

# Telecom Program Office Hours

February 15, 2023



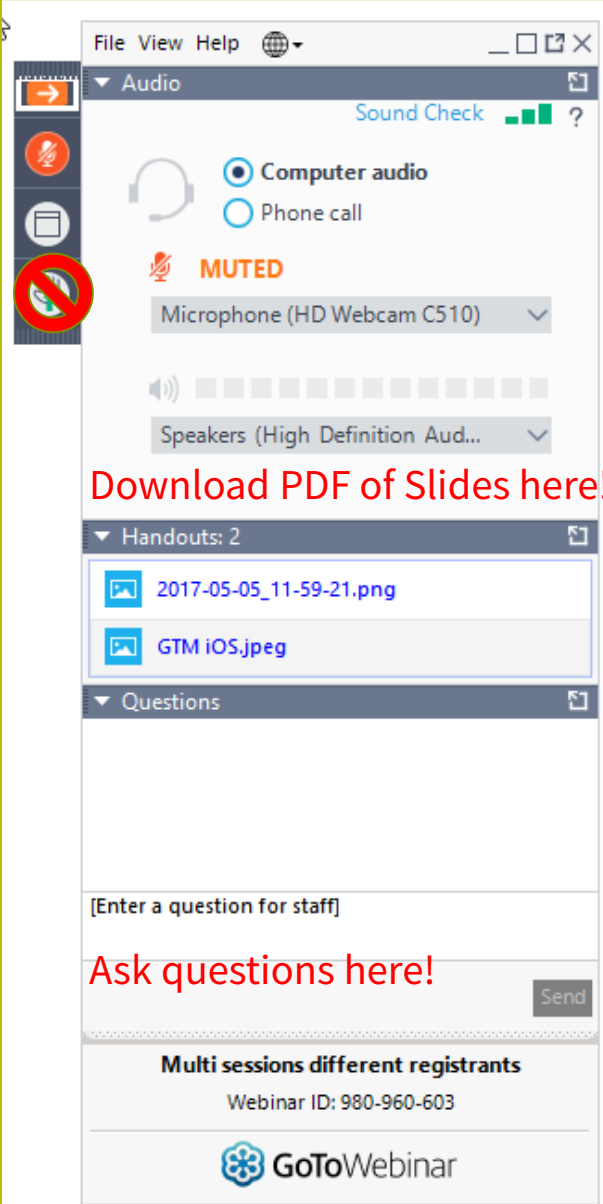
Universal Service  
Administrative Co.

## **DISCLAIMER:**

To accommodate all attendees, real-time closed captions will be present during this presentation. We apologize in advance for any transcription errors or distractions. Thank you for your support.

# Housekeeping

- Use the “Audio” section of your control panel to select an audio source and connect to sound.
  - Turn on your computer’s speakers, or
  - Use the call-in instructions in your confirmation email.
- All participants are on mute.
- Submit questions at any time using the “Questions” box.



The screenshot shows the GoToWebinar control panel interface. The top section is titled "Audio" and includes a "Sound Check" indicator. Below this, there are two radio buttons: "Computer audio" (selected) and "Phone call". A prominent red "MUTED" label is displayed next to a microphone icon that has a red "X" over it. Below the muted indicator, a dropdown menu shows "Microphone (HD Webcam C510)". A volume slider is visible, and another dropdown menu shows "Speakers (High Definition Aud...)".

Below the Audio section is the "Handouts: 2" section, which lists two files: "2017-05-05\_11-59-21.png" and "GTM iOS.jpeg".

The "Questions" section is at the bottom, featuring a text input field with the placeholder "[Enter a question for staff]", a "Send" button, and the text "Ask questions here!".

At the very bottom, the text "Multi sessions different registrants" and "Webinar ID: 980-960-603" is displayed, along with the GoToWebinar logo.

Red text annotations are present: "Download PDF of Slides here!" is written in red above the Handouts section, and "Ask questions here!" is written in red above the Questions section.

