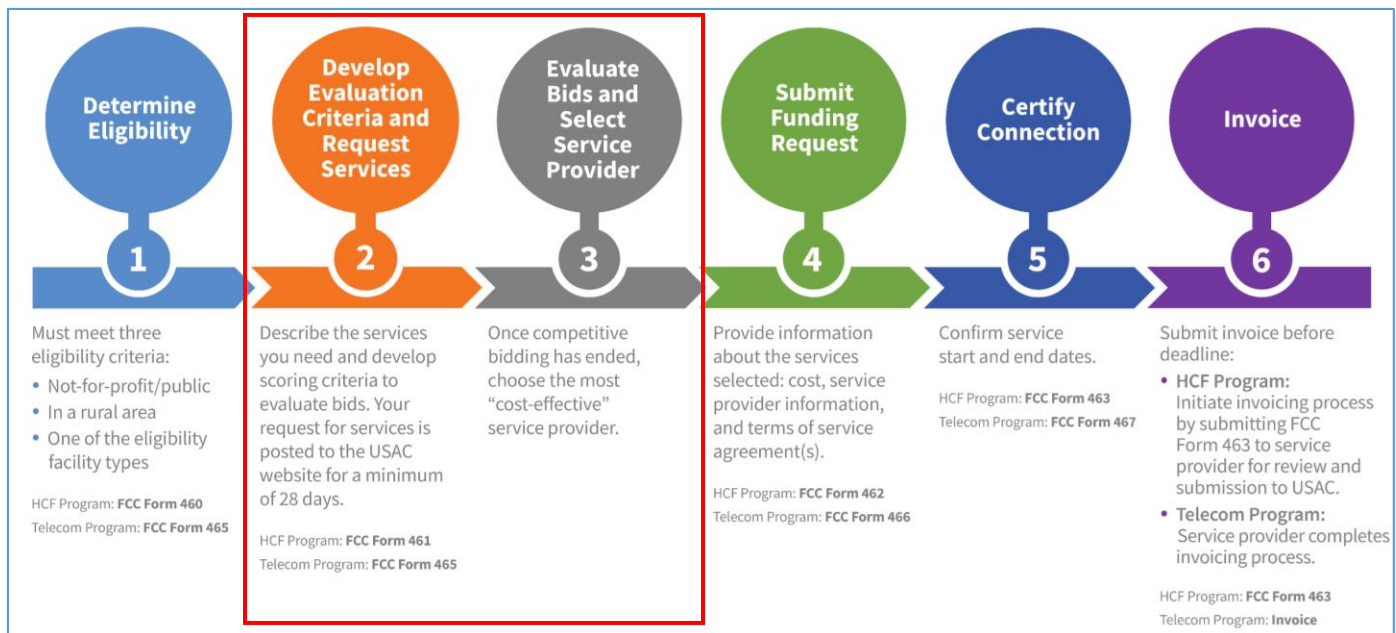


Rural Health Care Program

Requests for Services



What is a request for services?

- Request for services is the part of the application process that lets services providers know what types of telecommunications or broadband services the health care provider (HCP) is seeking. You submit your request for services using these forms:
 - Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) Program – [FCC Form 461](#) (Request for Services Form)
 - Telecommunications (Telecom) Program – [FCC Form 465](#) (Description of Services Requested and Certification Form)
 - Note: The Telecom Program’s FCC Form 465 includes **both** eligibility and request for services information
- Once a request for services is approved, it is posted to the USAC website for a minimum of 28 days, starting the competitive bidding process.
 - Service providers respond to the bids by the deadline posted on the USAC website (minimum of 28 days)

What is competitive bidding?

