Available for Public Use

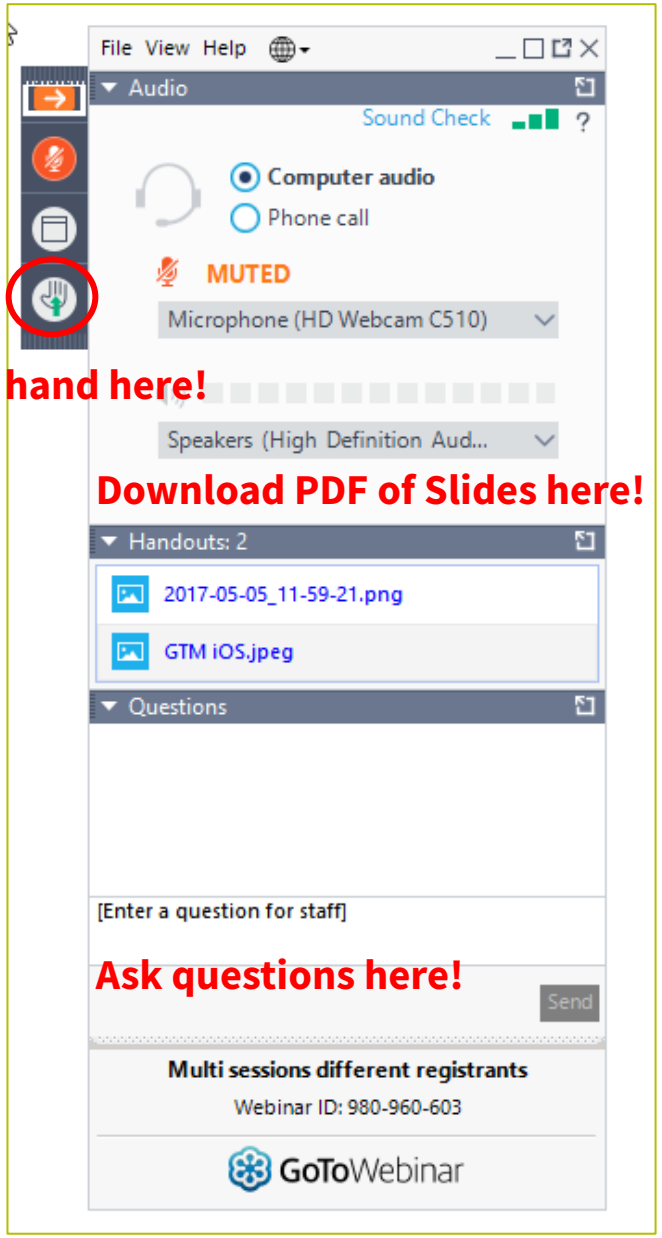
# HCF Program Funding Request Office Hours

April 17, 2024

Universal Service Administrative Co.

# 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

## Simone Andrews

Senior Communications Specialist|
RHC Outreach

## Blythe Albert

Advisor of Program Management |
RHC Outreach

# Agenda

- Introduction
- Program Updates
- Submitting Forms in RHC Connect
- Best Practices
- Resources

# Introduction – Office Hours

- Subject matter experts are available to answer live questions from program participants.
- Today's presentation will focus on the HCF Program.
- Send FRN or HCP-specific questions to the RHC Customer Service Center at RHC-Assist@usac.org.
- Raise your hand or ask your question in the questions box.
- Please note, recordings of Office Hours webinars are not posted to the USAC website.
- You can download a PDF copy of the slide deck from the handout section on the GoToWebinar dashboard.

# Glossary

| Acronym | Definition |
|---|---|
| FCC | Federal Communications Commission |
| HCF | Healthcare Connect Fund |
| FY | Funding Year |
| HCP | Health Care Provider (your site) |
| HCP Number | Number associated with your site |
| PAH | Primary Account Holder |
| FCL | Funding Commitment Letter |
| NCW | Network Cost Worksheet |
| BAN | Billing Account Number |
| SPIN/498 ID | Service Provider Identification Number |