# Meet Our Team



**Simone Andrews**

Senior Communications Specialist |  
RHC Outreach



**Blythe Albert**

Advisor of Program Management |  
RHC Outreach

# Agenda

- Introduction – Office Hours
- Program Reminders
- Program Updates
- My Portal Updates
- Best Practices and Resources

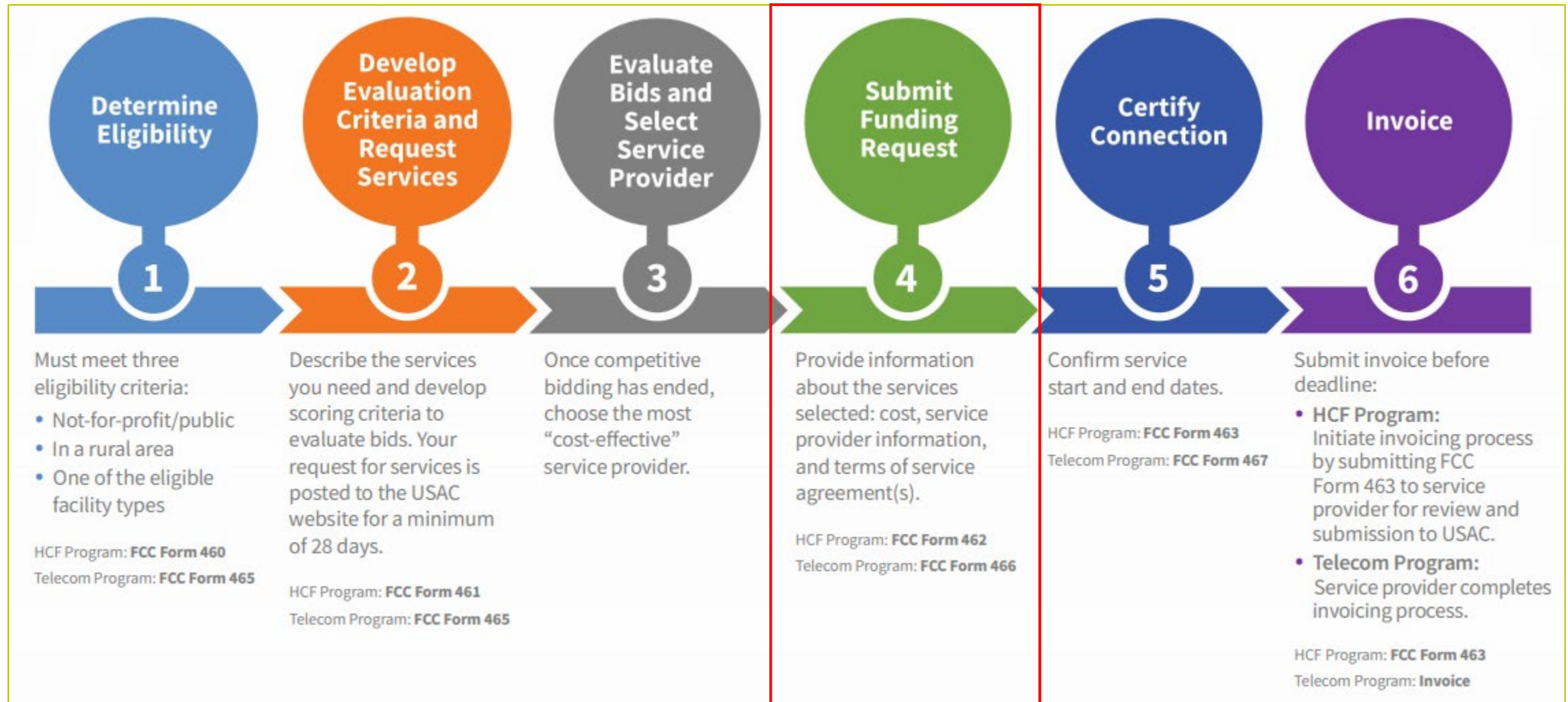
# Introduction – Office Hours

- Subject matter experts are available to answer live questions from attendees
  - Send FRN or HCP-specific questions to the RHC Customer Service Center at [RHC-Assist@usac.org](mailto:RHC-Assist@usac.org)
  - Raise your hand or ask your question in the questions box

