

June 2022 RHC Monthly Newsletter

June 2, 2022

Latest News

Funding Requests Reviews Starting Earlier Than Ever!

In our continuing efforts to deliver funding decisions as soon as possible, RHC began funding request reviews before the filing request window closed. This means that you may have received an Information Request before June 1, 2022. Per program rules, applicants have 14 days to respond to Information Requests. Please be sure to reply by the deadline listed on the Information Request.

Submit Your FY2022 Requests for Service July 1, 2022

RHC program applicants can submit their FCC Forms 461 and Forms 465 to initiate competitive bidding as early as July 1, 2022, five months before the opening of the FY2023 filing window. The FY2023 funding request filing window will open on December 1, 2022 and close on March 31, 2023. View the [FY2023 Program Calendar](#).

FCC Releases Order [DA 22-580](#): Waives Use of Rates Database for All Telecom Program Applicants for FY2023

On May 25, 2022, the Wireline Competition Bureau released Order [DA 22-580](#) extending the nationwide waiver of the requirement to use the Telecom Program Rates Database to determine urban and rural rates for FY2023. This action will ensure that service providers nationwide will receive sufficient Telecom Program support for FY2023 while the FCC further examines an effective rate determination mechanism for the Telecom Program.

The processes allowing the use of previously approved rural and urban rates for funding years 2021 and 2022 established in FCC Order [DA 21-394](#) will apply for funding year 2023. When establishing rural rates, health care providers (HCPs) and their service providers should continue to use rates approved under [Method 1, 2, or 3](#). For both rural and urban rates, HCPs and service providers must use the most recently-approved rate for the last five years (FY2018, FY2019, FY2020, FY2021, and FY2022) for the same service to the same facility or, if there is no approved rate, an approved rural or urban rate for the same or similar services to a facility with the same or similar geographic characteristics. As clarified in FCC Order [DA 22-401](#), the most recently approved rate for a facility/service combination is the most recently approved rate on the date the HCP submits its FCC Form 465.

Important Reminders

My Portal Platform Has a New Name!

The platform used to submit the FCC forms has been updated to improve user experience and has been named **RHC Connect**.

The name RHC Connect was selected because this new platform bridges the gap between our external stakeholders and the resources to obtain Universal Service Fund (USF) funding. This funding helps to connect rural communities with healthcare services. It represents USAC's commitment to transparency, customer service, and communication with our applicants. Providing these connections is the sum total of what the Rural Health Care Program was developed to support: HCP applicants, service providers, and the rural communities they represent.

Although the platform is changing, the information requested on the FCC forms will not change. The update currently applies to FCC Form 462 only, but FCC Form 461 (for FY2023 HCF Request for Services) will be available beginning on July 1. Over time, RHC Connect will offer all FCC Forms in both the HCF and Telecom Programs. Updates will be provided to program participants as the platform grows and all updates and resources will be posted on the [Welcome to RHC Connect](#) webpage.

The following resources have been posted to the Welcome to RHC Connect webpage:

- [RHC Connect User Guide](#)
- [RHC Connect](#) – Self-guided training module

Duplicate Funding Prohibited

Please remember, FCC rules prohibit duplicate funding for the same service for the same locations during the same period from more than one FCC program. This includes the RHC programs (HCF and Telecom), the COVID-19 Telehealth Program, and the Connected Care Pilot Program (CCPP).

FY2021 Funding Request Update

FY2021 **workable** funding requests completed as of May 12, 2022:

- HCF – 99% complete
- Telecom – 100% complete

Invoicing Best Practices

Please keep in mind that once you receive an approved funding commitment you should follow the necessary steps to invoice prior to your invoicing deadline(s):

Per invoicing guidelines adopted in [FCC Report and Order 19-78](#), the invoicing deadline will be four months (120 days) from the service delivery deadline in both the HCF and Telecom programs. Please be sure to respond to any invoicing Information Requests by the 14-calendar day deadline listed in the email. For more information please see the [HCF invoice page](#) and [Telecom invoice page](#).

On-line Tools Updates

Application Status Report and Invoicing Deadline Tools

On December 20, 2021, USAC launched new Application Status Report and Invoicing Deadline tools that utilize USAC's Open Data platform. Through integration with USAC Open Data, the tools replace spreadsheets with a cleaner user experience and real-time data updates. Note: While the spreadsheets will remain on the USAC website, the data on the spreadsheets will not be updated.

Application Status Report

The new [Application Status Report](#) tool replaces the Application Status Report spreadsheet. Similar to the spreadsheet, the new tool allows users to view whether USAC has:

- Confirmed submission of FCC Form 466,
- Received all of the necessary information to complete a review, and
- Made a decision on the submitted form.

USAC will refresh the tool daily. Users who need the data in formats such as .CSV still have the option to export the data. If the data is not available five days after submission, users are encouraged to contact the [RHC Customer Service Center](#).

The Application Status Report tool and all other RHC tools can be found on the [Tools webpage](#). In addition, users who need to look up data from Funding Year 2004 through Funding Year 2021 can access the [archived spreadsheets](#).

Invoicing Deadlines

The new Invoicing Deadline tool replaces the Invoicing Deadline spreadsheet. The tool allows service providers and health care providers to look up the deadline to submit invoices for funding commitments. As an upgrade to the spreadsheet, the tool allows users to avoid having to set up specific Excel configurations to find their deadlines.

Note: The tool does not contain any additional information such as form submissions, payment status, or funds remaining. Contact the [RHC Customer Service Center](#) for questions about those topics. The Invoicing Deadline tool and all other RHC tools can be found on the [Tools webpage](#).