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# Program Updates

## HCF Program Funding Request Office Hours

# RHC Connect Updates

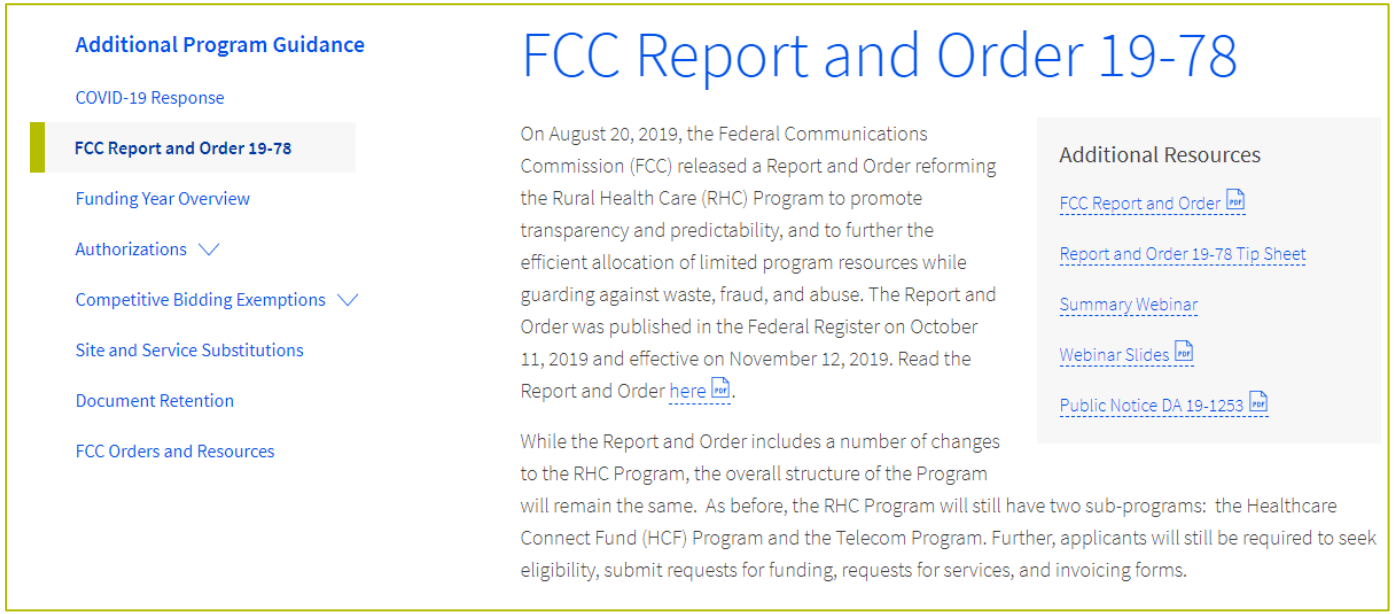
| Form | Platform | Relevant Funding Years |
|---|---|---|
| FCC Forms 460 & 465 | My Portal | Currently in development/release by July 1, 2024 |
| - Letters of Agency (LOA) | My Portal | Currently in development/release by July 1, 2024 |
| - Third Party Authorization (TPA) | My Portal | Currently in development/release by July 1, 2024 |
| FCC Form 461 | RHC Connect | FY2023 and forward |
| FCC Form 462 | My Portal | FY 2021 and prior – Multi-year commitments |
| FCC Form 462 | RHC Connect | FY2022 and forward |
| FCC Form 463 | My Portal | FY 2021 and prior – Multi-year commitments |
| FCC Form 463 | RHC Connect | FY2022 and forward |
| Post-commitment Change Requests | RHC Connect | FY2022 and forward |
| FCC Form 466 | RHC Connect | FY2024 and forward |
| FCC Form 467 – Telecom Invoice | My Portal | Future development |

# FCC Order DA 24-214

- On March 7, 2024, the FCC released 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.

# Reminder: FCC Report and Order 19-78

- FCC Report and Order 19-78 webpage summarizes the Report and Order's major changes.



# FCC Report and Order 19-78 (continued)

- **Consortia Majority Rural Rule (HCF Only)** – Every consortium participating in the HCF Program must consist of more than 50 percent eligible rural sites.
  - Rurality Compliance Tip Sheet
- **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.

