Welcome to Rural Health Care (RHC)

An Introduction to the RHC Programs

Universal Service Administrative Co.

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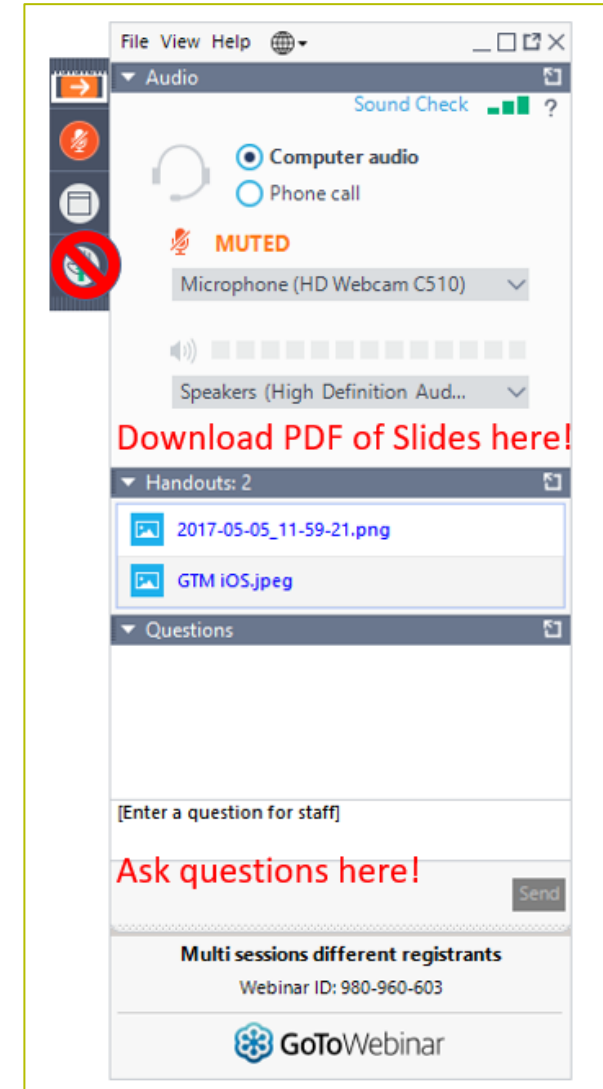
Rural Health Care Programs

- Telecommunications (Telecom) Program

  - The original RHC program established in the 1996 Telecommunications Act

  - Funds urban/rural rate difference for telecommunications services for eligible HCPs

- Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) Program

  - Supports broadband connectivity and broadband networks for eligible healthcare providers (HCPs)

  - Eligible services and equipment receive a 65% discount

- Connected Care Pilot Program (CCPP)

  - Three-year pilot program

  - Projects were selected by the FCC

  - Program covers 85% of the eligible costs of broadband connectivity, certain network equipment and information services necessary to provide connected care services to the intended patient population

