addresses are provided for readers using extracted text.

1. https://www.usac.org?p=4511
2. https://apps.fcc.gov/cgb/form499
3. https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-418505A1.pdf
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