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

- **SPIN CHANGES**
  - A corrective SPIN change is made when the SPIN associated with a Funding Request Number (FRN) is not correct. This occurs when:
    - The applicant or USAC made a data entry error,
    - SPIN has changed due to the merger of companies or the acquisition of one company by another; or
    - The applicant has not initiated the change (e.g., where the service provider declares bankruptcy).
  - An operational SPIN change is a request to change the actual service provider associated with an FRN.
    - The change in service providers is the result of a deliberate decision by the applicant.
    - The applicant has a legitimate reason to change providers (e.g., breach of contract or the service provider is unable to perform).
- **Site and Service Substitutions** – HCPs in both the HCF and Telecom program are required to submit site and service substitutions by the service delivery deadline.
  - This date can be found on the Funding Commitment Letter (FCL) for the FRN (FCC Form 462 Application)

# FCC 23-110 Third Report and Order

- On December 14, 2023, the FCC released Order FCC 23-110. This order improves RHC Program administration and facilitates participation in the program by allowing health care providers that expect to become eligible during a funding year to complete the processes required to request funding, aligns program deadlines, simplifies rules for calculating urban rates, streamlines administrative processes, and frees up unused funding for other purposes. Changes to RHC Program rules are as follows:
  - Permits health care providers to be granted conditional eligibility, thus allowing them to initiate competitive bidding and request funding while awaiting a final eligibility determination (Prior to July 1, 2024, for purposes of competitive bidding FY2025).
  - Provides health care providers more time to complete Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN) changes by moving the SPIN change deadline to align with the invoice filing deadline (Beginning in FY2023).
  - Simplifies urban rate calculations by eliminating the seldom-used “standard urban distance” component of the rule for determining urban rates in the Telecommunications (Telecom) Program (Beginning in FY2025).
  - Allows health care providers to request changes to the dates covered by an evergreen contract post-commitment (Beginning in FY2024).
  - 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 health care providers to claim undisbursed funding commitments that do not currently have an applicable invoice filing deadline from FY2019 and prior years.

# 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 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.
- An extension request must be received prior to the original 14-day Information Request deadline.

# FY2024 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.**
- Some changes to submissions must occur prior to the close of the filing window.
- This means that you may receive an Information Request before May 1, 2024.
- For FY2024 FCC Forms 462, an auto-generated email will be sent with instructions to respond through RHC Connect.
  - **HCPs should respond through RHC Connect only.**
  - The auto-generated email comes from an unattended mailbox so please only respond through RHC Connect.

# Update: FCC Form 463 in RHC Connect

- While it is no longer required in RHC Connect to move forward with the submission of Form 463, applicants are expected to have supporting documentation for invoices and proof of payment available at the time they submit the form.
- Upon selection for manual review or audit, RHC will require submission of all documents for all requested billing period(s).
- **Please be mindful that program rules require applicants to have all supporting documentation available when forms are submitted, and for 5 years thereafter.**

# Reminder: Invoice Filing Deadlines

- Invoicing guidelines adopted in FCC Report and Order 19-78 became effective beginning with FY2020 applicants.
- The invoice filing 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 RHC Invoicing Deadline Tool in the Open Data section of the USAC website to look up your invoice filing deadline 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 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.
- **FY2023 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 FY2023, you cannot invoice for these funds. Instead, you should immediately request a service substitution.
- **FY2024 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