  - Emphasis is on low-income Americans and veteran patient populations

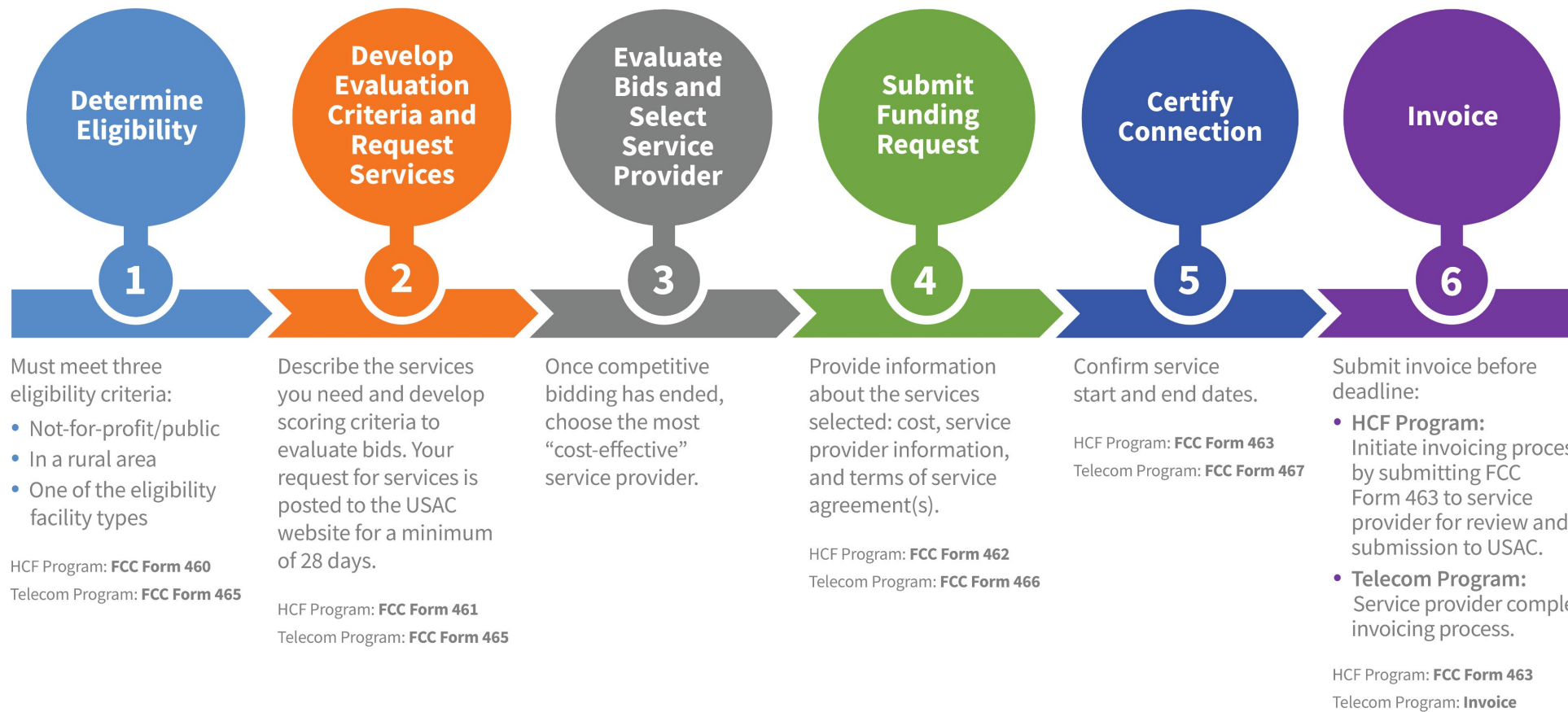# Examples of Telemedicine Applications

- Dermatology

- OB/GYN
  - High risk pregnancy
  - Neo-natal care
  - General women's reproductive health

- Tele-stroke

- Mental health applications
  - Opioid and other addiction programs

- Distance Learning for post-secondary educational institutions such as teaching hospitals or medical schools

RHC Application Process

Welcome to USAC – Introduction to the RHC Program

RURAL HEALTH CARE PROGRAM

Application Process

1 — Determine Eligibility

Must meet three eligibility criteria:

- Not-for-profit/public
- In a rural area
- One of the eligibility facility types

HCF Program: **FCC Form 460**

Telecom Program: **FCC Form 465**

2 — Develop Evaluation Criteria and Request Services

Describe the services you need and develop scoring criteria to evaluate bids. Your request for services is posted to the USAC website for a minimum of 28 days.

HCF Program: **FCC Form 461**

Telecom Program: **FCC Form 465**

3 — Evaluate Bids and Select Service Provider

Once competitive bidding has ended, choose the most "cost-effective" service provider.

4 — Submit Funding Request

Provide information about the services selected: cost, service provider information, and terms of service agreement(s).

HCF Program: **FCC Form 462**

Telecom Program: **FCC Form 466**

5 — Certify Connection

Confirm service start and end dates.

HCF Program: **FCC Form 463**

Telecom Program: **FCC Form 467**

6 — Invoice

Submit invoice before deadline:

- **HCF Program:** Initiate invoicing process by submitting FCC Form 463 to service provider for review and submission to USAC.
- **Telecom Program:** Service provider completes invoicing process.

HCF Program: **FCC Form 463**

Telecom Program: **Invoice**

Funding Years & Filing Window Periods

- Funding Year (FY)
  - From July 1 to June 30 of the subsequent calendar year
  - FY 2023 = July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024

- Filing Window Periods
  - A fixed period during which all qualifying funding requests (FCC Forms 462 and 466) that are received during a filing window are treated as having been filed simultaneously for purposes of making funding commitment decisions.
  - FY 2023 filing window was December 1, 2022, through May 1, 2024.
  - FY2023 filing window opened on December 1, 2022, and close at 11:59 p.m. ET on May 1, 2023.

