RHC Program News for February 2021

February 4, 2021

Latest News

FY2021 Filing Window Open Now!
The FY2021 filing window opened on January 4 and will close 11:59 p.m. ET on Thursday, April 1. This means that you must submit your funding requests (FCC [Forms 462](#) or [Forms 466](#)) as early as January 4 and no later than 11:59 p.m. ET April 1, 2021, for the initial filing window period. We highly encourage you to submit your application forms as early as possible in the filing window period. Other forms for FY2021 (FCC Forms 460, 461, or 465) were accepted prior to January 4 to begin the application process. Learn more about filing window periods. Learn more about [filing window periods](#).

Use the following helpful resources to help you submit your funding request by the April 1 deadline:

- [Funding Request Best Practices for FY2021 Webinars](#)
- [Funding Request Summary](#)
- [FY2021 Recommended Form Submission Dates](#)
- [Information for FY2020 Applicants Applying in FY2021](#)

New! Sign Up for Funding Request Office Hours
During the filing window, the RHC Program Team will be hosting a number of office hour sessions to give you the opportunity to ask any funding request related questions. After registering, you can log in any time during that hour to ask RHC staff questions about the FCC Form 462 or Form 466, My Portal, or program rules. Register for a February Office Hour Session below:

- HCF Program FCC Form 462 Office Hour: Friday, February 12, 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. ET - [Register](#)
- Telecom Program FCC Form 466 Office Hour: Friday, February 26, 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. ET - [Register](#)

Please note that each session is limited to 75 registrants.

New! FCC Releases DA 21-83: Waives Use of Telecom Program Rural Rates Database for Alaskan Applicants
On January 19, the FCC released [DA 21-83](#), waiving the requirement to use the Telecom Program Rates Database for determining rural rates for health care providers in Alaska. This action will ensure that telecommunications service providers in Alaska will receive sufficient Telecom Program support for the next two funding years, thereby providing a reliable telecommunications marketplace for Alaskan health care providers, while the FCC further examines how to apply the Rates Database to Alaska in light of its unique and challenging geography. Please note that while the waiver precludes use of the Rates Database for determining rural rates in Alaska, the Rates Database must still be used to determine urban rates.

This waiver is in place for FY2021, for which competitive bidding has already begun, and for FY2022 unless the FCC has separately addressed pending petitions seeking reconsideration of the Rates Database requirements by January 19, 2022. We will alert you whether waiver of the Rates Database remains in effect for FY2022.

Reminder: Supply Chain Order and Your Funding Request Forms

As a reminder, the FCC's [Supply Chain Order](#) became effective on January 3, 2020. The Order prohibits Universal Service support from being used to purchase, obtain, maintain, improve, modify, or otherwise support any equipment or services produced or provided by companies that pose a national security threat to the integrity of communications networks or the communications supply chain. Huawei Technologies Company and ZTE Corporation are the two companies that have been officially designated as such threats by the FCC. New certifications concerning the supply chain will be added to the FCC Form 463 and the Telecom invoice with an effective date of April 1, 2021.

- FY2020 applicants: If you requested services or equipment provided or that contain components of products produced by Huawei Technologies Company or ZTE Corporation in FY2020, you cannot invoice for these funds. Instead, you should immediately request a [service substitution](#) prior to invoicing in order to ensure complete program compliance.
- FY2021 applicants: As you proceed with competitive bidding and submitting funding requests forms, please ensure you are not requesting funding for services or equipment from Huawei Technologies Company and ZTE Corporation.

FCC Releases Order DA 20-1420: Certain Rule Changes to be Implemented in FY2020
The FCC released [Order DA 20-1420](#) implementing certain rule changes mid-funding year (FY) 2020 that were previously slated for FY2021. The FCC recognizes that making these rules effective mid-FY2020 will provide helpful flexibility to health care providers during the current funding year. The Order accelerates the effective dates of the following rule changes:

- Extending site and service substitutions to Telecom Program applicants
- Amending the SPIN change process to allow for corrective and operational changes across both the HCF and Telecom Programs
- Establishing a service delivery deadline of June 30 while permitting a one-year extension of the service delivery deadline for non-recurring services
- Permitting a one-time 120-day invoice filing extension

Please note, this Order will become effective 30 days following publication in the [Federal Register](#). USAC will communicate additional information including specific instructions on how to submit service substitutions and SPIN change requests for Telecom Program applicants.