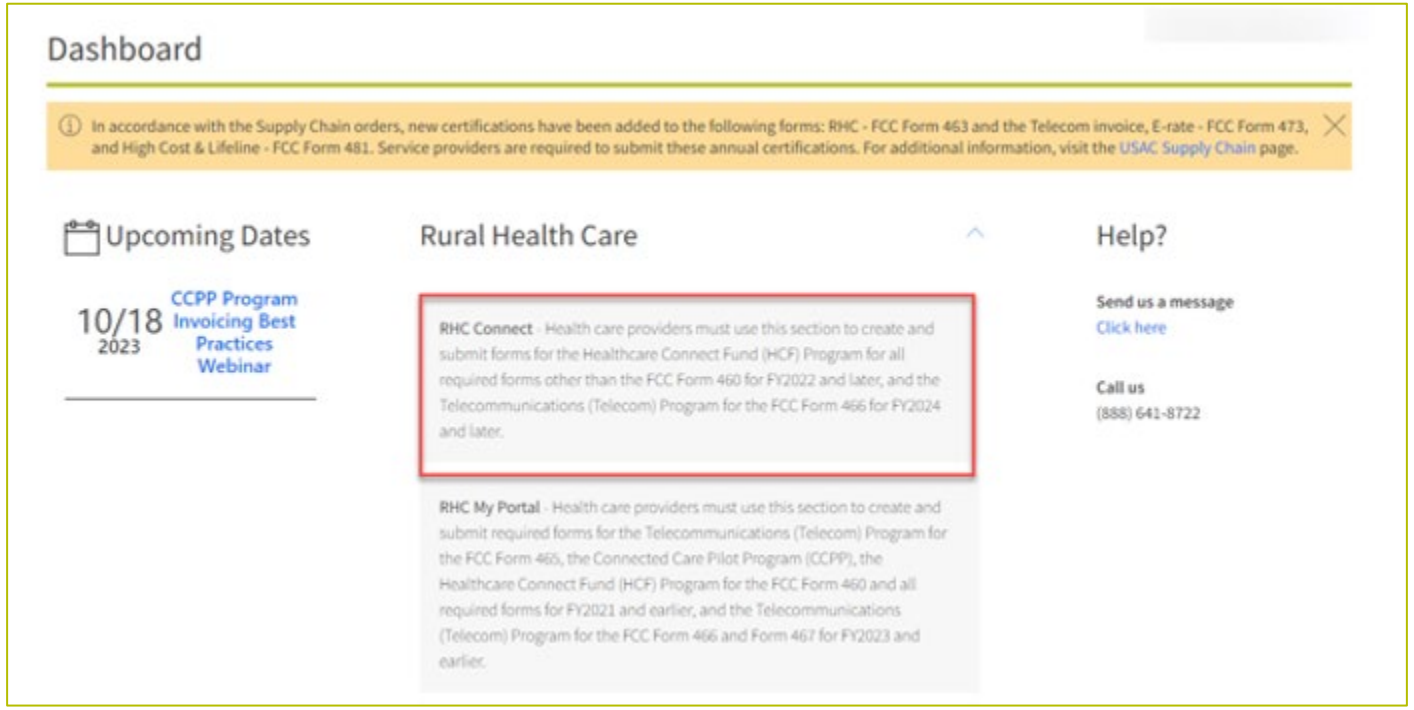
# Questions?