My Portal and RHC Connect

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Telecom Program – Forms

- **Description of Services Requested and Certification Form - FCC Form 465**

  - Determines eligibility.

  - Used to request bids from service providers during competitive bidding.

- **Funding Request and Certification Form – FCC Form 466**

  - Provides information to USAC about the type of service(s) ordered, rates, service provider, and date of service provider selection.

  - Certifies that the vendor selected was the most cost-effective bid received after the competitive bidding process.

- **Connection Certification – FCC Form 467**

  - Confirms when the service starts, when the service ends or if the service will not be turned on.

  - HCP Support Schedule (HSS) is sent after the FCC Form 467 is submitted

- **Telecom Invoice**

  - Service provider submits the Telecom Invoice after the HCP submits the FCC Form 467

Telecom Program – Form Review

- Applicants submit forms in My Portal

- All reviews are completed in My Portal

  - Initial Review (Eligibility, Competitive bidding and Funding Requests)

  - Final Review (Eligibility, Competitive bidding and Funding Requests)

  - Contract Review

  - Approve, Deny, Withdraw

  - Issue Commitments

  - FCC Form 467 – Confirmation of Commitment and HSS Schedule

  - Service Provider Invoicing

HCF and CCPP – Forms

- **Eligibility and Registration Form – FCC Form 460 – Eligibility criteria**

  - Must be a public or non-profit entity

  - Must be an eligible type of a facility

  - For HCF only, HCP must be located in a rural location as defined by the FCC

    - Non-rural sites may participate as a member of a majority rural consortium

- **Request for Services Form – FCC Form 461**

  - Allows applicants to describe their service needs and request bids from service providers to comply with program rules for competitive bidding.

- **Funding Request Form – FCC Form 462**

  - Provides information to USAC about the services, equipment, or facilities selected, and how much funding is requested.

- **Invoicing Form – FCC Form 463**

  - Joint process between HCP and service provider

  - Funds are disbursed to the service provider who then credits the HCP

HCF and CCPP Program – Form Review

- Applicants submit forms in My Portal or RHC Connect (beginning in FY2022)

- Steps in Review
  - Initial Review (Eligibility, Competitive bidding and Funding Requests)
  - Final Review (Eligibility, Competitive bidding and Funding Requests)
  - Contract Review
  - Approve, Deny, Withdraw
  - Issue Commitments
  - Invoicing

New! RHC Connect

- RHC Connect is the web-based system used to host the RHC forms and was updated for Funding Year 2022 to improve user experience.

- RHC Connect has a new look and feel that is more intuitive and user-friendly.

- It is easier to navigate the form for submission, and it is easier for RHC program reviewers to approve funding requests.

- Currently, only HCF forms have migrated to RHC Connect

- Telecom forms will eventually move to RHC Connect

- CCPP forms will remain in My Portal

Post-Commitment Activities

- Appeals
  - If applicants disagree with a USAC decision, they have 60 days to submit an appeal to USAC.
  - RHC rules require that appeals must be submitted to USAC first and then the FCC if the applicant wants to take further action.
  - Parties seeking a waiver of FCC rules must file an appeal directly with the FCC because USAC cannot waive FCC rules.

- Beneficiary and Contributor Audit Program (BCAP)
  - Primary purpose is to ensure compliance with FCC rules and program requirements
  - Audits can be randomly selected or targeted to include a wide variety of entities with regard to size and geographic location
  - Selection for an audit does not necessarily indicate that USAC believes problems exist.

- Payment Quality Assurance Program (PQA)
  - Allows USAC to provide the FCC with information about improper payments as required by the Improper Payment Information Act of 2022 (IPIA) and the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act of 2010 (IPERA)

Success Story Tele-stroke

The Times-Independent

A letter to the editor of the Times-Independent, Moab UT

Telestroke – *Time is brain!*

"I hope that neither you or your family members ever have a stroke... Stroke is the third-ranking cause of death and the leading cause of disability in this country. I had my stroke in my second floor bedroom in Castle Valley. My wife had to call 911 as I was unable to get out of bed. I didn't know I had a 4.5-hour window to get to the emergency room, get a CT scan, and be examined and diagnosed by a board certified neurologist in order to qualify for the clot busting drug t-PA.

