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Telecom Program Funding Request Best Practices for FY2022

Submitting the FCC Form 466

November 17, 2021

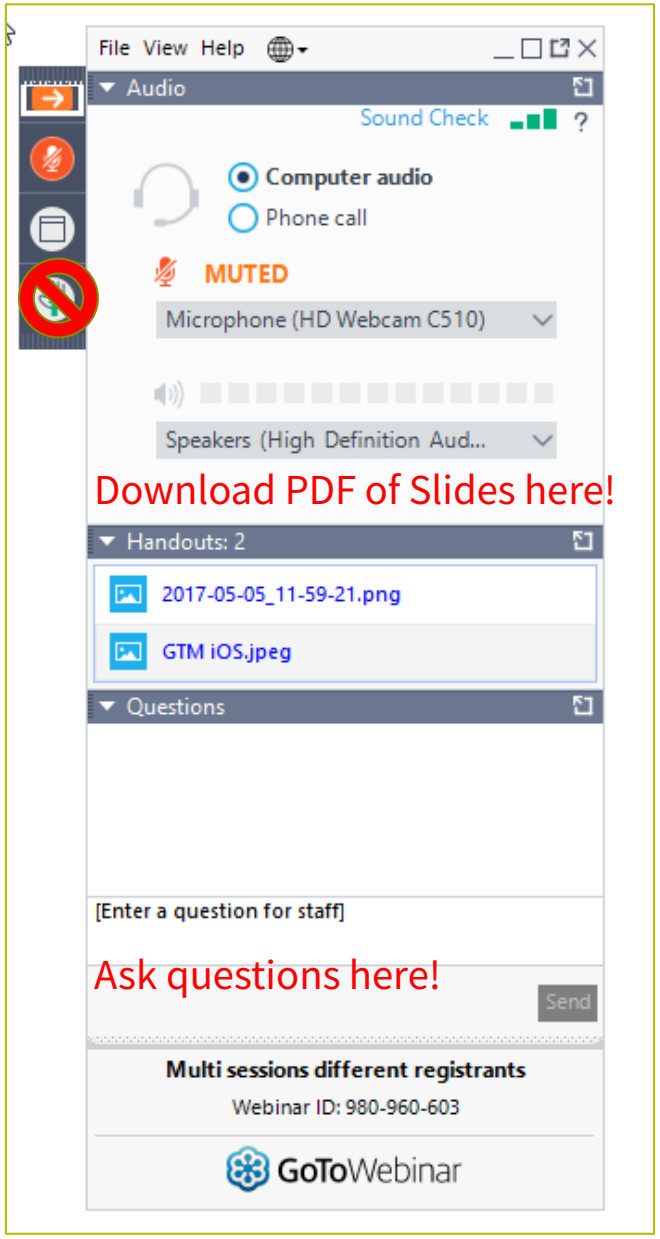
Universal Service Administrative Co.

DISCLAIMER:

- To accommodate all attendees, real-time closed captions will be present during this presentation. This is a new feature we are testing out to improve webinar accessibility for all. We understand it is a significant change and appreciate your patience. 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
- Slides attached to GoToWebinar Panel and posted to [RHC Learn]



Meet Our Team

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Agenda

- Overview
- Program Updates
- My Portal Updates - Submitting the FCC Form 466
  - Competitive Bidding Exemptions
  - Uploading a Contract for Evergreen Designation
  - Urban/Rural Rate Updates
- Best Practices and Resources

By the end of this webinar, you will be able to…

- Understand what a funding request is, who must submit, and when to submit
- Preview updates to My Portal
  - Changes based on waiver of the requirement to use of the rates database
- Complete and submit an FCC Form 466 in My Portal
  - Avoid common errors
  - Upload a contract for evergreen designation
  - Submit your funding request before the deadline
- Respond to Information Requests
- Locate important resources on the USAC website

Glossary

Acronym	Meaning
FCC	Federal Communications Commission
FY	Funding Year
HCP	Health Care Provider (Your site)
HCP Number	Number associated with your site
PAH	Primary Account Holder
FRN	Funding Request Number
ACSD	Allowable Contract Selection Date
FCL	Funding Commitment Letter
SPIN/498 ID	Service Provider Identification Number

Differences Between RHC Programs

- Different services funded: **Telecom Program** funds telecommunications services and **HCF Program** funds advanced telecommunications and information services for broadband connectivity.
  - The Telecom Program does not provide support for equipment, network buildout, and non-common carrier services, e.g., information and private carriage services.
- Different method of calculating discount: Telecom Program funds the difference between the urban and rural rates; HCF Program funds a flat 65 percent.

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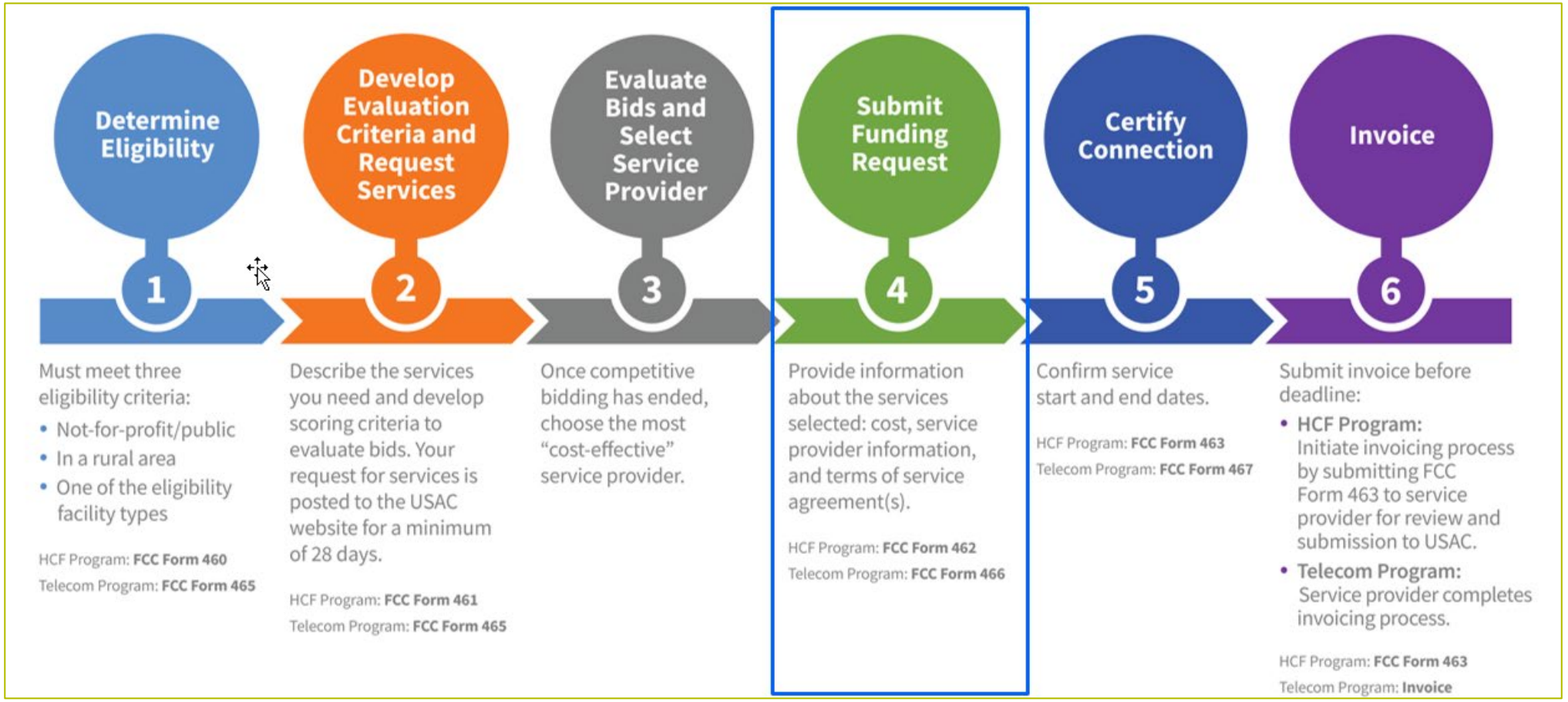
Funding Request Overview

Best Practices for FY2022

RHC Program Application Process



What is a Funding Request?

- Once a service provider is selected, the next step is to submit a **funding request** to USAC to provide information about the services selected and certify that those services are the most cost-effective option of the offers received.
- Specifies the type of service(s) ordered, cost, name of service provider(s), and terms of the service agreement(s).
- Applicants submit their Telecom funding request using an **FCC Form 466** (Funding Request Form).
- Download a blank FCC Form 466.

