



Rural Health Care

April 2024 RHC Monthly Newsletter

April 4, 2024

Latest News

FCC Releases Order DA 24-214 Extending the Deadline for Funding Year (FY) 2024 Filing Window to May 1, 2024

On March 7, 2024, the FCC released FCC Order [DA 24-214](#) extending the deadline for the FY2024 application filing window to May 1, 2024. This means all funding requests (FCC Forms 462 or 466) must be submitted no later than 11:59 p.m. ET on May 1, 2024. We highly encourage you to submit your funding requests as early as possible in the filing window.

Visit USAC's website for more information about [filing windows](#).

FCC Form 466 for the Telecommunications (Telecom) Program for FY2024 Is Available in RHC Connect

The FCC Form 466 (Funding Request Form) has migrated to RHC Connect for FY2024. Although the platform changed, the FCC Form 466 itself did not. To submit your funding request, you are asked the same questions and need to provide the same information as in years past. No preparation for the platform change is required by you. Please continue to use My Portal to submit FCC Forms 465 and the Telecom program Invoice.

Please use the following resources to submit your FY2024 FCC Forms 466:

- [RHC Connect User Guide – FCC Form 466](#)
- [Welcome to RHC Connect – FCC Form 466](#) webpage

FCC Form 465: Issues Resolved

Some users may have experienced technical issues posting FCC Forms 465 from December 27, 2023 through January 23, 2023, and from February 16, 2024 through February 23, 2024. These technical issues have been resolved. Please contact the [RHC Customer Service Center](#) if you experience any technical issues.

Resources for the Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) Program - FCC Form 462

The following resources have been posted to the USAC website to assist applicants that are submitting the FCC Form 462 for the HCF program through RHC Connect.

- [Welcome to RHC Connect](#)
- [FCC Form 462 User Guide](#)

Consortium Rurality Percentage

All current and new HCF program consortia must be "majority rural." Majority rural means that more than 50 percent of participating health care providers (HCPs) in a consortium are 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](#).

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).

Invoice Filing Deadline

The deadline to submit invoices for any participants that received an invoice filing deadline extension for FY2022 was February 25, 2024. Any program participants that were unable to submit invoices by the deadline due to issues with [SAM.gov](#) registration must receive a waiver of the invoice filing deadline from the FCC. A [requests for waiver](#) should state the reason a waiver is necessary.

Upcoming Office Hours

Please join the RHC Outreach team for the following webinars:

- HCF Office Hours – April 17, 2024, at 2 p.m. ET – [Register](#)
- Telecom Office Hours – April 24, 2024, at 2 p.m. ET – [Register](#)
- Service Providers Training – June 12, 2024, at 2 p.m. ET – [Register](#)

FCC News

RHC Program Inflation-Based Cap Announced for FY2024

The RHC program funding cap for FY2024 is \$706,926,603. The internal cap for upfront payments and multi-year commitments under the HCF program is \$178,496,951. The internal cap for upfront payments and multi-year commitments will apply only if RHC program demand exceeds available funding. These new caps represent a 3.6 percent inflation-adjusted increase to the \$682,361,586 RHC program funding cap and the \$172,294,354 internal cap on multi-year commitments and upfront payments from FY2023. Read the [announcement](#).

FCC Released Order FCC 23-110: Continuing Improvement to Rural Health Care Program Procedures

On December 14, 2023, the FCC released a Third Report and Order ([FCC 23-110](#)). This order improves RHC program administration and facilitates participation in the program by allowing HCPs that expect to become eligible during a funding year to complete the processes required to request funding. The order aligns program deadlines, simplifies rules for calculating urban rates, streamlines administrative processes, and frees up unused funding for other purposes.

Rule Changes

The Third Report and Order:

- Permits HCPs to be granted conditional eligibility, thus allowing them to initiate competitive bidding and request funding before they meet all eligibility requirements. An HCP must meet all eligibility requirements before it receives a funding commitment.
- Provides HCPs more time to complete Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN) changes by moving the SPIN change deadline to align with the invoice filing deadline.
- Simplifies urban rate calculations by eliminating the seldom-used “standard urban distance” component of the RHC program rule for determining urban rates in the Telecom program.
- Allows HCPs to request changes to the dates covered by an evergreen contract.
- Adopts the FCC Form 460 for eligibility determinations in the Telecom program, which will eliminate the need for Telecom program participants to seek an eligibility determine every time they engage in competitive bidding.
- Establishes a deadline of July 1, 2024, for HCPs to claim undisbursed funding commitments that do not currently have an applicable invoice filing deadline, which would free up for other uses up to \$22.2 million in unclaimed RHC program support from FY2019 and prior years.

For more information, read Order [FCC 23-110](#).

Important Deadlines and Reminders

Submit Your Telecom Program Invoice for FY2019 or Earlier by July 1, 2024!

Per [FCC 23-110](#), the FCC established a deadline of July 1, 2024, for Telecom Program participants to submit invoices for FY2019 and earlier, the period during which there was no invoice filing deadline in the Telecom program.

If you plan to submit a disbursement request (invoice) for the remaining commitment balance(s), please submit the request(s) in My Portal by July 1, 2024. After that date, the outstanding commitment balance will no longer be available. Unused balances for Telecom funding commitments will be de-obligated and returned to the Universal Service Fund for use in accordance with the public interest.