We arrived at Allen Memorial to find nurses Mike Kelly and Jan Pratt preparing for my arrival. They had called Dr. Fairbanks, the physician who was on call in Moab. A CT scan is a critical part of any stroke diagnosis. The CT technician, Erin, was waiting and performed the scan. A communications technician was also there to set up the Telestroke equipment. Telestroke is a state-of-the-art video connection, which linked Dr. Jennifer Majersik, a University of Utah Medical Center neurologist with the emergency room staff and me. This linkup and the CT scan allowed Dr. Majersik to make the diagnosis and direct the administering of the drug.

My improvement was almost immediate. We made the time-window with about 10 minutes to spare. My recovery was a modern medical miracle.

The Telestroke program and similar programs mean that right here in Moab we have access to a major medical center. I urge you to support our hospital any way you can, including financially."

Bob Russell

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Success Story Brazos Valley Infrastructure Project

- Serious health care provider shortage

- School nurse was primary care doctor for families

- No access to large enough bandwidths to conduct tele-medicine

- No incentives to provide services

  - No market due to small commercial populations

- Built their own network

- Three years later, they put needed services out to bid

  - Creation of their network created a competitive market leading to commercial growth in this region
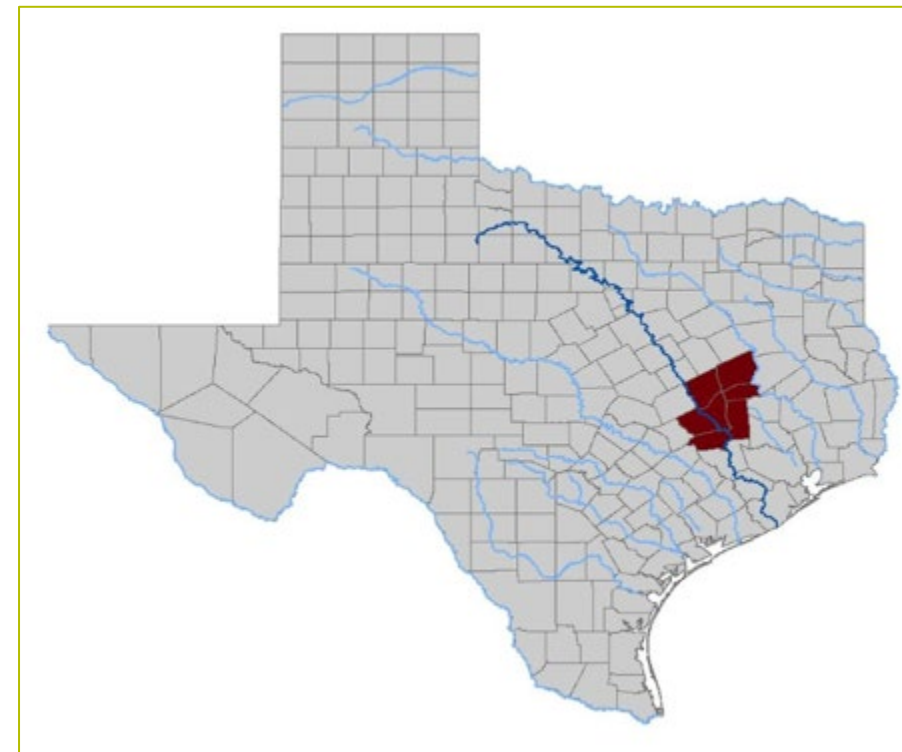
Getting Started

- Determining Rurality - <u>Rurality Tier Search Tool</u>

- Resources
  - <u>Get Started</u>
  - <u>HCF - List of Common Products and Services</u> tip sheet
  - <u>Telecom – List of Common Products and Services</u> tip sheet
  - <u>Learn</u>
  - <u>Newsletter</u>
    - <u>Subscribe</u>

RHC Program Customer Service Center

Email: RHC-Assist@usac.org

- Include in your email:
  - HCP Number
  - FRN Number

- Phone: **(800) 453-1546**

  - Hours are 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET
  - Monday to Friday

Questions?