New! FCC Announces Initial Projects Selected for Connected Care Pilot Program
As part of its ongoing efforts to promote and support connected care technologies and services, the FCC has announced an initial set of pilot projects that have been selected for the Connected Care Pilot Program. These projects will support the goals of the Pilot Program and will help inform the FCC on the role of the Universal Service Fund in supporting connected care into the future. Read the [Public Notice](#) and list of selected pilot projects.

Please keep in mind that the selections announced in PN 21-12 are only an initial set of projects. The FCC's review of applications for the Pilot Program is ongoing, and the FCC will announce the selection of the remainder of projects in the coming months. The FCC or USAC will provide selected projects with additional information regarding next steps, required forms, and funding timelines. Learn more about the [Connected Care Pilot Program](#).

New for FY2021
Rates Database for Telecom Program Applicants
Beginning FY2021, the rural and urban rates used to calculate the amount of eligible Telecom Program support for a Health Care Provider (HCP) site location will be the median of available rates as identified in the [Rates Database](#) . (As explained above, the Rates Database is not available for determining rural rates for Alaskan HCPs.) A database search will also provide users with the underlying data used to calculate those median rates. Telecom Program applicants will use the median rural and urban rates from the Rates Database for the requested telecommunications services when submitting the FCC Form(s) 466. At the FCC's direction, the database inputs have been updated to include recent E-Rate and RHC Program commitments.

When submitting an FCC Form(s) 466, the rural rate for the requested service will be calculated based on the rural rate included in the agreement with the service provider or the median rural rate from the Rates Database, whichever is lower. The urban rate for the requested service will be the median urban rate from the Rates Database.

Important Reminders

Submit Your FY2021 Request for Services Today!
New for FY2021 and forward, the competitive bidding period begins on July 1 of the prior calendar year. This allows RHC Program applicants more time to complete and submit their FCC Forms 461 and Forms 465 for the purposes of competitive bidding. Learn about the changes to the FY2021 competitive bidding process and corresponding My Portal updates by watching the recent Request for Services Webinars. Please keep in mind that it's best practice to submit these forms as early as possible in preparation for the upcoming filing window.

Tip: Rurality Tier Search Tool
When using the Rurality Tier Search Tool, it is important to put in your site's exact address for best results. If the site's exact address does not yield results, you may also use the latitude and longitude coordinates for your site. Please note, this tool is for informational purposes only and is not an official determination of a site's rurality from USAC. For more information about rurality tiers and terms used in the search results, please visit the Rurality Tier Search Tool homepage.

To find your site's latitude and longitude coordinates:

1. Go to Google Maps
2. Type in your site's address
3. Right click on the marker pinpointing to your site on the map and select "What's Here?"
4. The coordinates (a pair of numbers, each with a decimal point) will appear on the screen

Use these coordinates to "Search with geographic coordinates" in the Rurality Tier Search Tool. Be sure to include the negative sign when entering the negative longitude coordinate.

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 documentation that is relevant to the required fields of the FCC Form 460. Submitting supporting documentation helps to verify health care provider (HCP) eligibility thereby expediting the review process. A few examples include, but are not limited to:

- 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) or public documents if the health care provider is owned by a local or state government
- Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) accreditation to verify a community health center.

Please note that submission of this supporting documentation does not guarantee form approval. You can submit your FCC Form 460 at any time during the funding year. First time applying? We suggest you review this step-by-step guide to check if your HCP site has previously registered with the RHC Program.

Telecom Program FCC Form 467 Revisions
Please remember to carefully review your Funding Commitment Letter (FCL) and Healthcare Support Schedule (HSS) prior to beginning the invoicing process. If there is an error or you have any questions about the information on the FCL or HSS, email RHC-Assist@usac.org with the funding request number in the subject line. As a reminder, if services were delayed or not turned on, it is the responsibility of the HCP to submit a request for an FCC Form 467 revision.

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.