

September 2022 RHC Monthly Newsletter

September 1, 2022

Latest News

New! FY2021 HCF Participants Annual Report Due September 30, 2022

Per [FCC Order 19-78](#), all HCF participants receiving Rural Health Care (RHC) program funding are required to submit an annual report to USAC to supplement information collected in RHC program application forms using the provided [Excel template](#). The reports for funding year (FY) 2021 (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022) are due September 30, 2022. In prior years, only consortia participants were required to submit an annual report to USAC. **Beginning this year, all HCF participants must file a report. This means any HCF participant that received funding in FY2021 is required to submit the annual report by September 30, 2022.**

Who is Required to Submit the Annual Report? All HCF Program participants, both individual and consortia, must submit an annual report for each funding year in which it received HCF Program support and for the life of a supported facility or service for which the consortium received large upfront payments. Email the completed report to RHC-Outreach@usac.org by September 30, 2022.

For instructions on how to complete and submit the FY2021 Annual Report, please visit our [website](#).

Submit FY2023 Requests for Service Beginning July 1, 2022

RHC program applicants can submit 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 filing window will open on December 1, 2022 and close on April 3, 2023. View the [FY2023 Program Calendar](#).

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

Although the platform is changing, the information requested on the FCC forms will not change. For FY2023, FCC Form 461 (Request for Services) can now be submitted in RHC Connect. Over time, RHC Connect will offer all FCC forms in both the HCF and Telecom Programs.

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

- [RHC Connect – FCC Form 461 User Guide](#)
- [Welcome to RHC Connect – FCC Form 461 Webpage](#)

RHC Connect Updates

The FCC Form 461 migrated to RHC Connect on July 1, 2022. The FCC Form 463 will move to RHC Connect this fall. If a FY2022 commitment in the HCF program is received prior to the deployment of the FCC Form 463 to RHC Connect, applicants will be unable to submit an FCC Form 463 (Invoice) until the deployment is complete. FY2022 HCF Invoicing will start in Late September. Updates about the deployment date are provided on the [Announcements webpage](#) and in future newsletters.

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 FY2022 filing window closed. Information Requests will be issued in cases where funding requests are incomplete. Per program rules, applicants have 14 calendar days to respond to Information Requests. Please be sure to reply by the deadline listed on the Information Request.

FCC Announces Availability of Unused Funds to Increase Rural Health Care Program Funding for FY2022

On July 22, 2022, the FCC Wireline Competition Bureau directed USAC to carry forward up to \$380.50 million in unused funds from prior funding years to the extent necessary to satisfy FY2022 demand for the Rural Health Care program. Read the [Public Notice](#).

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 FY2021 and FY2022 established in

FCC Order [DA 21-394](#) will continue to apply for FY2023. HCPs and service providers may use the most recently approved rural and urban rates from 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 21-394](#), 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. HCPs may alternatively determine the rural rate using one of the preexisting methods (Methods 1, 2, or 3), and must use one of these preexisting methods if there is no previously approved or comparable rural rate available.

For more information, read Order [DA 22-580](#).

Upcoming Webinars

Please join the RHC Outreach team for the following webinar:

- Invoicing Best Practices Webinar – September 7, 2022 at 2 p.m. ET – [Register](#)

Important Reminders

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).

Invoicing Deadline

Per [FCC Order 19-78](#), the invoicing deadline is four months (120 days) from the later of the service delivery deadline, the date of a revised FCL approving a post-commitment request, or a successful appeal of a previously denied or reduced funding request. This invoicing deadline applies to both RHC programs. The Order also adopted a rule, effective FY2021, permitting a single 120-day extension of the invoicing deadline if the HCP is unable to meet the invoicing deadline for any reason. The request for an extension must be submitted prior to the original invoicing deadline. The invoicing deadline for single year FY2021 commitments is October 28, 2022.

Please use the [RHC Invoicing Deadline Tool](#) on the Open Data platform of the USAC website to look up the invoicing deadline for specific FRNs.

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). 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 FY2004 through FY2021 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. 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. Please use the [Information Request Tip Sheet](#) to help you navigate Information Requests sent through RHC Connect.
- 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-Outreach@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](#).

- FY2022 Account holders: If you requested services or equipment provided or that contain components of products produced by any company on the [Covered List](#), or any of their parents, affiliates, and subsidiaries in FY2022, you cannot invoice for these funds. Instead, you should immediately request a service substitution prior to invoicing in order to ensure complete program compliance.
- FY2023 Account holders: As you proceed with competitive bidding beginning in July, please ensure you are not requesting funding for services or equipment from any company on the [Covered List](#), or any of their parents, affiliates, and subsidiaries.

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-Outreach@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.