# **Program Reminders**

Telecom Program Funding Request Office Hours

# RHC Program Application Process





# Submission Checklist

- Document(s) confirming the monthly cost for your services (e.g. a copy of your bill dated within the requested funding period) or the most currently available bill as the filing window closes before the funding year opens.
- A copy of all bids that were received for your request for service including the winning bid, all bids that were rejected and any bids that were disqualified and why.
- A copy of the bidding evaluation matrix.
- A list of people who evaluated bids including title, role, and their relationship to the applicant
- Internal documents related to the selection of the service provider (if applicable)
- Copies of any correspondence with service providers prior to and during the competitive bidding process (if applicable)
- A copy of any new contract signed for your services.
- The start and end location of your services.
- Documentation substantiating the rural and urban rate (Telecom Program only)

**\* Any information that cannot be located on the submitted supporting documentation will result in an Information Request.**

# Submission Tips

- It is helpful to also submit a cover letter that includes a summary of your submission.
- Recommended things to include in your cover letter:
  - Where to find information about your circuit in the supporting documentation (i.e. Ethernet 20M - \$XX.XX – Page 5 of Invoice)
  - Highlight/label any documentation that is submitted.
- Information that isn't clearly identified via supporting documentation may need to be confirmed by the service provider.
  - It is the HCPs responsibility to reach out to the service provider to get any missing information. USAC cannot reach out to the service provider on an HCP's behalf.

## Best Practices: Communicating with Your Service Provider

- Ensure your service provider is aware of all the necessary documentation needed for future steps in the application process.
- Include your service provider when you reply to Information Requests via email.
- Program participants are required to retain documentation for a period of five years.

**Questions?**

# Program Updates

Telecom Program Funding Request Office Hours

# Reminder: FCC Report and Order 19-78

- [FCC Report and Order 19-78](#) webpage summarizes the Report and Order's major changes and includes the following resources:
  - [FCC Report and Order 19-78](#)
  - [Public Notice DA 19-1253](#)
  - [FCC Report and Order 19-78 Tip Sheet](#)
  - Webinar [recording](#) and [slides](#)

# FCC Order 22-580 – FY2023 Rates Database Waiver Order

- On May 25, 2022, the FCC released [Order DA 22-580](#), waiving the requirement that HCPs and service providers participating in the Telecom Program use the Rates Database to calculate urban and rural rates for funding year 2023.
- Applicants should apply the requirements used in FY2021 and FY2022 per [FCC Order DA 21-394](#) when calculating urban and rural rates for FY2023.
- Please use the [Urban and Rural Rate Information FY2023](#) tip sheet as a resource.

# FCC Order 22-1063 – Hurricane Ian Relief Order

- On October 4, 2022, the FCC issued Order [DA 22-1063](#) waiving certain RHC rules and deadlines to assist participants and providers located in the areas affected by Hurricane Ian. This Order applies to HCPs and service providers located in the state of Florida, North Carolina and South Carolina. This Order takes the following actions:
  - Grants a 60-day extension to the deadline for appeals and request for waiver for all requests from September 18, 2022 through March 3, 2023;
  - Waives the 14-day Information Request response deadline for Information Requests related to funding requests, appeals and waivers, invoices, audits and other documentation and applies to all funding years for all Information Requests issued on or after September 4, 2022 (affected health care providers and service providers have until March 3, 2023 to respond);
  - Waives the invoicing deadline for FY2021 funding requests and grants an automatic 120-day extension; and
  - Waives the September 30, 2022 deadline for Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) program annual reports (HCF program participants have until March 3, 2023 to submit annual reports).