# RHC Connect – Submitting the FCC Form 462

## HCF Program Funding Request Office Hours

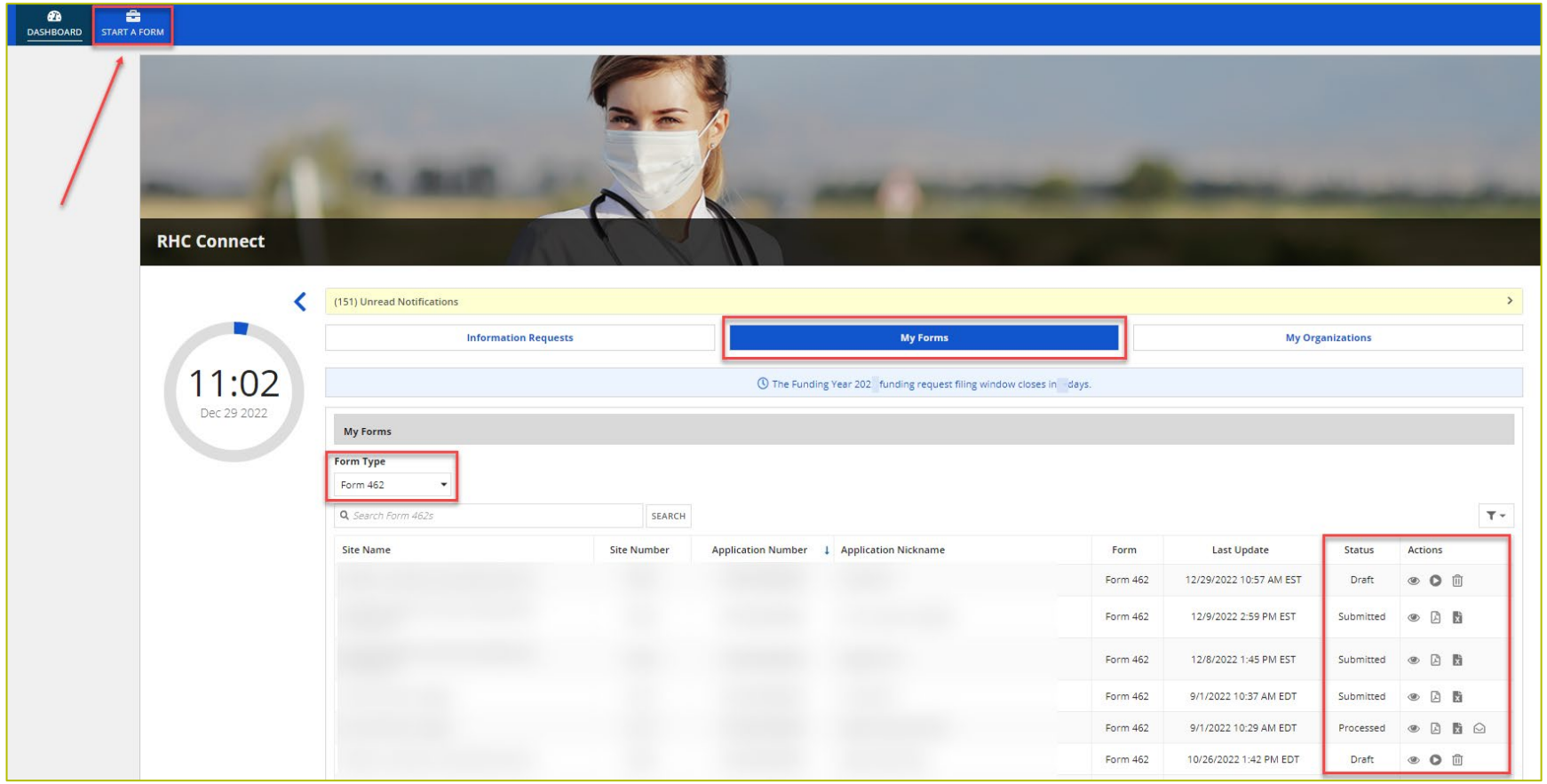
# My Portal Landing Page

- Log in to My Portal and click "**RHC Connect**" to begin.



# Dashboard

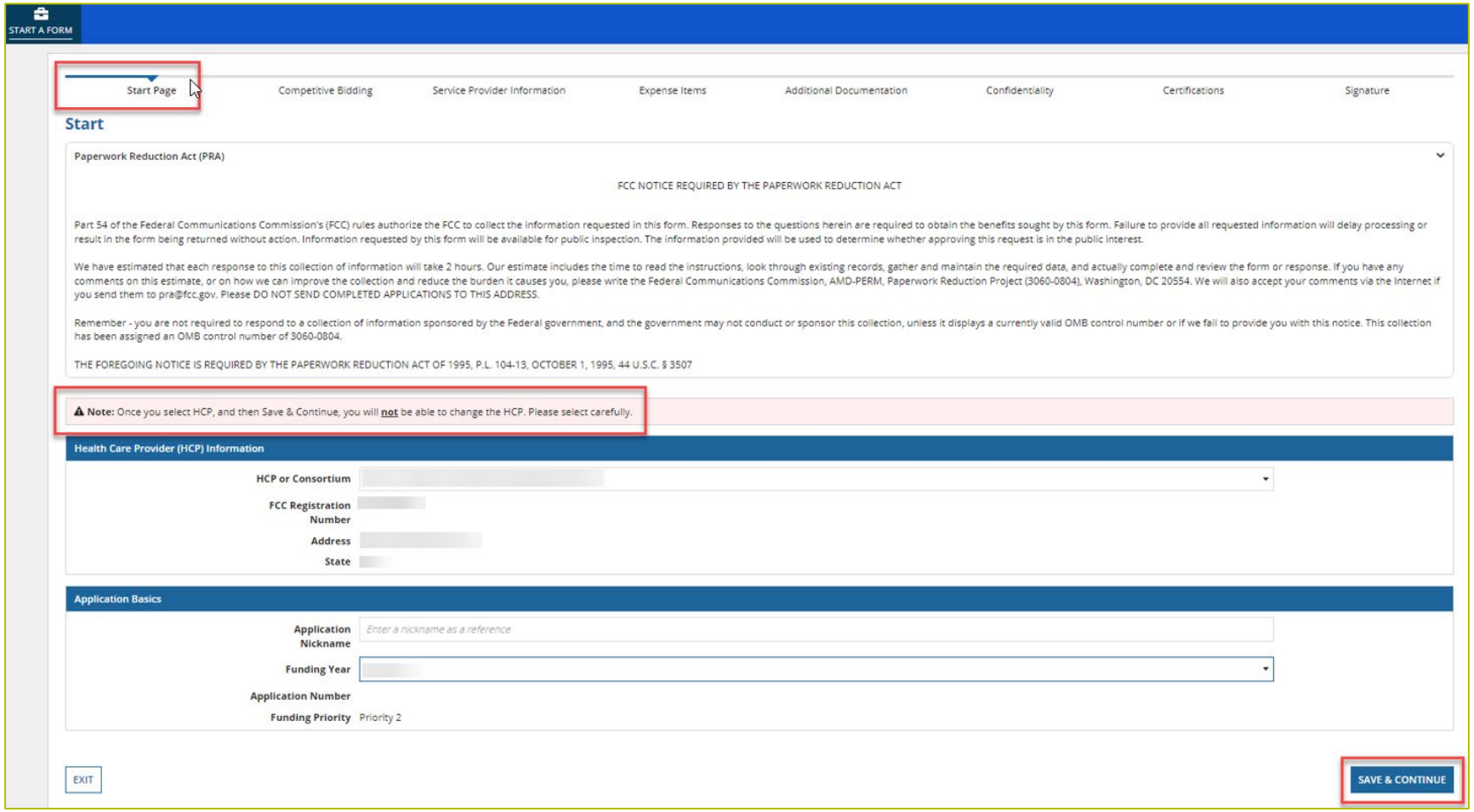
- Here you can start a new form, resume working on a draft or delete a draft FCC Form 461 or 462 for FY2023.
- There's a countdown banner displaying the days remaining in the filing window.



