



## RHC Program News for February 2020

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February 6, 2020

### Latest News

#### **FY2020 Filing Window Open Now!**

The FY2020 [filing window](#) opened on February 1 and will close at 11:59 p.m. ET on April 30. This means that you must submit your funding requests (FCC [Forms 462](#) or [466](#)) before 11:59 p.m. ET April 30, 2020, for the initial filing window period. We highly encourage you to submit your application forms as early as possible in the filing window. See below for helpful resources:

- Funding Request Webinars: [HCF Program, Telecom Program](#)
- [Funding Request Summary](#)
- [FY2020 Recommended Submission Dates](#)
- [Information for FY2019 Applicants Applying in FY2020](#)
- [Urban and Rural Rate Information](#) (Telecom Program only)
- [Forming a Consortium Tip Sheet](#) (HCF Program only)

#### **Update on FY2019**

RHC has begun issuing decisions on FY2019 funding requests, and will continue to do so on a rolling basis. RHC will communicate any updates via the email addresses the applicant has submitted in My Portal. Due to the high demand for RHC Program funds, there will not be a second filing window period for FY2019. The RHC Program will not accept additional funding requests (FCC Forms 462 or 466) for FY2019. All qualifying single-year funding requests with no upfront costs will be fully funded for FY2019 with no proration.

### New for FY2020

#### **Consortia Majority Rural Rule**

Beginning February 1, for FY2020, all current and new HCF Program consortia must be “majority rural.” FCC [Report and Order 19-78](#) eliminates the three-year grace period for consortia to become majority rural; there will also be no grandfathering of prior Pilot Program consortia or other existing consortia.

“Majority rural” means that more than 50% of participating HCPs in a consortium must be rural. For example, if a

consortium has five participating HCPs, at least three of those HCPs must be in a rural area for the consortium to be deemed “majority rural.” Funding requests filed by consortia that are not in compliance with this rule will be denied. Download the [Consortia Rurality Compliance Tip Sheet](#).

### **Additional Competitive Bidding Exemptions to the Telecom Program**

For FY2020, Telecom Program applicants may use all the [competitive bidding exemptions](#) allowed in the HCF Program, with the exception of the \$10,000 or less exemption.

### **Gift Rule**

Beginning February 1, for FY2020, RHC Program applicants and their consultants, if any, are prohibited from soliciting or accepting gifts from service providers. The new requirement, modeled after E-Rate’s gift rule, specifically prohibits an RHC Program applicant and/or its consultant from directly or indirectly soliciting or accepting anything of value (including meals, tickets to sporting events or trips) from a service provider.

### **Elimination of Limitation on Support for Satellite Services**

Beginning February 1, for FY2020, the restriction on support for satellite service up to the amount HCPs would have received if they purchased functionally similar terrestrial-based alternatives, is eliminated.

### **Revised and Harmonized Funding Request Certifications**

FCC [Report and Order 19-78](#) harmonizes the certifications between the HCF and Telecom Programs required as part of a funding request. There are some additional certifications beginning in FY2020 that will appear on the FCC Form 462 and FCC Form 466.

### **Urban and Rural Rate Database Feedback Opportunity**

Interested in providing RHC with your feedback on urban and rural rates database? Feel free to email [RHC-Assist@usac.org](mailto:RHC-Assist@usac.org) with the subject line “Urban and Rural Rate Database Feedback.” Future feedback opportunities will be made available and publicized via the RHC Monthly Newsletter.

## **Important Reminders**

### **Letter of Agency (LOA) My Portal Enhancements**

My Portal no longer allows consortia leaders or account holders to submit forms on behalf of health care provider (HCP) sites with expired [LOAs](#). Account holders of the consortia and their member HCPs will now receive automatic emails from My Portal when an LOA is about to expire and will be required to update any expired LOAs. For instructions on how to submit an updated LOA, view the [LOA submission guide](#).

### **Account Holder Guidance**

Now 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**

FCC Forms submitted with incomplete or missing documentation cannot be processed, 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 days 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 Program Information Requests through My Portal OR by email
  - For Information Requests received through My Portal, applicants should respond through My Portal only
  - For Information Requests received by email, applicants should “Reply All” to respond to the Information Request by email
- Use Chrome/Firefox Only when using My Portal
- When uploading a document as a response, the document should be limited to 10MB and its file name should not contain any special characters, only letters and numbers

#### Information Request Tips for the HCF Program

- Applicants that receive HCF Program Information Requests through email should “Reply All” to respond to an Information Request by email

#### Filing an Appeal

Any party that wishes to appeal a USAC decision must file an appeal with USAC within the required 60 days of the date when USAC issued the decision. All appeals must be sent to [RHC-Appeals@usac.org](mailto: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 relief sought through the appeal

USAC may reach out for additional information while reviewing your appeal, but failure to provide all of the information listed above within the 60-day period may result in denial of your appeal. Parties seeking a waiver of FCC rules (e.g., waiver of deadlines) should file the waiver request directly with the FCC because 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.

#### Need Help? Contact Us!

For questions about the Rural Health Care Program, call the RHC Help Desk Call at 800-453-1546 or email [RHC-Assist@usac.org](mailto:RHC-Assist@usac.org).

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