Telecom Program Office Hours

March 23, 2022
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

• Use the “Raise Your Hand” button to be unmuted and ask a question to the team!
Meet Our Team

**Eric Overton**  
Program Manager | Rural Health Care

**Blythe Albert**  
Senior Program Manager | Rural Health Care
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 Help Desk at RHCAssist@usac.org
  - Raise your hand or ask your question in the questions box
Program Reminders

Telecom Program Funding Request Office Hours
Application Process

1. Determine Eligibility
   - Must meet three eligibility criteria:
     - Not-for-profit/public
     - In a rural area
     - One of the eligibility facility types
   - HCF Program: FCC Form 460
     - Telecom Program: FCC Form 465

2. Develop Evaluation Criteria and Request Services
   - Describe the services you need and develop scoring criteria to evaluate bids. Your request for services is posted to the USAC website for a minimum of 28 days.
   - HCF Program: FCC Form 461
     - Telecom Program: FCC Form 465

3. Evaluate Bids and Select Service Provider
   - Once competitive bidding has ended, choose the most “cost-effective” service provider.
   - HCF Program: FCC Form 462
     - Telecom Program: FCC Form 466

4. Submit Funding Request
   - Provide information about the services selected: cost, service provider information, and terms of service agreement(s).
   - HCF Program: FCC Form 463
     - Telecom Program: FCC Form 467

5. Certify Connection
   - Confirm service start and end dates.
   - HCF Program: FCC Form 463
     - Telecom Program: Invoice

6. Invoice
   - Submit invoice before deadline:
     - HCF Program: Initiate invoicing process by submitting FCC Form 463 to service provider for review and submission to USAC.
     - Telecom Program: Service provider completes invoicing 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.

- Award letter to winning vendor.

- Contact information for the service provider and all responsible account holders

- The start and end location of your services.

- Documentation substantiating the rural and urban rate (Telecom Program only)

- Viable source letter (35% contribution) (HCF Program consortia 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 will 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.
Reminder: Information Request

• Forms with missing or incomplete information or documentation cannot be processed.
• Where USAC requires information that cannot be located on the submitted supporting documentation will result in an Information Request.
  • FCC Form 466 Information Requests can either be sent via My Portal or an @usac.org email address.
• 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 14th 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.
• In our continuing efforts to gain efficiencies, you may receive an Information Request before the close of the filing window.
  • This will allow us to begin our reviews earlier and get a head start on issuing commitments once the filing window has closed.
  • As a reminder, no final decisions will be made prior to the close of the filing window and no funding commitments will be issued.
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.

- **New!** 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.
Questions?
Program Updates

Telecom Program Funding Request Office Hours
FCC Order 22-221 - Extending Filing Window Deadline

• On March 3, 2022, the FCC released Order 22-221 extending the deadline for FY2022 from April 1, 2022 to June 1, 2022.

• All FCC Forms 466 must be submitted no later than 11:59 p.m. ET on June 1, 2022.
**Milestones to Apply for Funding for FY2022: Telecom Program Recommended Last Day to Submit for HCPs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HCF Program Form</th>
<th>Last Day to Submit for Individual HCPs NOT using a Request for Proposal (RFP)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FCC Form 465 – Eligibility</td>
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*Please note that these dates (with the exception of the FCC Form 466 filing window deadline of June 1) are not mandatory deadlines, but rather recommended milestones to meet the close of the filing window.*
Order DA 21-394

- On April 8, 2021, the FCC released Order DA 21-394, waiving the requirement that health care providers and service providers participating in the Telecommunications (Telecom) Program use the Rates Database to calculate urban and rural rates for funding years 2021 and 2022.

- In addition, the Order waives the following administrative deadlines to provide all RHC Program applicants with additional time to comply with requirements:
  - Service delivery deadline for FY2020 (non-recurring charges) – extended by one year to June 30, 2022.
  - Invoice filing deadline for FY2020 – extended by 120 days to February 25, 2022.

- Use the RHC Invoicing Deadline Tool on the USAC website to find your invoicing deadline.
Calculating Rural Rates

• Instead of using the Rates Database, HCPs and their service providers should continue to use rates approved under Method 1, 2, or 3 to calculate rural rates.

• HCPs and service providers must use the most recently-approved rural rate for FY2018, FY2019, or FY2020 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, you **must** provide USAC with the previous FRN associated with that approved rate and submit all documentation associated with that rate.

• **If you have an approved rate for FY2021, please use that rate to submit your funding request.**

• 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 FY2018, FY2019, or FY2020.

• 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

• Instead of using the Rates Database, HCPs should use an urban rate that has been previously approved for the same service at the same facility within the past three funding years.

• HCPs should upload to their FCC Form 466 documentation substantiating their urban rate on Line 33, whether it be documentation supporting a previously approved urban rate such as a Funding Commitment Letter (FCL) or documentation substantiating their urban rate under the preexisting rule.

• Documentation provided must show that the urban rate provided is in compliance with the urban rate rule (FCC Order DA 21-394 paragraphs 23-25).

• HCPs may use an urban rate that was approved in the last three years for the same service at the same facility
  • If more than one such rate was approved, HCPs must use the most recently approved urban rate.

• If there is no approved rate for a specific service delivered to the specific HCP, an urban rate approved for the same or similar services to a facility in a same or similar geographic location may be used.

• If an HCP doesn’t upload supporting documentation to its FCC Form 466, an Information Request will be sent to obtain it.
Supply Chain Order

• It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that they are compliant with FCC Report and Order 19-121, prohibiting the use of Universal Service funds for equipment or services produced or provided by companies that pose a national security threat.

• New certifications concerning the supply chain were added to the FCC Form 463 and the Telecom invoice with an effective date of April 1, 2021.

• FY2022 applicants: As you proceed with competitive bidding and submitting funding requests forms, please ensure you are not requesting funding for services or equipment from companies identified on the FCC-issued Covered List.

• Learn more on the Supply Chain webpage on the USAC website.
Questions?
My Portal Updates – Submitting the FCC Form 466

Telecom Program Funding Request Office Hours
Create FCC Form 466
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.
Competitive Bidding Exemptions (continued)

- Within the exempt 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.
Enter Rural Rate and Upload Document
Calculating Rural Rates

• On April 8, 2021, the FCC released Order DA 21-394, 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 years 2021 and 2022.

• Instead of using the Rates Database, HCPs and their service providers should continue to use rates approved under Method 1, 2, or 3 to calculate rural rates.

• HCPs and service providers must use the most recently-approved rural rate for FY2018, FY2019, or FY2020 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, you must provide USAC with the previous FRN associated with that approved rate and submit all documentation associated with that rate.

• If you have an approved rate for FY2021, please use that rate to submit your funding request.

• 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 FY2018, FY2019, or FY2020.

• 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 21-394 allows the use of the most recently-approved urban rate within the past three 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.
Entering Rural Rate and 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.
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.
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 FY2022

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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 Prodcuts and Services Telecom Program
Help Desk Information

Email: 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 Help Desk

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Help Desk CAN</th>
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<tr>
<td>Answer general questions regarding both programs</td>
<td>Determine eligibility of a specific site or service before an official form submission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide account holder information for an HCP</td>
<td>Review a form or document for accuracy before an official submission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide clarity regarding FCC Report and Order 19-78</td>
<td>Contact a service provider or other account holder on someone else’s behalf</td>
</tr>
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<td>Provide helpful resources and best practices for forms</td>
<td>Provide documents that are not already accessible in My Portal</td>
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<td>Assist with My Portal</td>
<td>Transfer a call to a specific form reviewer</td>
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Questions?
Thank You!