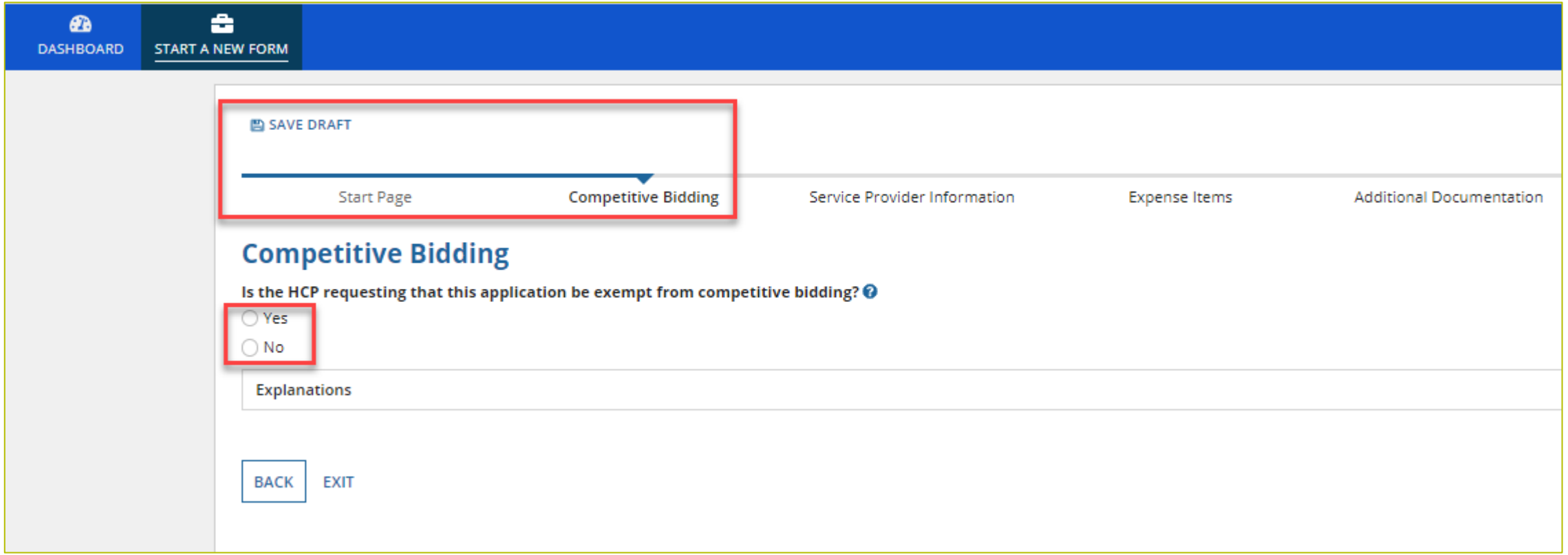
# Start a New Form

- Select FCC Form 462, then click “Next”.