- Competitive bidding** is the process that allows service providers equal opportunity to bid on the HCP’s service requirements.
- FCC Forms 461 and 465 are posted to the USAC website, and service providers have a minimum of 28 days to respond to the applicant
 - The applicant and service provider may not enter into an agreement to purchase services until after the bidding period is over
- After the bidding period, the HCP and service provider can sign a contract; this is the Allowable Contract Selection Date (ACSD). Program rules require that the competitive bidding process be “fair and open.”¹
- Service providers who plan to bid cannot help the HCP select a winner nor participate in the vendor selection process.
- All applicants and service providers must comply with any applicable state or local competitive bidding requirements.
- View posted services on the [RHC Program’s Search Posted Service web page](#)
 - [Another resource is USAC Open Data](#) (Please note that posting is delayed by one day, so if your application is approved today, it will appear in the dataset tomorrow)

¹ Paragraph 126 of the HCF Order

Competitive Bidding Exemptions

- In some cases, the applicant's service needs or contract conditions can permit a competitive bidding exemption. [Read more.](#)
- You are exempt from competitive bidding if any of the following apply:
 - You are seeking support for services and equipment purchased from master service agreements (MSAs) negotiated by a federal, state, Tribal, or local governmental entity on the applicant's behalf, and awarded pursuant to those competitive bidding requirements. The contract must comply with RHC Program Rules.
 - You are opting into an existing MSA and are seeking support for services and equipment purchased from the MSA, as long as the MSA was developed and negotiated in response to an RFP or request for services that specifically solicited proposals that included a mechanism for adding additional sites to the MSA that was reviewed by USAC and approved for use in the Pilot program.
 - You have an existing contract already endorsed by USAC as evergreen. [Learn more.](#)
 - You are authorized to purchase off of a contract that was negotiated in the Schools and Libraries (E-rate) Program and you're purchasing services and/or network equipment under a contract approved under the E-rate Program as a master contract. The contract must comply with RHC Program Rules
 - You are seeking support for \$10,000 or less of total undiscounted eligible expenses for a single year you may bypass the competitive bidding process (HCF Program only).

Bid Evaluation Criteria

- The bid evaluation criteria is a list of weighted standards the HCP uses to determine the most cost-effective bid. [Read more.](#)
- Each criterion is given a certain weight, and the sum of these weights must equal 100.
- The bid criteria should address the HCP's needs per the FCC Forms 461/465 and meet the FCC's definition of "cost-effective."²
- Cost must be a primary factor, but need not be the only primary factor. Although other factors may receive the same weight as cost, no single factor can receive a weight that is greater than cost (47 CFR 54.622(c)).
- For FY2021 and forward, you must specify on its bid evaluation worksheet and/or scoring matrix the requested services for which you are seeking bids, its minimum requirements for the specified criteria, and each service provider's proposed service levels for the specified criteria. For FY2021 and forward, you also must also specify disqualification factors, if any, that you will use to remove bids or bidders from further consideration.

Requests for Proposal

- A [request for proposal \(RFP\)](#), submitted at the same time as the FCC Form 461/465, is a comprehensive bidding solicitation that describes the applicant's business priorities and functional requirements in greater detail.
- Information that is required on the FCC Form 461/465 must be identical to the information described in the RFP.
- For consortia applicants participating in the HCF Program, RFPs must be submitted if the consortium is seeking more than \$100,000 in support for all funding requests submitted in a given fund year, or if seeking support for participant-constructed and owned network facilities

Tips for Consortia (HCF Program only)

- Make sure the FCC Forms 460 and [LOAs](#) for all member sites have been approved before filing the consortium FCC Form 461.
- Once the FCC Form 461 is filed, you will not be able to link sites to that FCC Form 461 that are later added to the consortium.
- Please keep in mind that starting in FY2020, all consortia must be majority rural upon submission of their funding request.

² The FCC defines "cost-effective" as the method that costs the least after consideration of the features, quality of transmission, reliability, and other factors that the health care provider deems relevant to choosing a method of providing the required health care services. 47 CFR 54.603(b)(4) (Telecom Program), 47 CFR 54.642(c) (HCF Program)