# FCC 23-6: Order on Reconsideration, Second Report and Order, Order, and Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

- On January 26, 2023, the FCC released an Order on Reconsideration, Second Report and Order, Order, and Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking strengthening the procedures for RHC. These actions resolve petitions for reconsideration on issues from [FCC Report and Order 19-78](#), adopt proposals from the February 2022 Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, and propose and seek comment on further reforms to RHC program rules. These actions include:
  - Rule Changes
  - Potential Future Rule Changes

# FCC 23-6: Rule Changes

Rates determination in the Telecom Program:

- Eliminates rules requiring use of the Rates Database to determine urban and rural rates.
- Waivers allowing the use of previously approved rates for all urban and rural rates will remain in place for FY2023.
- Beginning in FY2024, rules requiring rural rates to be calculated using Methods 1 through 3 and the pre-Rates Database calculation method for urban rates will be reinstated with the following minor changes:
  - For FY2024 and 2025, service providers will be permitted to use previously approved rates for rural rates that would otherwise be calculated under Method 3.
  - If there are no comparable rural rates within 30 percent of the speed of the requested service, service providers may use the rate for a higher bandwidth service that is otherwise similar to the requested service to justify a rural rate.
  - Similarly, if there are no comparable urban rates within 30 percent of the speed of the requested service, health care providers may use the rate for a higher bandwidth service that is otherwise similar to the requested service to justify an urban rate.
  - Affirms the decisions in FCC Order 19-78 that a non-telecommunications service that is functionally similar to a service requested in the Telecom Program should be considered similar to it when calculating rates and that services with advertised speeds 30 percent above or below the speed of the requested service be considered functionally similar to the requested service.

# FCC 23-6: Rule Changes (continued)

## Invoicing in the Telecom Program:

- Eliminates the use of the Health Care Provider Support Schedule (HSS) and moves invoice submission until after services have been provided.

## Internal cap on upfront costs and multi-year commitments in the HCF Program:

- Limits the application of the internal cap on upfront costs and multi-year commitments in the HCF Program to when the total support available for the funding year is exceeded.
- When the internal cap applies, funding requests for upfront costs and the first year of multi-year commitments will be prioritized over the second and third year of multi-year commitments.

# FCC 23-6: Potential Future Rule Changes

## **The Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking proposes:**

- Adjustments to the methods used to determine rural rates using the service provider's own rates or competitor's rates, a new process for determining cost-based rural rates, and changes to the process for determining urban rates.
- Allowing a conditional approval of eligibility to allow entities that will soon become eligible to participate in the RHC program to begin competitive bidding and file a Request for Services.
- Moving the Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN) change deadline to align with the invoice deadline.

## **The Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking seeks comment on:**

- Reinstating the cap on satellite services in the Telecom Program.
- Funding in the HCF Program for equipment used for Telecom Program supported connections.
- Whether there should be a process for changing the dates of evergreen contracts after a funding commitment is issued.
- Revisions to data collected in the Telecom Program.

# Reminder: Information Requests

- If USAC requires information that cannot be located on the submitted supporting documentation, this will result in an **Information Request**.
- All account holders will receive all Information Requests.
- Applicants are given 14 calendar days to provide a response to the Information Request.
  - 11:59 p.m. ET on the 14<sup>th</sup> day would be the last time to respond to the Information Request.
- Information Requests not responded to within 14 calendar days **will result in a denial** of that form.
- An extension request must be received prior to the original 14-day Information Request deadline.

# FY2023 Funding Request Reviews

- RHC may begin funding request reviews before the funding request window closes.
- **No final decisions will be made prior to the close of the filing window.**
- This means that you may receive an Information Request before April 3, 2023.
- FCC Form 466 Information Requests can either be sent via My Portal or an @usac.org email address.
  - If you receive an Information Request via My Portal, please respond directly in My Portal.
  - If you receive an Information Request by email, please “Respond All” to that Information Request.
- All account holders will receive all Information Requests.

# Reminder: Invoicing Deadlines

- New invoicing guidelines adopted in FCC [Report and Order 19-78](#) became effective beginning with FY2020 applicants. The invoicing deadline will be four months (120 days) from the service delivery deadline in both the HCF and Telecom Programs, October 28 of a given funding year.
- Please use the new [RHC Invoicing Deadline Tool](#) in the Open Data section of the USAC website to look up your invoicing deadline.
- For more information, please see the [HCF invoice page](#) and [Telecom invoice page](#).

# Supply Chain Order

- As a reminder, when service providers login to [My Portal](#) they will see two new [supply chain certifications](#) included in the FCC Form 463 and Telecom program invoice.