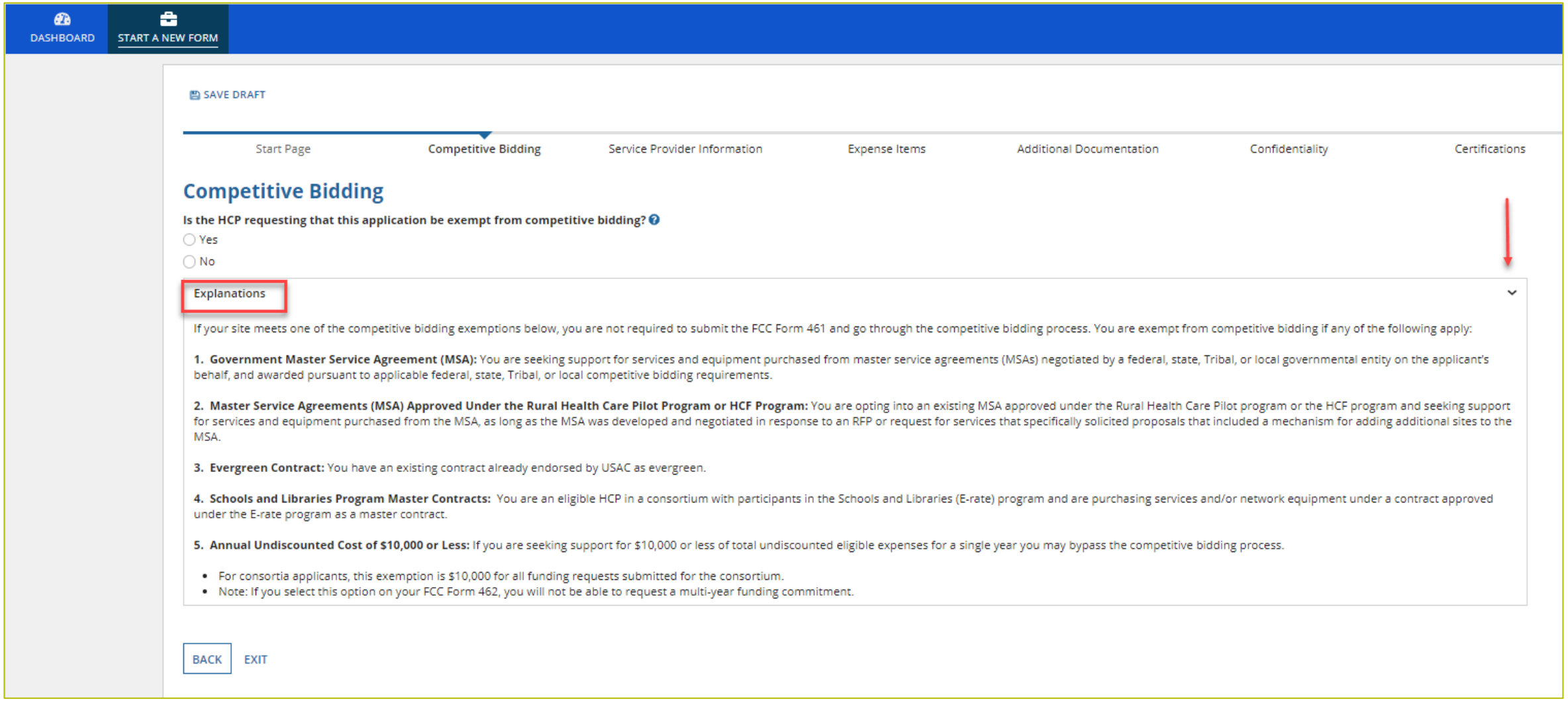
# Start


START A FORM
Start Page
Competitive Bidding
Service Provider Information
Expense Items
Additional Documentation
Confidentiality
Certifications
Signature
Start
Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA)
FCC NOTICE REQUIRED BY THE PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT
Part 54 of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) rules authorize the FCC to collect the information requested in this form. Responses to the questions herein are required to obtain the benefits sought by this form. Failure to provide all requested information will delay processing or result in the form being returned without action. Information requested by this form will be available for public inspection. The information provided will be used to determine whether approving this request is in the public interest.
We have estimated that each response to this collection of information will take 2 hours. Our estimate includes the time to read the instructions, look through existing records, gather and maintain the required data, and actually complete and review the form or response. If you have any comments on this estimate, or on how we can improve the collection and reduce the burden