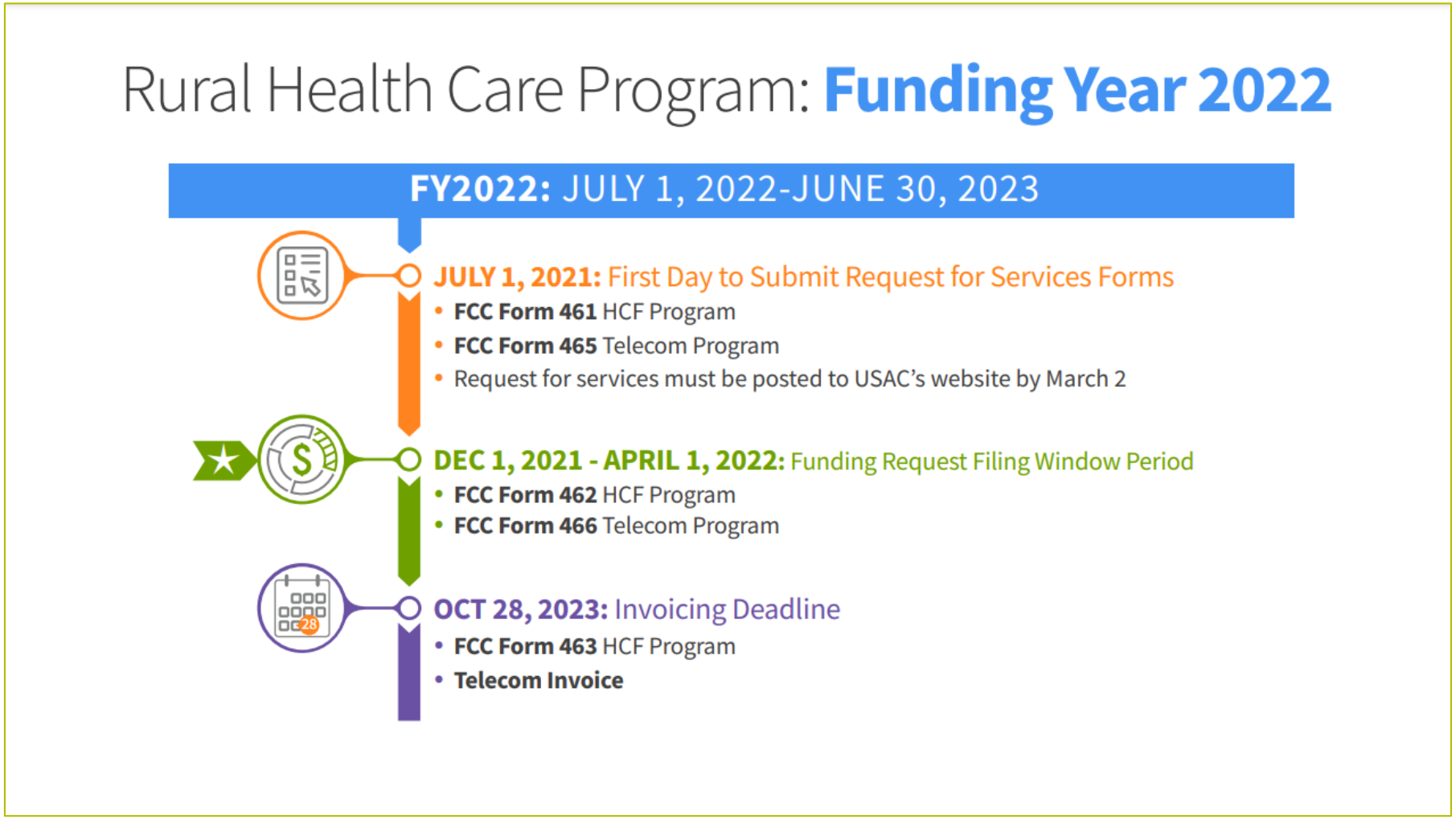
Who Must Submit a Funding Request

- All applicants requesting funding through the Telecom Program must file a separate FCC Form 466 for each circuit for which funding is requested.

When to Submit a Funding Request

- Applicants are unable to submit funding request forms outside of a filing window period
  - **The FCC Form 466 must be submitted by the close of a filing window period to be considered for funding**
- Funding Year (FY) 2022 Filing Window Period Opens December 1, 2021
  - **December 1, 2021 – April 1, 2022 11:59 p.m. ET**
- USAC suggests that applicants submit their funding requests as early as possible during the filing window
- No changes can be made to your funding request after the filing window closes

FY2022 Calendar



Information Requests

- Forms with missing or incomplete information or documentation cannot be processed
- 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 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
  - Note: Order DA 21-394 extended response deadline by an additional 28 days if an applicant requests the extension before the expiration of the initial 14-day deadline. This relief applies to information requests issued from April 8, 2021 through December 31, 2021.

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 list of the bid evaluation criteria and 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 bidder.
- ❑ Contact information for the service provider and all responsible account holders.
- ❑ The start and end location of your services.

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

Evergreen Contracts

- An **evergreen contract** is a multi-year contract between an HCP and a service provider that has been reviewed by USAC and designated as evergreen, which allows an applicant to bypass competitive bidding for the life of the contract for the same terms.
- For the Telecom Program, HCPs **must submit the FCC Form 466 annually** for every funding year in which funding is requested under the terms of the contract.
- Applicants may exercise voluntary extensions under the following conditions:
  - Voluntary extensions must be memorialized in the contract
  - The decision to extend the contract must have been made before a funding request is filed
  - Voluntary extensions cannot exceed five years in aggregate

Evergreen Contracts (continued)

- To be considered evergreen, the multi-year contract must meet the following criteria:
  - Both parties are identified,
  - Contract is signed and dated by the HCP,
  - Contract specifies the bandwidth, type, quantity, and terms of service,
  - Contract has a specific duration,
  - Contract specifies the cost of services to be provided,
  - Contract includes the physical addresses or other identifying information of the HCP sites purchasing from the contract, and
  - Contract must be entered into as a result of competitive bidding.
- Applicants will be notified of an evergreen designation on their Funding Commitment Letter (FCL).

Submission Tips

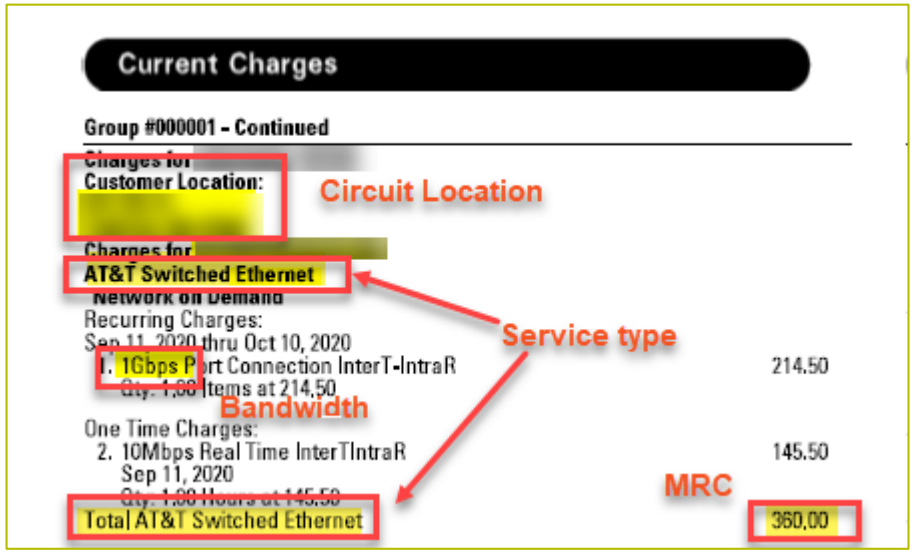
- Use the information on the original documentation (bill, contract, or service order) to enter the data into the FCC Form 466 and upload that document into My Portal with your submission.
- Remember you must also submit:
  - **Copies of all bids received** including winning, losing and disqualified.
  - **List of the people who evaluated the bids** with their names and titles.
  - **Evaluation documents** including the scores received by bidders based on the weighted criteria posted in the FCC Form 465.
  - **Award letter** to the winning vendor.
- Per the rules, you must have all supporting documents on hand at the time of submission and they must be uploaded when you submit your forms.

Submission Tips (continued)

- It is helpful to also submit a cover letter that includes a summary of your submission.
- Recommended items 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 HCP’s 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.

Identifying Applicable Charges on a Bill/Invoice - Example

- Annotated invoice clearly reflects HCP, Billing Account Number (BAN) Circuit Location(s), Bandwidth, Service Type, and Monthly Recurring Charge (MRC)



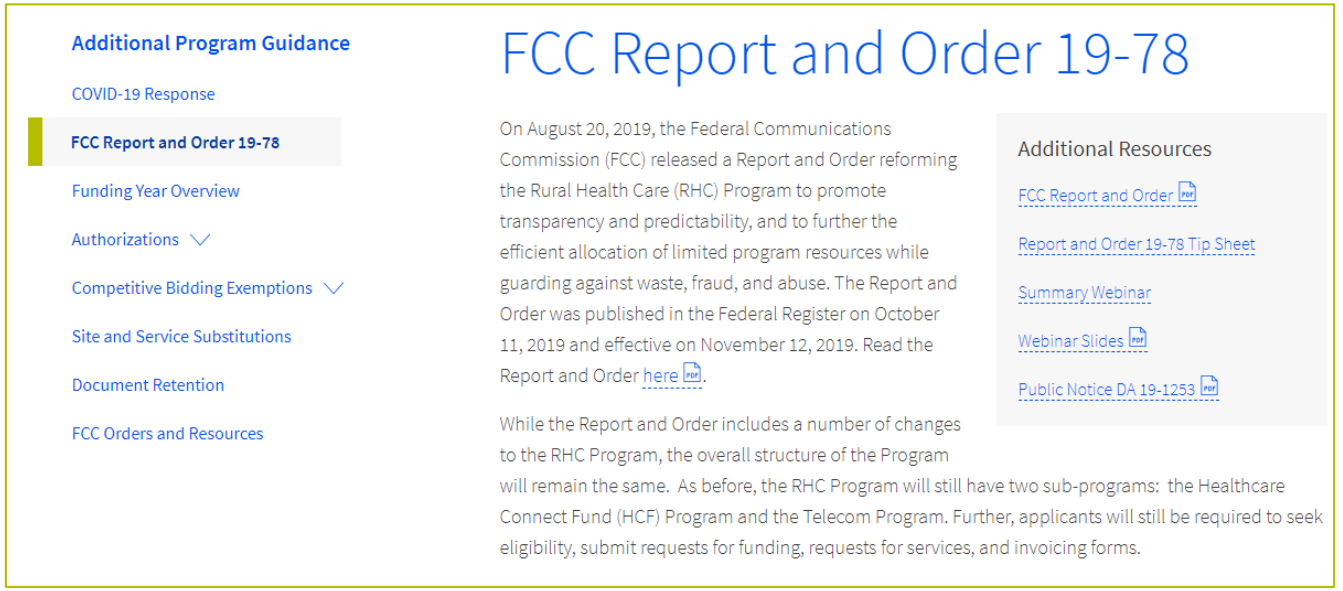
Questions?

Program Updates

Best Practices for FY2022

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 Tip Sheet
  - Webinar recording and slides



Reminder: FCC Report and Order 19-78 (continued)

- **Consultant Registration** – USAC will issue a unique registration number to the consultant or outside expert and that number will be linked to the HCP's organization.
- **Telecom Competitive Bidding Exemptions** – Telecom Program applicants can use every competitive bidding exemption applicable to the HCF Program, except the $10k or less exemption.
- **Bid Evaluation** – HCPs must include details about minimum service needs and disqualification factors with their request for services.
- **Declaration of Assistance** – Service providers must include a declaration of assistance when approving invoices and describe the nature of the relationship they have with a consultant, vendor, or outside expert who aids them in the preparation of their application.
- **Service Substitutions** – Telecom Program applicants will be allowed to submit service substitution requests.

Reminder: FCC Report and Order 19-78 (continued)

What about rurality tiers and prioritization of support?

- Based on FCC Report and Order 19-78, all eligible HCPs will be assigned a rurality tier for the purposes of prioritization and calculation of rural rates.
- The RHC program will continue to use the same definition of "rural area" under the FCC's rules.
  - In the case where demand exceeds available funding, USAC will prioritize funding based on the assigned rurality tiers and those areas in a Medically Underserved Area/Population (MUA/P).
- Since the rural definition has not changed, HCPs currently approved as "rural" will retain their rural status.
- **The RHC program will assign your rurality tier** – you do not have to do anything!
  - Look up your priority tier in My Portal or use the Rurality Tier Search Tool.

FCC Order 21-394

- 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.
- In addition, the Order grants the following extensions for all RHC program applicants:
  - Grants a one-year extension of the service delivery deadline for FY2020 to June 30, 2022.
  - Grants a 120-day extension (until February 25, 2022) of the invoice filing deadline for FY2020.
  - Directs USAC to grant an extension of 28 days for the deadline to respond to USAC's Information Request if an applicant requests the extension before the expiration of the initial 14-day deadline. This relief applies to information requests issued from April 8, 2021 through December 31, 2021.