The first certification affirms compliance with the [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. 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](#), which includes those offered by Huawei Technologies Company, ZTE Corporation, Hytera Communications Corporation, Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology Company, Dahua Technology Company, AO Kaspersky Lab, China Mobile International USA Inc., China Telecom (Americas) Corp. and their affiliates and subsidiaries.

- **FY2022 Applicants:** If you requested services or equipment provided or that contain components of products produced by any of the listed covered companies 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 Applicants:** As you proceed with competitive bidding, please ensure you are not requesting funding for services or equipment from listed covered companies or any of their parents, affiliates and subsidiaries.



# Supply Chain Web Page

- [Supply Chain webpage](#)



The screenshot shows the FCC's Supply Chain webpage. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for About, E-rate, Rural Health Care, Lifeline, High Cost, and Service Providers. A yellow arrow points to the 'About' link. Below the navigation menu, there is a breadcrumb trail: USAC | About | Reports & Orders | **Supply Chain**. On the left side, there is a sidebar menu with links for Reports & Orders, Annual Report, FCC Filings, FCC Orders, and **Supply Chain**. The main content area features a large heading 'Supply Chain' and two paragraphs of text. The first paragraph discusses the FCC's actions to protect national security and the integrity of communications networks since November 2019, mentioning the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act of 2019 and providing a link to the FCC's actions at www.fcc.gov/supplychain. The second paragraph discusses the FCC's release of the Supply Chain First Report and Order in November 2019, which adopted a rule (47 CFR Section 54.9) prohibiting the use of Universal Service Fund (USF) support to purchase, obtain, maintain, improve, modify, operate, manage, or otherwise support equipment or services produced or provided by companies found to pose a national security threat to the integrity of communications networks or the communications supply chain.

About ▾ E-rate ▾ Rural Health Care ▾ Lifeline ▾ High Cost ▾ Service Providers ▾

USAC | About | Reports & Orders | **Supply Chain**

**Reports & Orders**

Annual Report

FCC Filings

FCC Orders

**Supply Chain**

## Supply Chain

Since November 2019, the FCC has taken a number of actions to protect the national security of the United States, the security and safety of United States persons, and the integrity of communications networks or the communications supply chain. The FCC has also implemented the [Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act of 2019](#). The FCC's actions can be found at [www.fcc.gov/supplychain](http://www.fcc.gov/supplychain).

In November 2019, the FCC released the [Supply Chain First Report and Order](#) adopting a rule (47 CFR Section 54.9) which prohibits the use of Universal Service Fund (USF) support to purchase, obtain, maintain, improve, modify, operate, manage, or otherwise support equipment or services produced or provided by companies found to pose a national security threat to the integrity of communications networks or the communications supply chain.

**Questions?**

# **My Portal Updates – Submitting the FCC Form 466**

Telecom Program Funding Request Office Hours

# Create FCC Form 466

The screenshot shows a web application interface with the following components:

- Navigation tabs: MY FORMS, MY DOCUMENTS, MY CONTRACTS, MY HCPS.
- Search fields: HCP Name: [input], HCP Number: [input].
- Dropdown menus: Fund Year 2022, Fund Year 2021.
- Table of existing forms:

Form Type	Form 465 App #	Friendly Name	Last Edited	Form Status	ACSD	Action Available
465 +				Posted		Create 466

Form Type	FRN	Friendly Name	Service Type	Bandwidth	Status	FCL Issued	Action
466			Voice Grade Business Line(s)	56 Kbps (4)	In review		

Buttons: New FCC Form 465

# Competitive Bidding Exemptions

- Purchasing services from a **government master service agreement (MSA)** negotiated by a federal, state, Tribal, or local governmental entity on its behalf, and which was awarded pursuant to applicable competitive bidding requirements;
- Requesting support using contracts **previously approved by USAC** (MSA under the RHC Pilot Program or the HCF Program);
- Using an active multi-year contract designated as **evergreen** for the RHC program (exemption applies for the life of the contract); or is
- Using a contract **approved under the E-rate program**.