RHC program rules require the following documents to be retained for a minimum of five years. Documents must be provided to USAC (when requested) for invoice reviews.

- Copies of billing documentation for the referenced billing period with the following information highlighted:
 - HCP Name
 - Circuit Location(s)
 - Billing Account Number (BAN)
 - Bandwidth
 - Circuit ID
 - Service Type
 - Monthly Recurring Charges (MRC)
- Proof of payment for the requested billing period, e.g., check, bank statement, or a printout from the accounts payable system.
 - In the absence of payment or if no payment was made as a result of credits on an account, please provide an explanation of what action resulted from the credits.

For more information about submitting Telecom invoices, please visit the Invoice USAC webpage or contact the RHC Invoicing team at RHC-invoicing@usac.org.

Reminders for Account Holders

Per RHC program rules, a primary and secondary account holder for an individual HCP must be an officer, director, or authorized employee of the HCP. For consortium applicants in the HCF program, the Project Coordinator must be an officer, director, or other authorized employee of the Consortium Leader. If you are an HCP participating in the HCF or Telecom program, and a consultant or other third party will file forms on your behalf, you must file a [third-party authorization \(TPA\)](#).

Note: The primary account holder is responsible for all activities associated with submitting and certifying forms, and for all activities in the RHC program for their HCP site.

Letter(s) of Agency and Third-Party Authorizations

Please be sure that all authorizations including Letters of Agency (LOA) and TPAs are current and up-to-date, at

minimum, through the end of FY2024 and forward. For more information about LOAs, visit the [Letter of Agency](#) webpage. For more information about TPA requirements, see the [Third Party Authorization \(TPA\)](#) webpage.

What To Do When You Receive an Information Request

As part of their review of any eligibility, requests for services, funding requests, and invoicing forms, 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”). This request will assist with the collection of any missing documentation, address deficiencies, or general information required to address questions of FCC form reviewers.

In our continuing efforts to deliver funding decisions as soon as possible, RHC will begin funding request reviews before the funding request window closes. This means that you may receive an Information Request before May 1, 2024. No final decisions will be made prior to the close of the filing window.

Information Request Tips for the Telecom Program

- For FY2024 FCC Forms 466, 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.
- For prior years and all other Telecom program forms, 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 the email message.
- Use only Chrome, Firefox, or Microsoft Edge 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 FY2024 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 the email message.

RHC Connect Updates

Submit Your Post-Commitment Change Requests in RHC Connect

The following post-commitment change requests are now available in RHC Connect for HCF program applicants:

- SPIN changes (corrective and operational)
- Site and service substitutions
- Service delivery deadline extensions for non-recurring charges
- Invoice filing deadline extensions

A webpage for [Post-Commitment Actions](#) has been published on the USAC website as well as specific webpages for [SPIN Changes](#) and [Site and Service Substitutions](#). A step-by-step [Post-Commitments Change Request](#) user guide is available to help you submit these requests correctly.

A user guide for [Invoice Filing Deadline Extension Requests](#) specifically for service providers is posted under the Additional Resources section of the [Invoice USAC](#) webpage in the [Service Providers](#) section on the USAC website.

The FCC Form 463 Is Available in RHC Connect for FY2022 and FY2023 Funding Commitments.

HCF program applicants submitting FCC Forms 460 or 463 for funding years prior to FY2022 will continue to do so in My Portal. Telecom program and CCPP applications will not be affected. To learn more, please visit the [Welcome to RHC Connect – FCC Form 463](#) webpage.

RHC Connect for Service Providers

For FY2022 and forward, the FCC Form 463 will be submitted in RHC Connect. As you submit the FCC Form 463, please keep in mind that the General Contact on the FCC Form 498 is the only user for the company who can create additional logins for other users in that company.

If you have trouble accessing RHC Connect, it may be a result of outdated information on the FCC Form 498 (Service Provider and Billed Entity Identification Number and General Contact Information Form). To correct the issue, please update your FCC Form 498 as soon as possible and, if applicable, your Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) on the [SAM.gov](#) webpage. For more information, please visit the [Manage Your 498 ID](#) webpage on the USAC website.

A [user guide for the FCC Form 463](#) specifically for service providers is now available on the [Step 5: Invoice USAC](#) webpage in the RHC service provider section of the USAC website.

Online Tools

Invoice Filing Deadlines

The [Invoicing Deadline tool](#) replaces the Invoicing Deadline spreadsheet. The tool allows service providers and HCPs to look up the deadline to submit invoices for funding commitments. The tool frees users from 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 informational 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 their assigned rurality tier.

News You Can Use

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 [Section 54.9](#) on USF for specified transactions with companies deemed to pose a national security threat. The second certification affirms compliance with [Section 54.10](#), which prohibits the use of any Federal subsidies on any communications equipment and services on the [Covered List](#).

- **FY2022 and FY2023 program participants:** If you requested services or equipment provided by or that contain components of products produced by any company on the [Covered List](#), or any of their parents, affiliates, and subsidiaries in FY2022 or FY2023, you cannot invoice for these funds. Instead, you should immediately request a service substitution prior to invoicing to ensure complete program compliance.
- **FY2024 program participants:** As you proceed with requesting funding for FY2024, 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](#).

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.