FCC Order 21-1107 – Hurricane Ida Relief Order

- On September 3, 2021, the FCC issued Order DA 21-1107 waiving certain RHC rules and deadlines to assist participants and providers located in the areas affected by Hurricane Ida. This Order applies to HCPs and service providers located in all counties and parishes in **Louisiana and Mississippi** as of the date of release of the Order (September 3, 2021).
  - Grants a 60-day extension to the deadline for appeals and request for waiver for all requests from August 30,2021 through January 31, 2022
  - 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
  - Waives the September 30, 2021 deadline for HCF Program consortia annual reports
  - Impacted program participants will not be penalized for failure to retain records relating to program participation destroyed by Hurricane Ida

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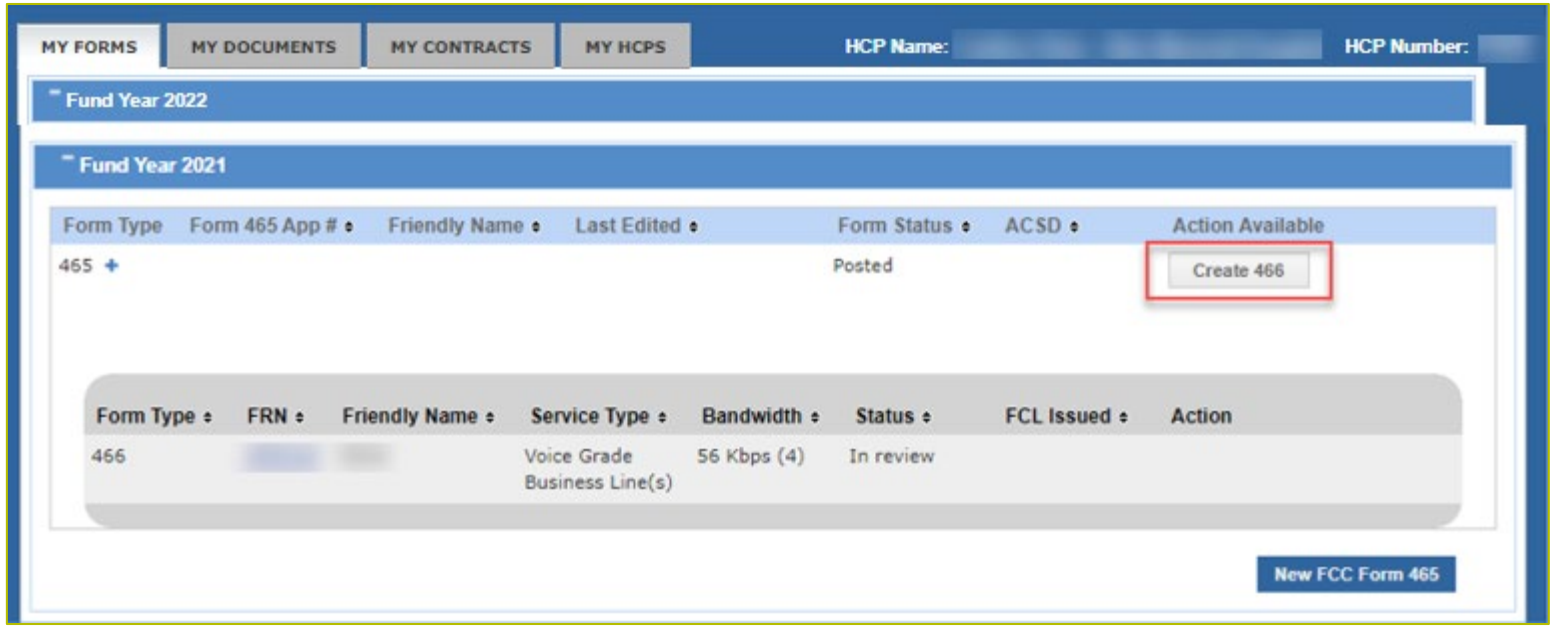
My Portal Updates – Submitting the FCC Form 466

Best Practices for FY2022

Create FCC Form 466

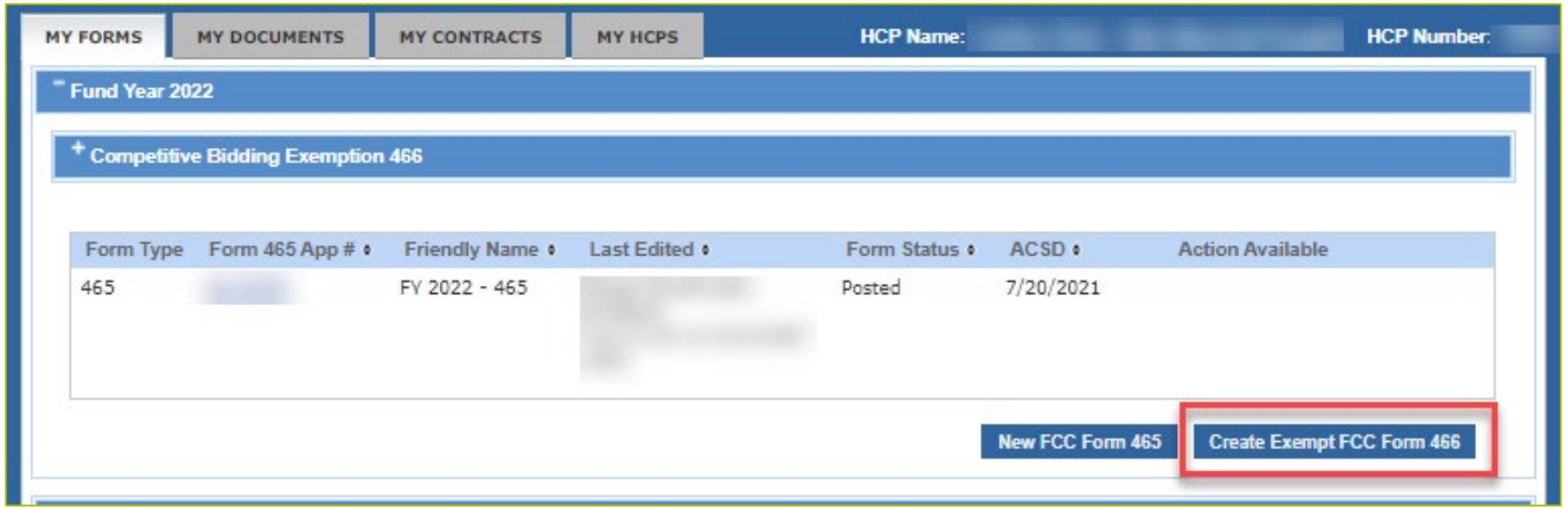


Competitive Bidding Exemptions

- 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**.

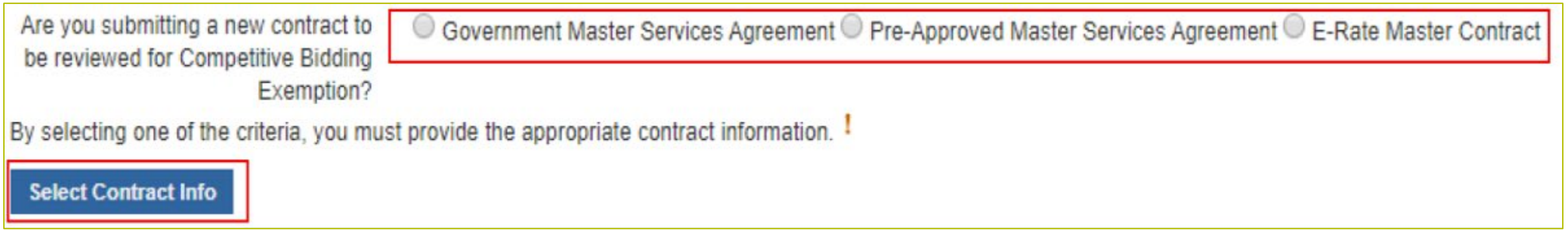
Competitive Bidding Exemptions (continued)

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

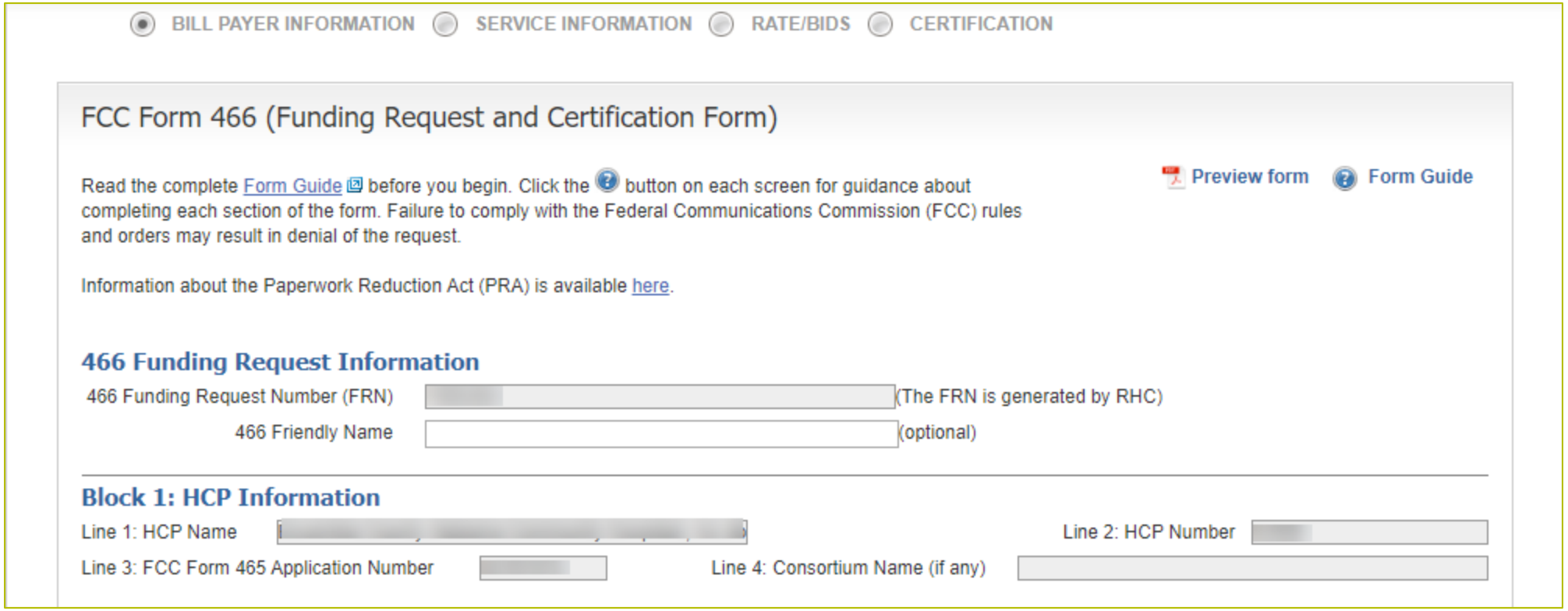


Competitive Bidding Exemptions (continued)