# Competitive Bidding Exemptions (continued)

- Applicants can select “Create Exempt FCC Form 466” if the HCP meets the requirements for a competitive bidding exemption.

MY FORMS MY DOCUMENTS MY CONTRACTS MY HCPS HCP Name: HCP Number:

Fund Year 2022

Competitive Bidding Exemption 466

Form Type	Form 465 App #	Friendly Name	Last Edited	Form Status	ACSD	Action Available
465		FY 2022 - 465		Posted	7/20/2021	

New FCC Form 465 **Create Exempt FCC Form 466**

# Competitive Bidding Exemptions (continued)

- Within the FCC Form 466, applicants using a competitive bidding exemption will be prompted to select which type of exemption they are applying for and upload the supporting contract.

Are you submitting a new contract to be reviewed for Competitive Bidding Exemption?

Government Master Services Agreement  Pre-Approved Master Services Agreement  E-Rate Master Contract

By selecting one of the criteria, you must provide the appropriate contract information. !

Select Contract Info

# Enter Rural Rate and Upload Documentation

Exemption?  
By selecting one of the criteria, you must provide the appropriate contract information. ✓  
Contract ID - Friendly name: 1504050 - My BFF Contract

**Select Contract Info**

Does the applicant's contract with the service provider include a Service Level Agreement (SLA)? No ▾

**Line 33: Rural rate per month per the service agreement (Enclose Documentation)**

Undiscounted Cost per Month (excluding taxes & fees) \$  !

Taxes & Fees per Month \$  (optional)

Total Undiscounted Cost per Month \$  !

Attach ONLY Rural Rate Documentation. Do not upload documentation for other line items here.

!



# Calculating Rural Rates

- On May 25, 2022, the FCC released [Order DA 22-580](#), waiving the requirement that HCPs and service providers participating in the Telecom Program use the Rates Database to calculate urban and rural rates for FY2023.
- Instead of using the Rates Database, HCPs and their service providers can:
  - use rates approved under [Method 1, 2, or 3](#) to calculate rural rates, or
  - use the most recently-approved rural rate within the past five funding years for the same service to the same facility or, if there is no approved rate, an approved rural rate for the same or similar services to a facility with the same or similar geographic characteristics.
  - **NOTE:** For all previously approved urban and rural rates, applicants **must** provide USAC with the previous FRN associated with that approved rate and submit **all** documentation associated with that rate.
- HCPs will enter this rural rate on **Line 33** (rural rate per month per service agreement) of the FCC Form 466 and upload supporting documentation, for example, a Funding Commitment Letter or rates approval letter for the previously approved rate.
- Documentation provided must show that the rural rate provided is in compliance with the rural rate rule (47 CFR 54.607 (2018)).

# Calculating Urban Rates

- As with rural rates, [Order DA 22-580](#) allows the use of the most recently-approved urban rate within the past five funding years for the same service at the same facility.
  - If there is no approved rate for a particular facility/service combination, the HCP and its carrier may use urban rates approved for the same or similar services to the facility with the same or similar geographic characteristics. You and/or your service provider must show that the urban rates were previously approved.
  - If there are no previously-approved rates available, the urban rate generated by the Rates Database should be used to avoid a denial of the funding request.
  - **NOTE:** For all previously approved urban and rural rates, you must provide USAC with the previous FRN associated with that approved rate and submit all supporting documentation associated with that rate.
- Applicants may also use prior sources for determining the urban rate which can include state and federal tariffs, NECA tariffs, advertised rates, E-Rate or Open Data.

# Entering Rural Rate and Urban Rates

**Block 6: Comprehensive Rate Comparison Request**

The information in this block will establish the difference between the urban and rural rates for your requested service. For more information please see this [tips page](#).

**Method for determining the rural rate**  !

Monthly Rural rate (excluding taxes & fees) \$  !

Monthly Taxes & Fees \$  (optional)

Total Monthly Rural Rate \$  !

Attach documentation to support the monthly rural rate.  !

Line 39: One-time Urban Rate Charge (in selected large city) \$  !  
Upload ONLY One-time Urban Charges Documentation. Do not upload documentation for other line items here.