Eligible Rural Areas Search Tool

The Eligible Rural Areas Search tool has been removed from the [Tools webpage](#) and the HCF and Telecom eligibility webpages pages. HCP rurality and priority tiers can be searched using the [Rurality Tier Search Tool](#). For more information about how to use this tool, please use the [How to Use the Rurality Tier Search Tool](#) tip sheet on the USAC website.

Note: This tool is for information purposes only. Rurality tiers are formally assigned during the review and approval of the FCC Form 460 in the HCF Program and FCC Form 465 in the Telecom Program. Applicants should check approved forms for assigned rurality tier.

News You Can Use

What To Do When You Receive an Information Request

As part of their review of any eligibility, request for services, funding requests, and invoicing form, RHC reviewers will contact all account holders (the primary and all secondary and tertiary account holders associated with the HCP) with a request for additional information ("Information Request") to collect any missing documentation, address deficiencies, or to ask clarifying questions about the FCC form.

Information Request Tips for the Telecom Program

- HCPs can receive Telecom Program Information Requests through My Portal or by email.
 - For Information Requests received through My Portal, HCPs should respond through My Portal only.
 - For Information Requests received by email, HCPs should "Reply All" to respond to the Information Request by email.
- Use only Chrome or Firefox Internet browsers when using My Portal.
- When uploading a document as a response, the file must 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

- For FY2022 FCC Forms 462, an auto-generated email will be sent directing HCPs to RHC Connect to respond. HCPs should respond through RHC Connect only.
- HCPs that receive HCF Program Information Requests through email should “Reply All” to respond to an Information Request by email.

Changes to a Commitment After Funding Has Been Approved

When a Funding Commitment Letter (FCL) is received, it is the responsibility of the applicant to confirm that the information contained therein is accurate. Applicants must contact USAC to request changes to an HCP site or service for any of the circumstances listed:

- If the site address changes or the primary account holder no longer works for the HCP, an FCC Form 460 revision for HCF or a new FCC Form 465 for Telecom must be submitted within 30 days of the change. The 30-day requirement applies at all points during the funding lifecycle including all post-commitment activities.
- If all approved funds will not be used, a request to decrease funding may be submitted by sending an email to RHC-Invoicing@usac.org. The HCP name and number, the affected Funding Request Number (FRN), and the amount reduced in the commitment must be included. USAC will complete a partial de-commitment for the FRN in that amount.
 - In the Telecom Program, the approved FRN can be revised prior to invoicing using the FCC Form 467.
 - If any additional changes are required after submitting the FCC Form 467, a FCC Form 467 revision can be submitted prior to invoicing.
- If funds within an FRN need to be re-allocated, a site and service substitution must be submitted. Learn more about [site and service substitutions](#).
- If no funds will be used in the approved or disbursed funding commitment, the disbursed funds must be returned to USAC. Learn more about voluntary return of funds by visiting the [Returning Program Funding](#) webpage.

Certifications Requirements for National Supply Chain

As a reminder, when service providers log in to My Portal, two new Supply Chain certifications included in the FCC Form 463 and Telecom Program invoice will be displayed.

The first certification affirms compliance with the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 47, [Section 54.9](#), prohibition on USF support to purchase, obtain, maintain, improve, modify, operate, manage, or otherwise support equipment or services produced or provided by the covered companies deemed to pose a national security threat to the integrity of the communications network or communications supply chain. As of March 25, 2022, Huawei Technologies Company, ZTE Corporation, Hytera Communications Corporation, Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology Company, Dahua Technology Company, AO Kaspersky Labs, China Mobile International USA Inc., and China Telecom (Americas) Corp., and their parents, affiliates, and subsidiaries, are the eight companies that have been officially designated as such threats by the FCC and placed on the Covered List. The second certification affirms compliance with CFR 47 [Section 54.10](#), which prohibits the use of any federal subsidies on any communications equipment and services on the [Covered List](#).

- Funding Year 2020 Applicants: If services or equipment that contain components of products produced by any company on the Covered List, or any of their parents, affiliates, and subsidiaries in Funding Year 2020, were requested, invoicing for the funds is prohibited. Instead, a [service substitution](#) should be submitted prior to invoicing to ensure complete program compliance.
- Funding Year 2021 Applicants: If the use of covered equipment or services are identified on the submitted funding request form, please email RHC-Assist@usac.org with the FRN and description of issue. USAC will work to take corrective action to ensure compliance.
- Funding Year 2022 Applicants: During competitive bidding, requesting funding for services or equipment from any company on the [Covered List](#), or any of their parents, affiliates, and subsidiaries is prohibited.

USAC updated the [Supply Chain](#) webpages to include three new subpages: [COVID-19 Broadband Programs](#), [Audits](#), and [FAQs](#).

Let’s Plan a Virtual Site Visit!

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, RHC will not be on the road during calendar year 2022. In prior years, USAC has gone to conferences and visited sites to connect with program participants to see first-hand how HCPs benefit from the RHC programs. RHC would like to continue to learn more about the people and communities who benefit from RHC program support by holding a virtual event. This is a great opportunity to introduce RHC staff to participating HCPs and to deepen the relationship between RHC staff and applicants. If you are interested in having your HCP or Consortia featured in an upcoming virtual site visit, please send a request to RHC-Assist@usac.org with “Virtual Site Visit” in the subject line. Once the request has been received, RHC will reach out with more information.

Need Help? Contact Us!

For questions about the Rural Health Care program, contact RHC-Assist@usac.org or the Customer Service Center at (800) 453-1546 from 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. ET Monday through Friday for assistance. Use the [Customer Service Center Tip Sheet](#) to learn about what the RHC Customer Service Center can and cannot help you with.

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