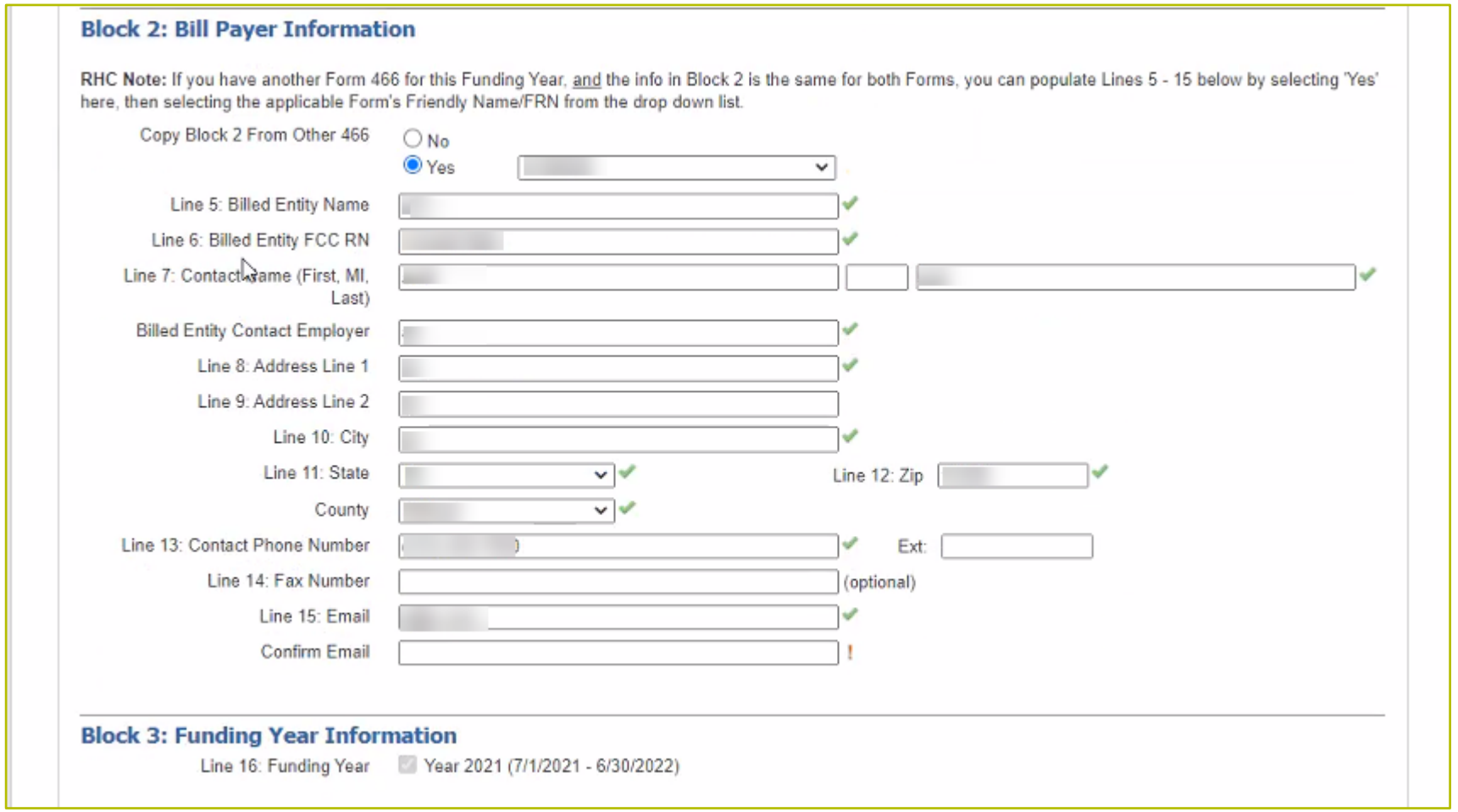
- Within the exempt FCC Form 466, applicants using a competitive bidding exemption will be prompted to select which type of exemption they are applying for and upload the supporting contract.



Review Funding Request and HCP Information



Enter Bill Payer Information and Select Funding Year



Block 2: Bill Payer Information

RHC Note: If you have another Form 466 for this Funding Year, and the info in Block 2 is the same for both Forms, you can populate Lines 5 - 15 below by selecting 'Yes' here, then selecting the applicable Form's Friendly Name/FRN from the drop down list.

Copy Block 2 From Other 466: ○ No ◉ Yes

Line 5: Billed Entity Name

Line 6: Billed Entity FCC RN

Line 7: Contact Name (First, MI, Last)

Billed Entity Contact Employer

Line 8: Address Line 1

Line 9: Address Line 2

Line 10: City

Line 11: State — Line 12: Zip

County

Line 13: Contact Phone Number — Ext:

Line 14: Fax Number (optional)

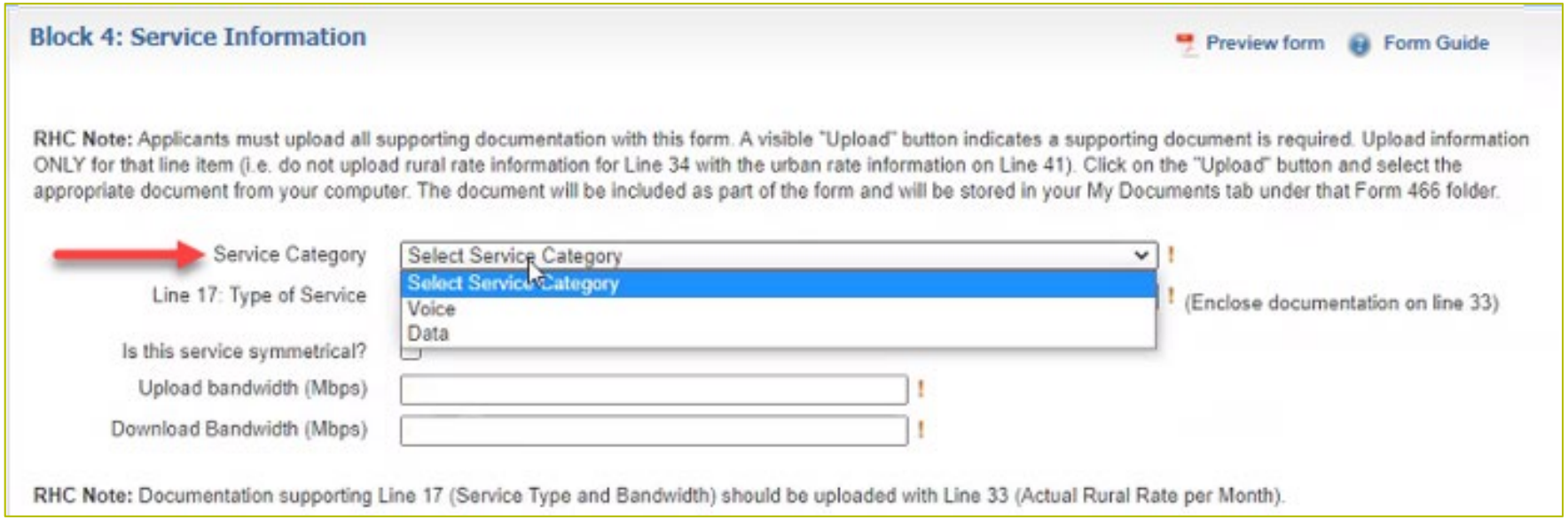
Line 15: Email

Confirm Email !

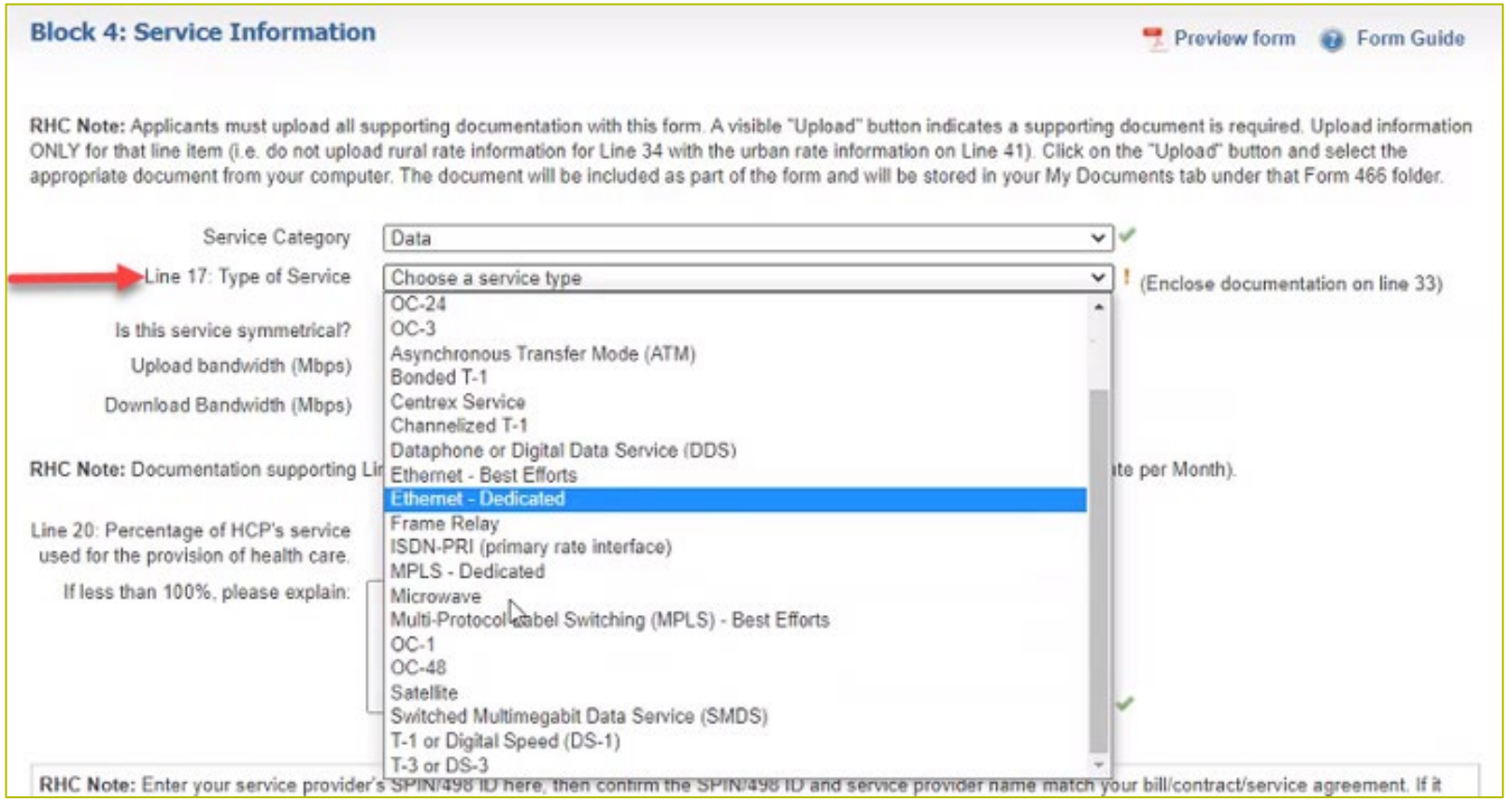
Block 3: Funding Year Information

Line 16: Funding Year — Year 2021 (7/1/2021 - 6/30/2022)

