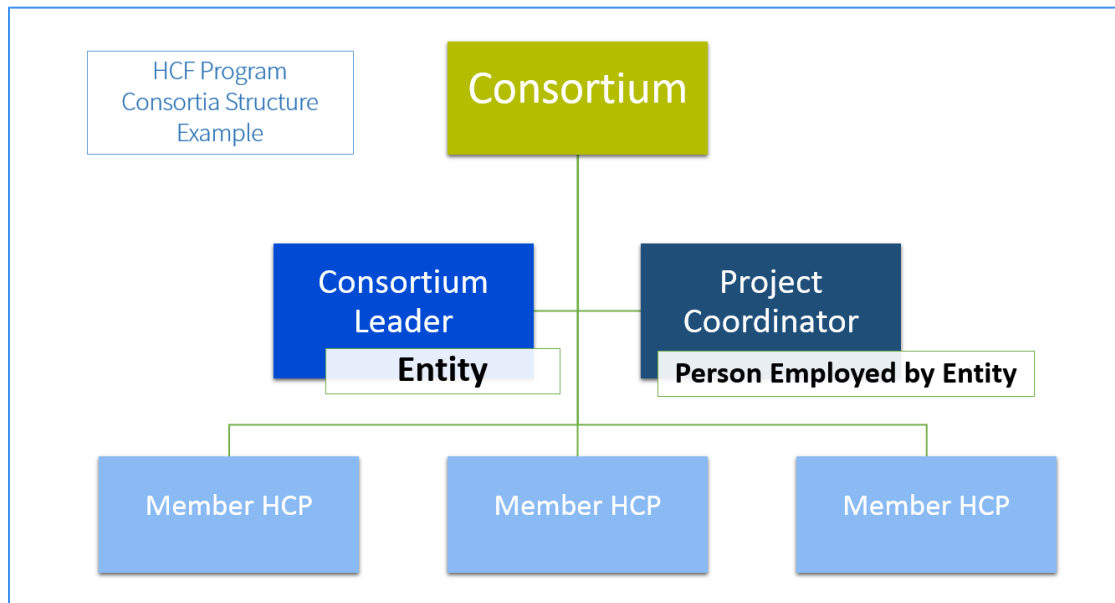**Universal Service**
Administrative Co.

Consortia Getting Started

This guide contains general information for applicants interested in forming a consortium. It is the responsibility of the consortium leader seeking support for broadband service from the Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) Program to make sure they are familiar with program requirements before beginning the application process. Consortium leaders should also be familiar with [eligibility requirements](#) and the application process before organizing a consortium.

What is a Consortium?

- A consortium is two or more health care providers (HCPs) that choose to request support from the Health Care Connect Fund (HCF) Program as a single entity.
- A consortium can file a single application on behalf of all its members
- Eligible and ineligible HCPs may participate in a consortium.
    - Ineligible entities cannot receive direct finding and must pay their fair share ([HCF Order](#), para.178-184)
    - Costs shared by eligible and ineligible entities must be allocated in a manner that ensures that only eligible entities receive the benefit of program discounts.

What is a Consortium Leader?

- A consortium leader is the legal entity that will be the lead entity for the consortium.
- The consortium and the consortium leader can be the same entity (if the consortium is a legal entity) but are not required to be.
- What other entities can be a consortium leader?
    - Eligible HCP participating in the consortium- *this eligible HCP serving as consortium leader must have an individual FCC Form 460 already approved.
    - Ineligible state organization

o   Public sector (government) entity, including Tribal Governments
o   Nonprofit entity

Consortium Leader Responsibilities

- Ensures that all member HCP sites comply with any applicable state or local competitive bidding requirements.
- Legally and financially responsible for the activities of the consortium.
- Designates a project coordinator responsible for communicating with USAC and the FCC.
- Submits program forms and required documents and verifies that all information and certifications are accurate and true.
- Ensures that the competitive bidding process is fair and open, and complaint with FCC requirements.
- Responsible for the invoicing process.
- Responsible for recordkeeping, site visits, and responding to audits.

Who is a Project Coordinator?

- An individual who is an officer, director, or authorized employee of the consortium leader.
- Responsible for signing all forms submitted on behalf of the consortium.
- Serves as point of contact with USAC and the FCC on all matters related to the consortium.
- Responsible for responding to inquiries from USAC and the FCC on behalf of the consortium members throughout the application, funding, invoicing and post-invoicing period.

What is a Member HCP?

- An individual site that has an approved individual FCC Form 460.
- Represents one of the individual HCPs that make up a consortium.

Things to Consider

- A consortium must meet a majority rural percentage quota in order to continue receiving eligible funding (i.e., more than 50 percent of HCP member sites are rural).
- HCPs can participate as both an individual HCP and a member of a consortium.
- Network-wide services may be eligible when requesting funding as a consortium.
- Consortia allow for a streamlined application process.
- Membership in a consortium is not dependent on ownership structure; HCPs can connect different member sites via Letter of Authorization (LOA).
- Membership in a consortium is not dependent on HCP locations; member sites from different states can be part of a consortium.