Line 40: One-time Rural Rate Charge (in city where HCP is located) \$  !  
Upload ONLY One-time Rural Charges Documentation. Do not upload documentation for other line items here.

**Line 41: Monthly Urban Rate (in selected Large City)**

**Method for determining the urban rate**  !

Monthly Urban Rate (excluding taxes & fees) \$  !

Monthly Taxes & Fees \$  (optional)

Total Monthly Urban Rate \$  !

Attach documentation to support the monthly urban rate.  !

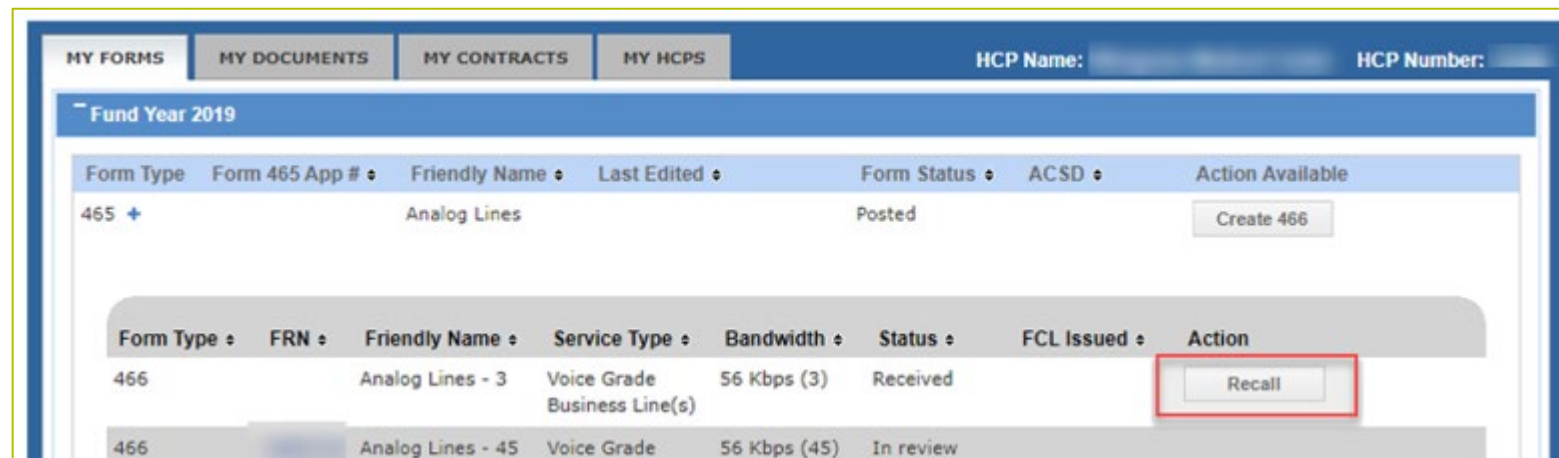
You must complete all required information on the "Service Information" tab before determining monthly urban rate.

# After Submitting

- You will receive an email letting you know that your form has been received.
  - If you do not receive an email, please go back into My Portal and be sure that you actually signed and submitted the form.
- The reviewer will reach out if additional information is needed.
- No funding decisions will be issued until after the close of the filing window period.
- Once your funding request has been approved, you will receive a Funding Commitment Letter (FCL) that will include all corresponding information to your funding request.

# After Submitting – Editing the FCC Form 466

- During the filing window, applicants can make edits to their FCC Form 466 by using the “Recall” feature **before** the form is in review.
  - The “Recall” feature will not be available once the form is in review and after the filing window closes.



The screenshot displays a web interface for managing FCC Form 466 applications. At the top, there are navigation tabs: MY FORMS, MY DOCUMENTS, MY CONTRACTS, and MY HCPS. To the right, there are input fields for HCP Name and HCP Number. Below this, a section titled 'Fund Year 2019' contains a table of applications. The table has columns for Form Type, Form 465 App #, Friendly Name, Last Edited, Form Status, ACSD, and Action Available. One application is listed with Form Type 465, Friendly Name Analog Lines, and Form Status Posted. Below this, there is a detailed view of a specific application with columns for Form Type, FRN, Friendly Name, Service Type, Bandwidth, Status, FCL Issued, and Action. The 'Recall' button in the Action column is highlighted with a red box.