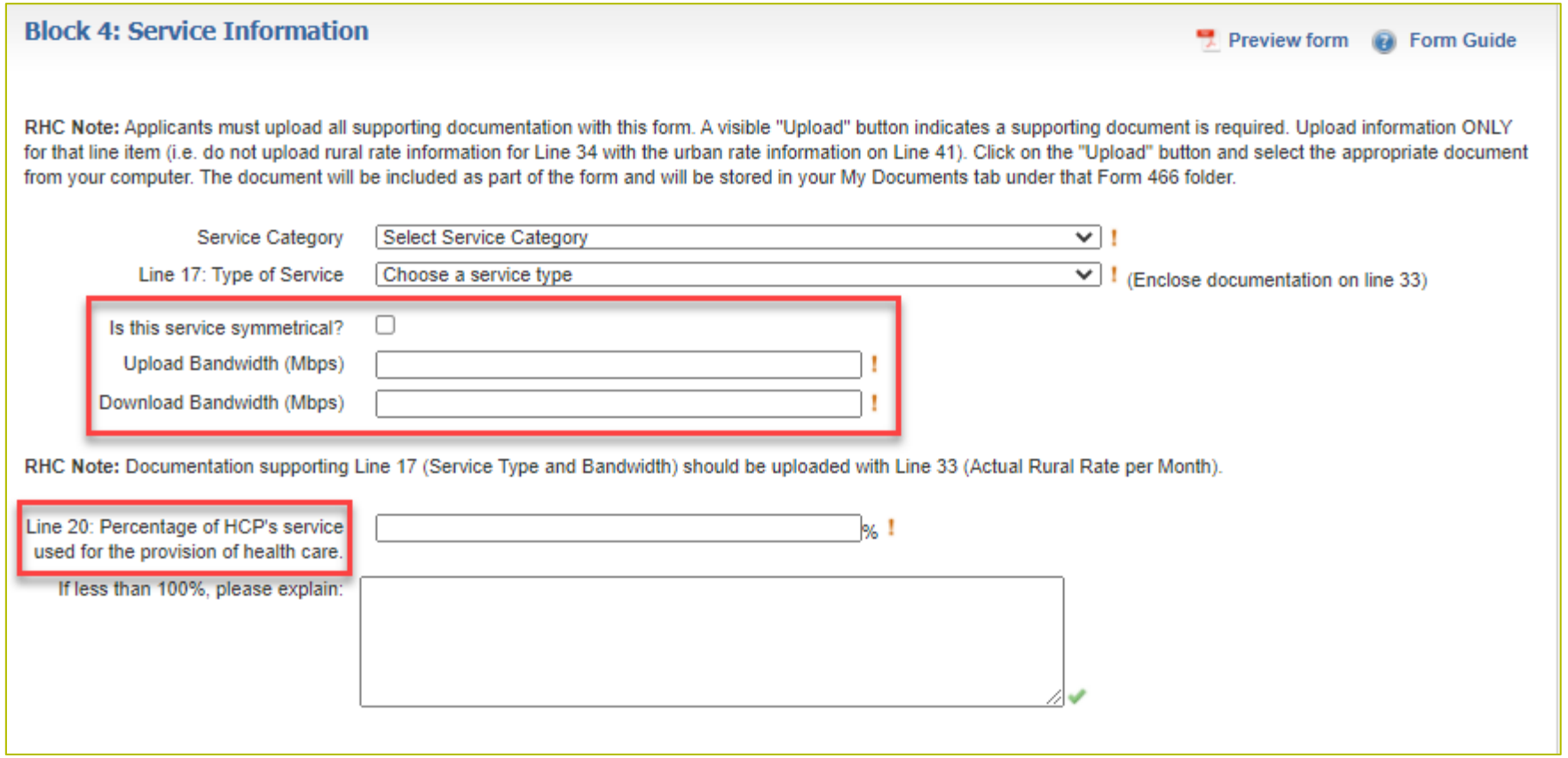
Select Type of Service



Select Type of Service (continued)



Select Type of Service (continued)



Block 4: Service Information

Preview form | Form Guide

RHC Note: Applicants must upload all supporting documentation with this form. A visible "Upload" button indicates a supporting document is required. Upload information ONLY for that line item (i.e. do not upload rural rate information for Line 34 with the urban rate information on Line 41). Click on the "Upload" button and select the appropriate document from your computer. The document will be included as part of the form and will be stored in your My Documents tab under that Form 466 folder.

Service Category: Select Service Category !

Line 17: Type of Service: Choose a service type ! (Enclose documentation on line 33)

Is this service symmetrical? ☐

Upload Bandwidth (Mbps): !

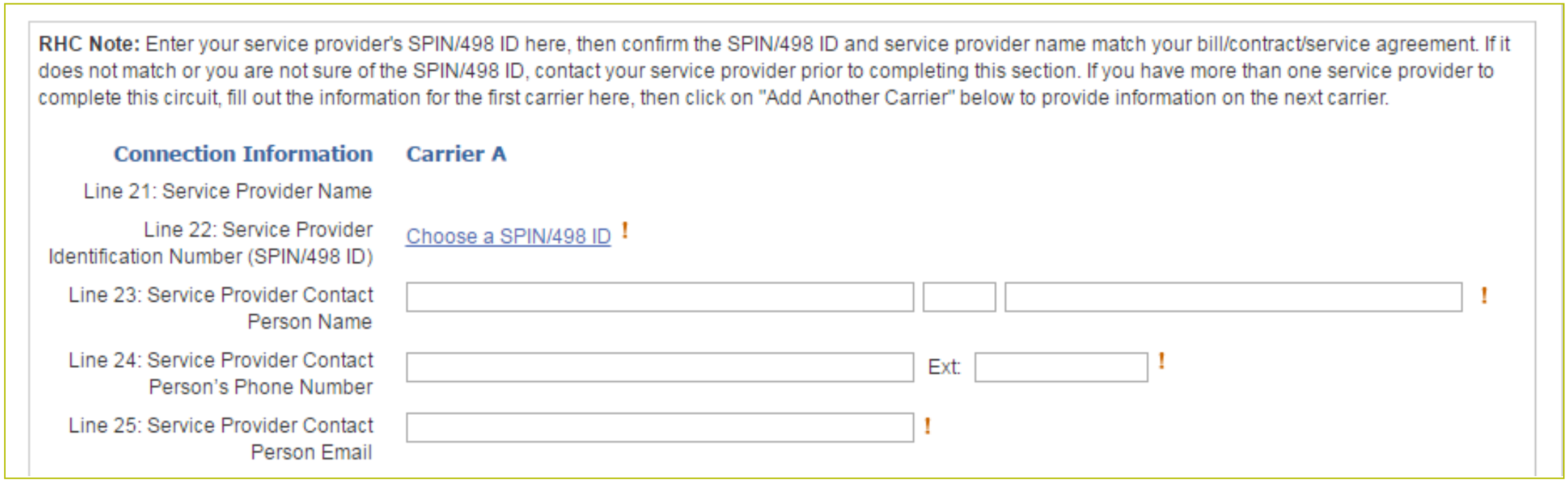
Download Bandwidth (Mbps): !

RHC Note: Documentation supporting Line 17 (Service Type and Bandwidth) should be uploaded with Line 33 (Actual Rural Rate per Month).

Line 20: Percentage of HCP's service used for the provision of health care: % !

If less than 100%, please explain:

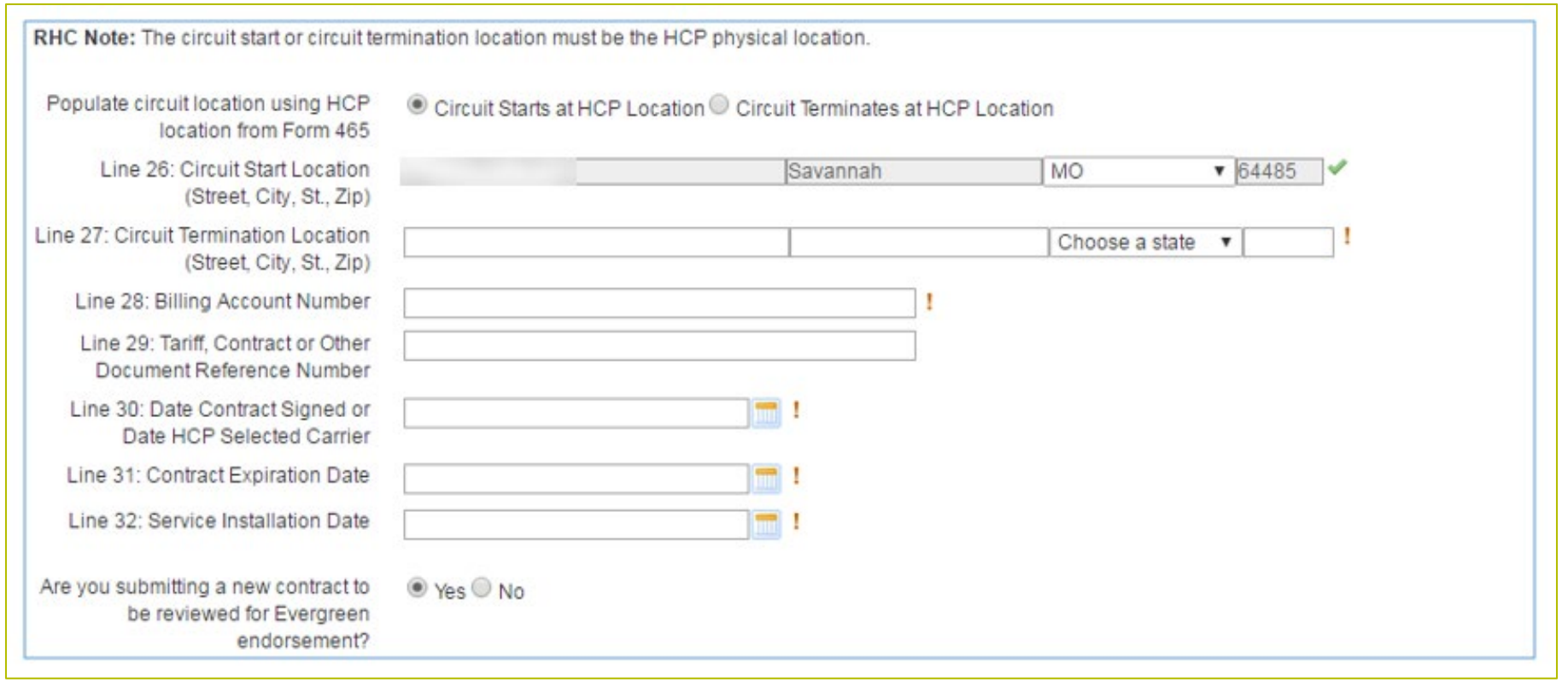
Select Service Provider Identification Number (498 ID/SPIN) and Enter Contact Information



