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RHC Program News for August 2019

Latest News

FCC Releases Draft Report and Order: Promoting Telehealth in America
On August 1, 2019, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted a Report and Order that reforms the Rural Health Care (RHC) Program to make the distribution of limited program funds more efficient and equitable, provide predictability and transparency for health care and service providers, and strengthen program safeguards against waste, fraud, and abuse. The reforms include changes to the distribution of funding the

Telecommunications Program to promote efficiency and reduce incentives that encourage waste, fraud, and abuse.

The reforms also target funding to rural areas most in need of health care services by: (1) prioritizing support based on rurality and whether the area is medically underserved when demand exceeds available funding; and (2) increasing the majority-rural requirement for Healthcare Connect Fund consortia each year that funding must be prioritized due to lack of available funding. The FCC also adopted a series of Program-wide rules and procedures to simplify the application process for program participants and make the administration of the RHC Program more transparent and predicable.

Before the meeting, the FCC released a draft of the Report and Order here.

We will provide additional information about the Report and Order, including how changes to the current rules will be implemented, once the adopted Report and Order is released. In the meantime, you may submit questions to the RHC Help Desk at RHC-Assist@usac.org.

New! Initial RHC Program Data Set Available Now!
 We are very excited to announce the posting of the first RHC Program Dataset to the USAC Open Data Portal. The dataset contains data from the FCC Forms 462 and 466 about funding decisions, and total committed/disbursed amounts for past funding years. In the open data portal you are able to filter, sort, and visualize the data in many different ways. Watch a quick demonstration of a data visualization here.

Coming Soon! Letter of Agency (LOA) My Portal Functionality Enhancements
Within the next few weeks, My Portal will no longer allow consortia leaders to submit forms on behalf of health care provider (HCP) sites with expired LOAs. Account holders of the consortia will now receive automatic emails from My Portal when an LOA is about to expire. An updated LOA must be submitted before any FCC Forms can be submitted in My Portal. For instructions on how to submit an updated LOA, view the LOA submission guide.

Training Dates Announced
 In August and September, the RHC Program will host two online trainings for applicants:

- **August 14 at 2:00 p.m. ET– FY2019 Applicant Webinar**: This webinar is for account holders who submitted FY2019 Funding Request forms (FCC Forms 462 and 466); it will include information on what to expect after form submission, best practices for information requests, and common applicant questions. Register here!
- **August 21 at 2:00 p.m. ET - Service Provider Training**: This webinar is for service providers and will cover best practices in the HCF and Telecom Programs. Register here!
- **September 12 at 2:00 p.m. ET – Consortia Best Practices for FY2020**: This webinar is for those interested in forming a consortia and consortia account holders who are preparing for FY2020. The RHC Program team will go over general questions about forming and organizing a consortia and how to get ready for the Request for Services (FCC Forms 461 and 465) process. Register here!

Coming Soon! RHC Website Updates
In mid-October, RHC will be refreshing the content on the RHC public website, usac.org/rhc. Our goal is to make information easier to find and understand for all applicants, and changes will include consolidating information and simplifying the content. Don't worry!

We will share more information about any changes before they happen.

Important Reminders

Account Holder Guidance
Now that the FY2019 application filing window has closed, it is a great time to review your HCP's account holders. USAC recommends having at least one secondary account holder per HCP. We've created guides for primary account holders with instructions for adding additional account holders in My Portal:

- Telecom Account Holder Guide
- Healthcare Connect Fund Account Holder Guide

What to Do if You Receive an Information Request
USAC cannot complete their review of FCC Forms submitted with incomplete or missing documentation, and RHC reviewers will reach out to all account holders (the primary and all secondary and tertiary account holders associated with that HCP) with a request for additional information ("Information Request"). Information Requests are sent to collect any missing documentation, address deficiencies, or to ask clarifying questions about the FCC Form. If you receive an Information Request, you must respond to it within 14 calendar days. **Failure to respond within the 14 calendar day timeframe will result in a denial of funding**, so be sure to meet that deadline.

Information Request Tips for the Telecom Program

- Applicants can receive Telecom Information Requests through My Portal OR by email
  - For Information Requests received through My Portal, applicants should respond through My Portal only
  - For email Information Requests, applicants should "Reply All" to respond to the Information Request
- Use Chrome/Firefox Only when using My Portal
- When uploading a document as a response, the document should be limited to 10MB, and the document name should not contain any special characters, only letters and numbers

Information Request Tips for the HCF Program

- Applicants receive HCF Program Information Requests through email and should "Reply All" to respond to the Information Request.

FCC Form 460 Best Practice
During the submission of an FCC Form 460 (HCF Eligibility and Registration Form), we recommend that applicants upload any supporting documentation necessary to validate form data to the "Supporting Documentation" section. This includes any documentation that is relevant to the required fields of the FCC Form 460. Doing so creates additional visibility into the HCP and increases the chance of a faster review. A few examples include:

- Hospital licenses, with the address clearly posted, to verify a non-profit hospital
- A recent bill or lease, with the address clearly posted, to verify the HCP address provided on the FCC Form 460
- Public tax documents to verify the Non-Profit Tax ID (EIN)

- Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) accreditation to verify a community health center

Please keep in mind that the FCC Form 460 review can take up to 30 days. You can submit your FCC Form 460 at any time during the funding year.

Filing an Appeal
Any party that wishes to appeal a USAC decision must file an appeal with USAC within 60 days of the date when USAC issued the decision. All appeals must be sent to RHC-Appeals@usac.org. The following information must be included in the appeal:

- Applicant or service provider who is filing the appeal (i.e. HCP number, service provider's 498 ID (SPIN))
- Contact information of the person who can discuss the appeal with USAC in detail (include name, address, telephone number, and email address)
- Documentation of USAC's decision (e.g., copy of USAC's decision letter being appealed)
- Supporting documentation such as forms and previous correspondence with USAC
- A precise explanation of the resolution sought through the appeal

USAC may reach out for additional information while reviewing your appeal, but failure to provide all of the information above within the 60 days may result in denial of your appeal. Parties seeking a waiver of FCC rules (e.g., waiver of deadlines) should file an appeal directly with the Commission as USAC cannot waive FCC rules. For more information on filing appeals with USAC or the FCC, please visit the appeals page of the USAC website or contact us.

Consortia Resources
HCF Program applicants who may be interested in forming a consortia can download three new resources to help them get started:

- Consortia Getting Started Tip Sheet
- Forming a Consortium Tip Sheet
- FCC Form 461 and 462 Tip Sheet for Consortia

Third Party Authorizations (TPAs) Must be Up to Date
In order to be considered eligible for funding in FY2019, TPAs must be up to date through FY2019, at a minimum. Be especially mindful if you are an HCP using a consultant. Before submitting a form, please check to ensure your authorization documents are up to date. FCC Forms submitted with expired TPAs will result in applicants receiving Information Requests. Download a Sample TPA .

Need help? Contact us!

For questions about the RHC Program, please contact the RHC Help Desk at RHC-Assist@usac.org or by phone at (800) 453-1546.