Form Type	Form 465 App #	Friendly Name	Last Edited	Form Status	ACSD	Action Available
465 +		Analog Lines		Posted		Create 466

Form Type	FRN	Friendly Name	Service Type	Bandwidth	Status	FCL Issued	Action
466		Analog Lines - 3	Voice Grade Business Line(s)	56 Kbps (3)	Received		Recall
466		Analog Lines - 45	Voice Grade	56 Kbps (45)	In review		

# After Submitting – Editing the FCC Form 466 (continued)

- Once an applicant selects “Recall,” the FCC Form 466 draft can be edited and then resubmitted, or deleted.
- Please be sure to actually resubmit the form prior to the close of the filing window.

The screenshot displays a web interface for managing FCC Form 466 applications. At the top, there are navigation tabs: MY FORMS, MY DOCUMENTS, MY CONTRACTS, and MY HCPS. To the right, there are fields for HCP Name and HCP Number. Below this is a section for Fund Year 2019. A table lists existing forms, and a detailed view of a specific form (Form 466) is shown below. In this view, the 'Draft' status and the 'Edit' and 'Delete' buttons are highlighted with red boxes.

Form Type	Form 465 App #	Friendly Name	Last Edited	Form Status	ACSD	Action Available
465 +		Analog Lines		Posted		Create 466

Form Type	FRN	Friendly Name	Service Type	Bandwidth	Status	FCL Issued	Action
466		Analog Lines - 3	Voice Grade Business Line(s)	56 Kbps (3)	Draft		Edit Delete
466		Analog Lines - 45	Voice Grade Business Line(s)	56 Kbps (45)	In review		

**Questions?**

# **Best Practices and Resources**

## Telecom Program Funding Request Office Hours



# Best Practices: Communicating with Your Service Provider

- Ensure your service provider is aware of all the necessary documentation needed for future steps in the application process.
- Include your service provider when you reply to Information Requests via email.
- HCPs and service providers are required to retain documentation for a period of at least five years.

# Milestones to Apply for Funding for FY2023

<b>Telecom Program Form</b>	<b>Last Day to Submit for Telecom Program</b>
FCC Form 465 – Eligibility	January 10, 2023 Recommended Date
FCC Form 465 – Request for Services	February 12, 2023 Recommended Date
FCC Form 466 – Funding Request	April 3, 2023 Deadline to Submit*

\*Please note that these dates (with the exception of the FCC Form 466 filing window deadline of April 3) are not mandatory deadlines, but rather recommended milestones to meet the close of the filing window.

# Online Resources

- [RHC Learn](#)
- [Step 4: Submit Funding Requests](#)
- [Funding Request Summary](#)
- [Rural and Urban Rate Information for FY2021 and FY2022](#)
- [Competitive Bidding Exemptions](#)
- Blank [FCC Form 466](#)
- [Examples of Eligible Products and Services Telecom Program](#)

# RHC Program Customer Service Center



Email: [RHC-Assist@usac.org](mailto:RHC-Assist@usac.org)

- Include in your email
  - HCP Number
  - FRN Number
- Phone: **(800) 453-1546**
  - Hours are 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. ET
  - Monday- Friday



# The RHC Customer Service Center

<b>The RHC Customer Service Center CAN</b>	<b>The RHC Customer Service Center CANNOT</b>
Answer general questions regarding both programs	Determine eligibility of a specific site or service before an official form submission
Provide account holder information for an HCP	Review a form or document for accuracy before an official submission
Provide clarity regarding FCC Report and Order 19-78	Contact a service provider or other account holder on someone else's behalf
Provide helpful resources and best practices for forms	Provide documents that are not already accessible in My Portal
Assist with My Portal	Transfer a call to a specific form reviewer

**Questions?**

**Thank You!**



**Universal Service**  
Administrative Co.