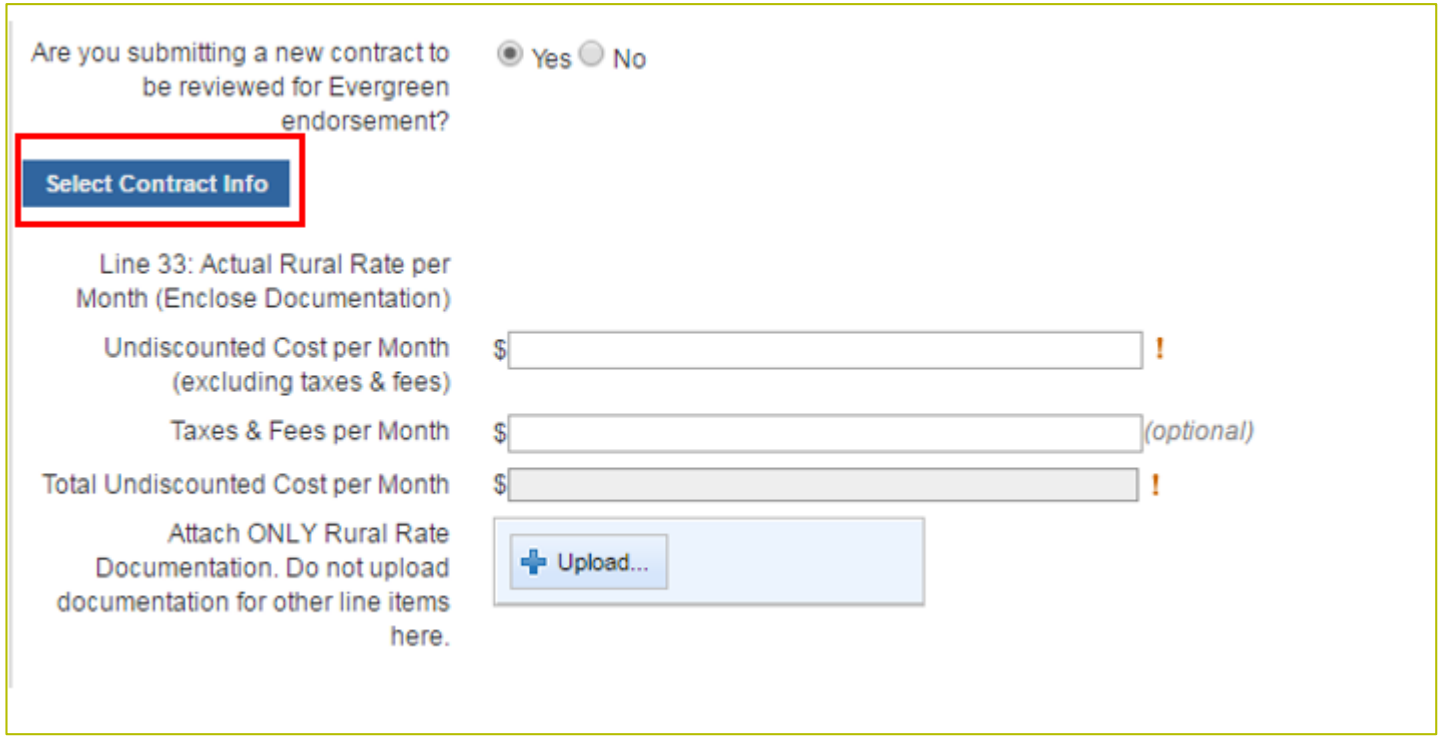
RHC Note: Enter your service provider's SPIN/498 ID here, then confirm the SPIN/498 ID and service provider name match your bill/contract/service agreement. If it does not match or you are not sure of the SPIN/498 ID, contact your service provider prior to completing this section. If you have more than one service provider to complete this circuit, fill out the information for the first carrier here, then click on "Add Another Carrier" below to provide information on the next carrier.

Connection Information	Carrier A
Line 21: Service Provider Name	
Line 22: Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN/498 ID)	Choose a SPIN/498 ID !
Line 23: Service Provider Contact Person Name	!
Line 24: Service Provider Contact Person's Phone Number	Ext: !
Line 25: Service Provider Contact Person Email	!

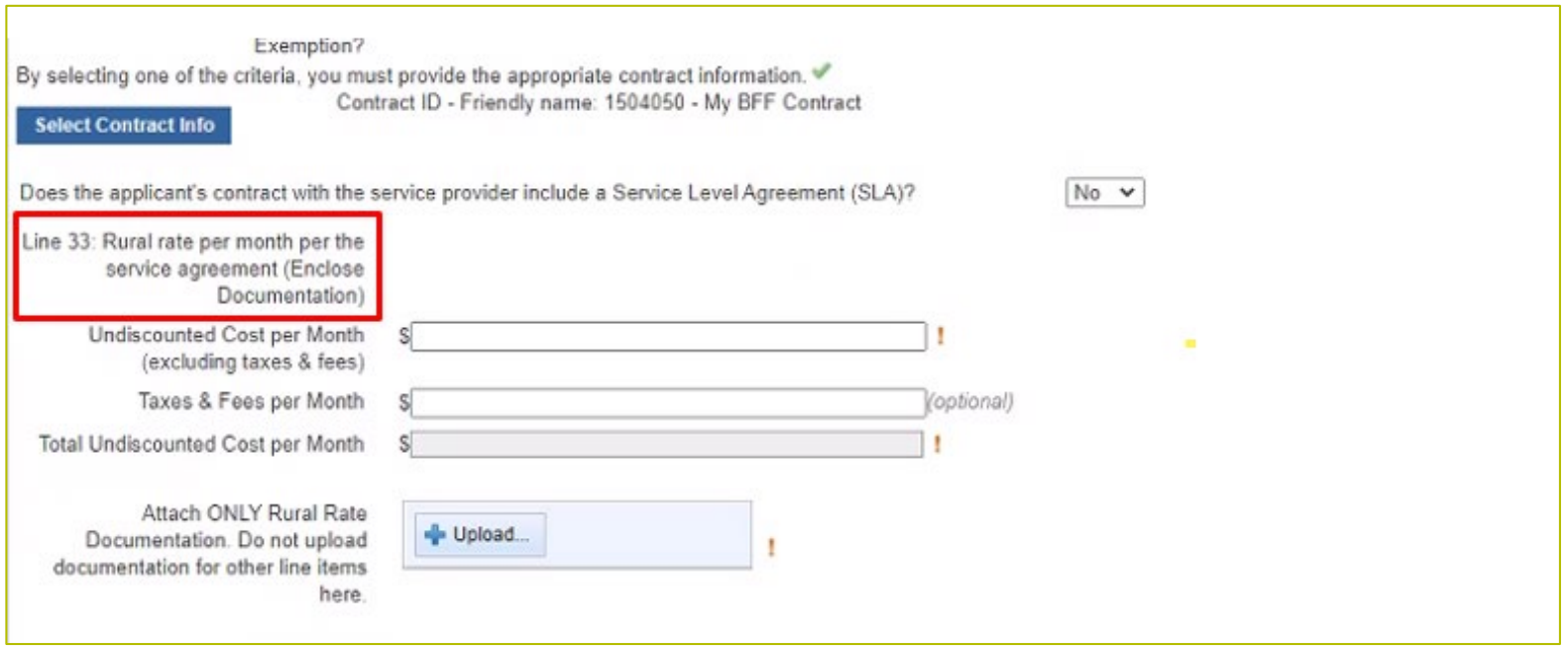
Enter Connection Information



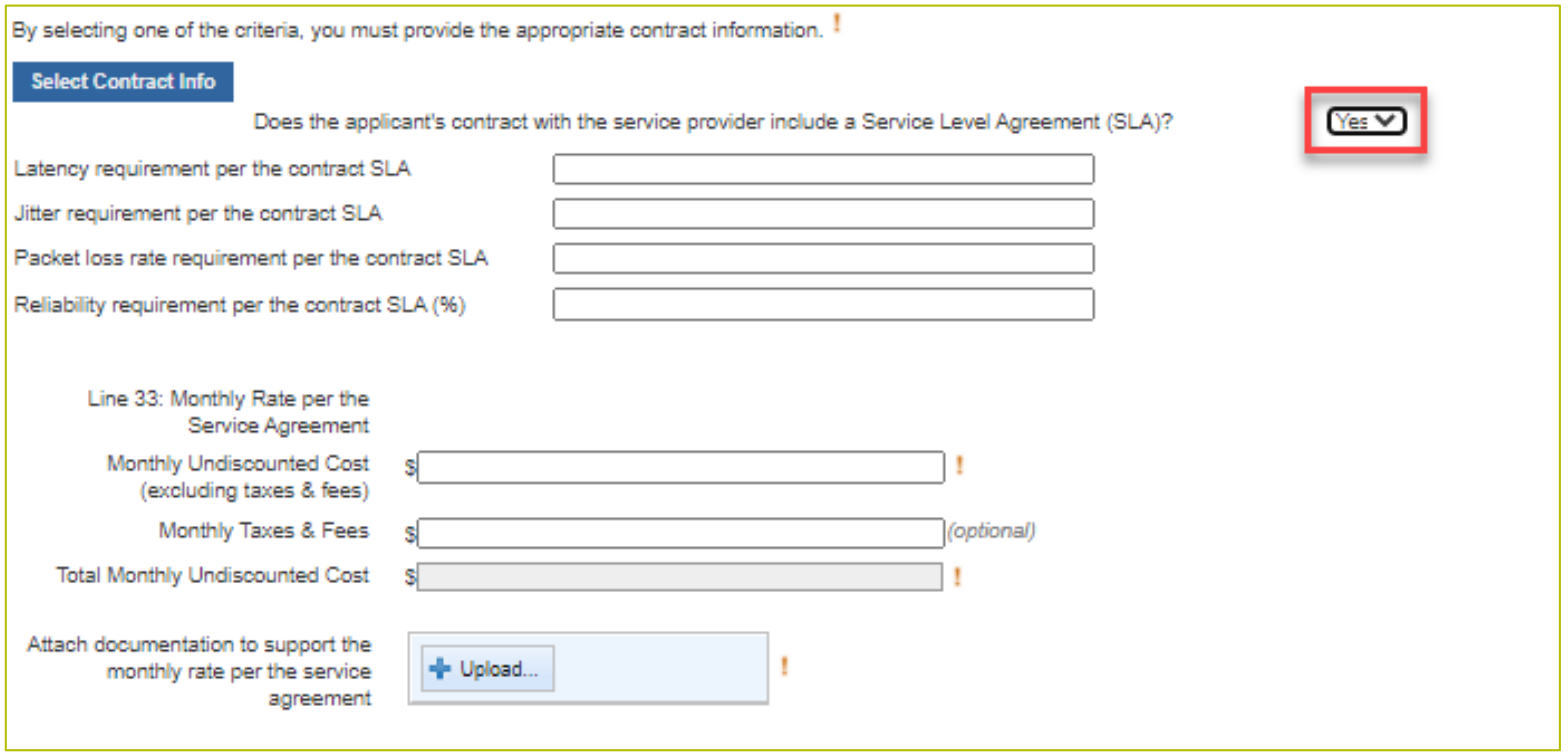
Enter Contract Information



Enter Rural Rate and Upload Document



Enter Service Level Agreement Information



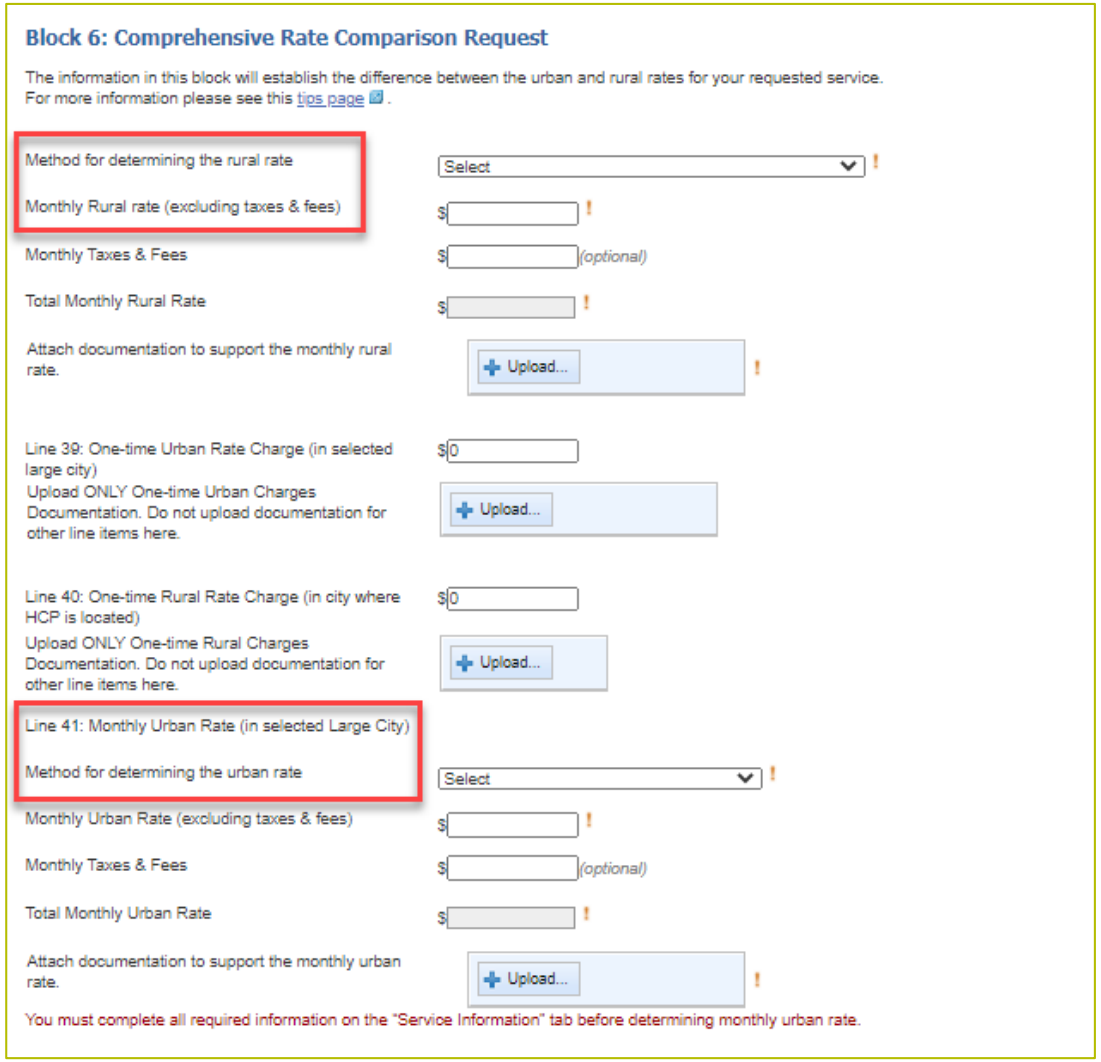
Calculating Rural Rates

- 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.
- 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



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 — Select !

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

Monthly Taxes & Fees — $ (optional)

Total Monthly Rural Rate — $!

Attach documentation to support the monthly rural rate. — Upload... !

Line 39: One-time Urban Rate Charge (in selected large city) — $0

Upload ONLY One-time Urban Charges Documentation. Do not upload documentation for other line items here. — Upload...

Line 40: One-time Rural Rate Charge (in city where HCP is located) — $0

Upload ONLY One-time Rural Charges Documentation. Do not upload documentation for other line items here. — Upload...

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

Method for determining the urban rate — Select !

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

Monthly Taxes & Fees — $ (optional)

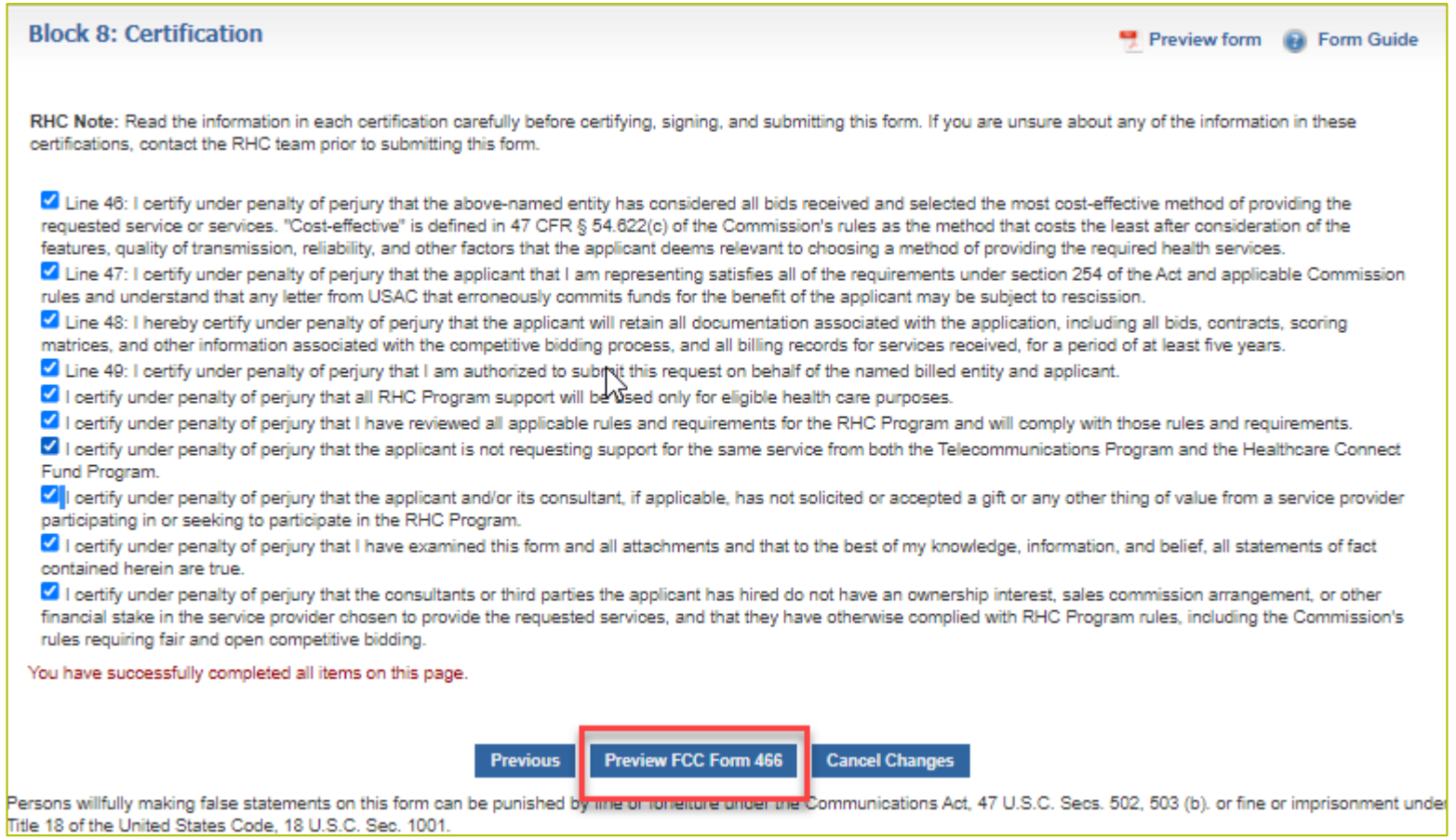
Total Monthly Urban Rate — $!

Attach documentation to support the monthly urban rate. — Upload... !

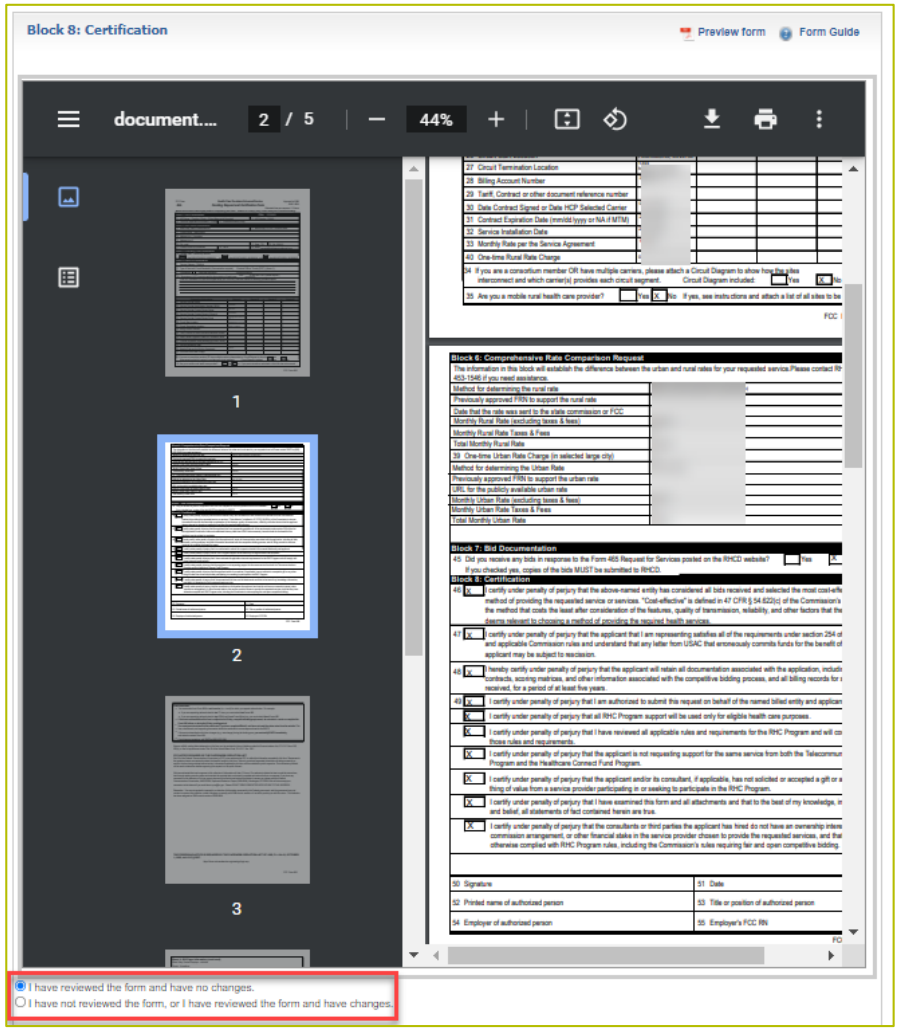
You must complete all required information on the "Service Information" tab before determining monthly urban rate.

Upload Bid Documentation

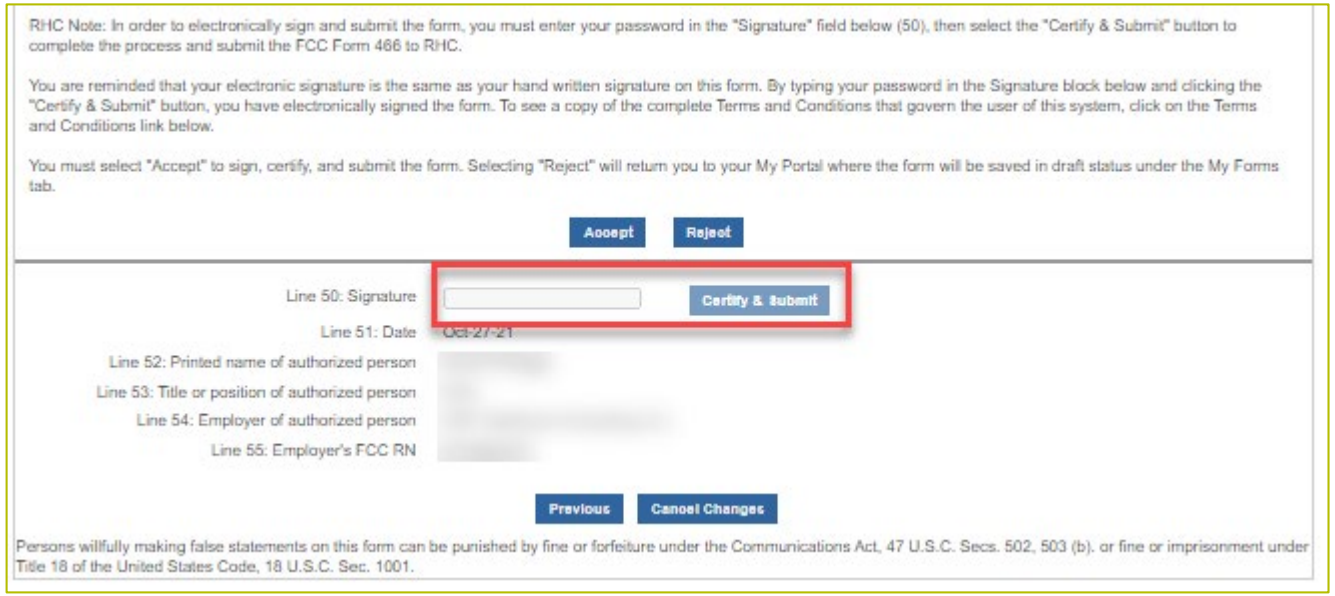
Certify, Preview, and Sign Form



Certify, Preview, and Sign Form (continued)



Certify, Preview, and Sign Form (continued)

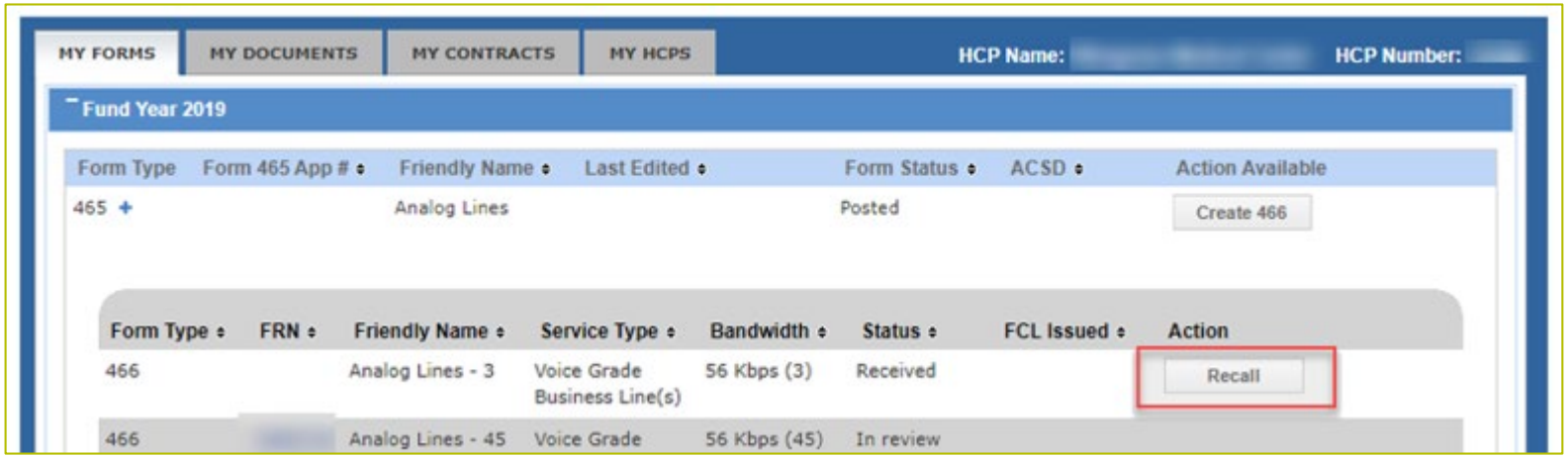


After Submitting

- 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.

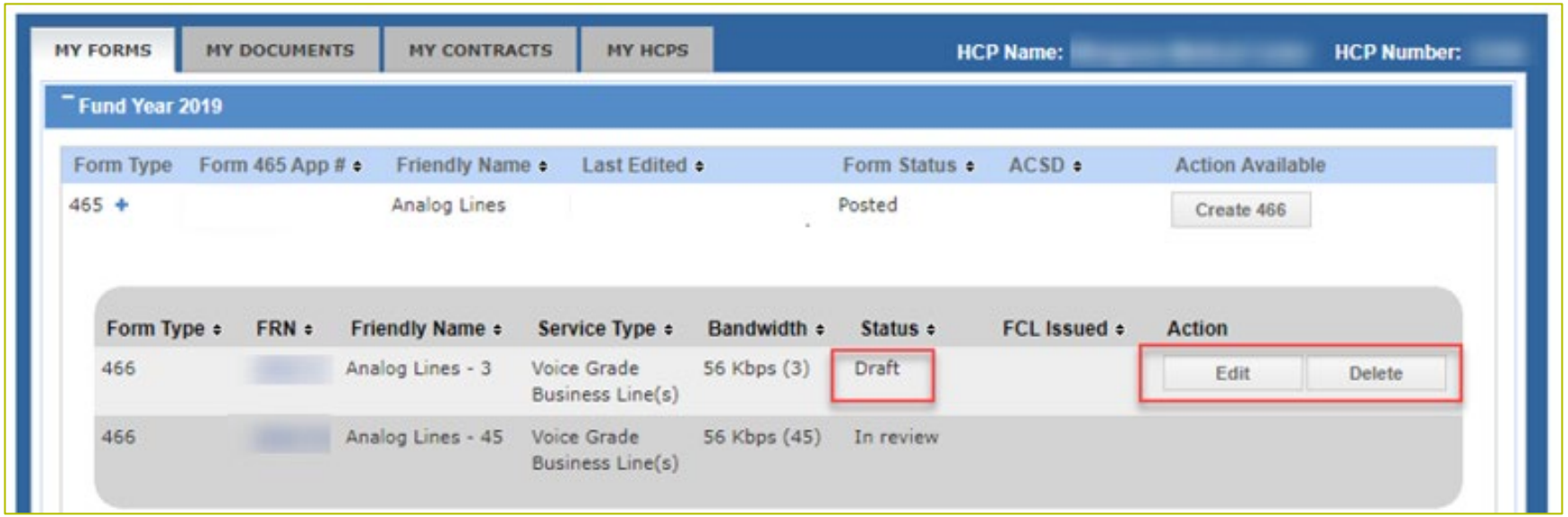
After Submitting – Editing the FCC Form 466

- 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

Best Practices for FY2022

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

Telecom Program Form	Last Day to Submit for Telecom Program
FCC Form 465 – Eligibility	January 8, 2022 Recommended Date
FCC Form 465 – Request for Services	February 10, 2022 Recommended Date
FCC Form 466 – Funding Request	April 1, 2022 Deadline to Submit*

*Please note that these dates (with the exception of the FCC Form 466 filing window deadline of April 1) are not mandatory deadlines, but rather recommended milestones to meet the close of the filing window.

RHC Program Help Desk

- Email: RHC-Assist@usac.org
  - Email at any time to request a one-on-one appointment to learn more about the application process or ask specific questions.
  - 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

The Help Desk CAN	The Help Desk CANNOT
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

Online Resources

- RHC Learn
- Step 4: Submit Funding Requests
- Urban and Rural Rate Information FY2021-FY2022
- Competitive Bidding Exemptions
- Blank FCC Form 466

Questions?

Thank You!

Available for Public Use

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