it causes you, please write the Federal Communications Commission, AMD-PERM, Paperwork Reduction Project (3060-0804), Washington, DC 20554. We will also accept your comments via the Internet if you send them to pra@fcc.gov. Please DO NOT SEND COMPLETED APPLICATIONS TO THIS ADDRESS.
Remember - you are not required to respond to a collection of information sponsored by the Federal government, and the government may not conduct or sponsor this collection, unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number or if we fail to provide you with this notice. This collection has been assigned an OMB control number of 3060-0804.
THE FOREGOING NOTICE IS REQUIRED BY THE PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT OF 1995, P.L. 104-13, OCTOBER 1, 1995, 44 U.S.C. § 3507
Note: Once you select HCP, and then Save & Continue, you will not be able to change the HCP. Please select carefully.
Health Care Provider (HCP) Information
HCP or Consortium
FCC Registration Number
Address
State
Application Basics
Application Nickname
Enter a nickname as a reference
Funding Year
Application Number
Funding Priority
Priority 2
EXIT
SAVE & CONTINUE

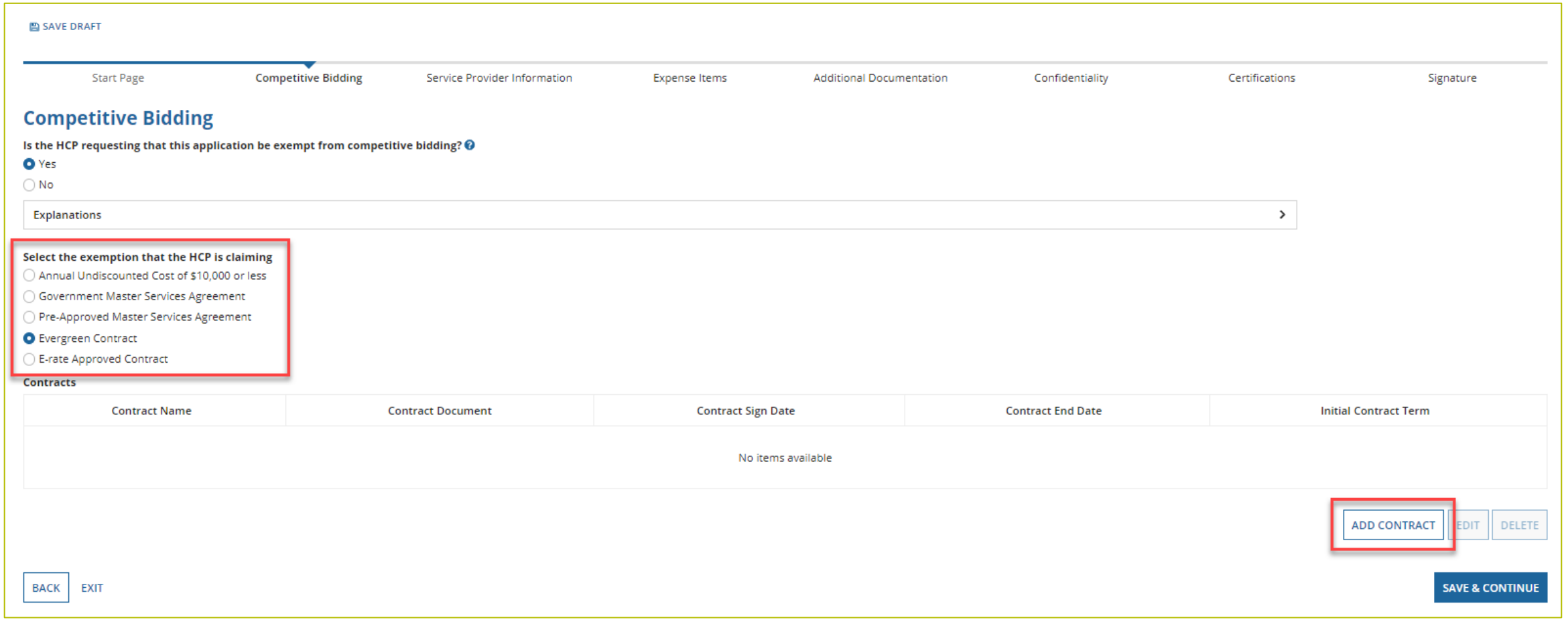
# Competitive Bidding



# Competitive Bidding (Continued)

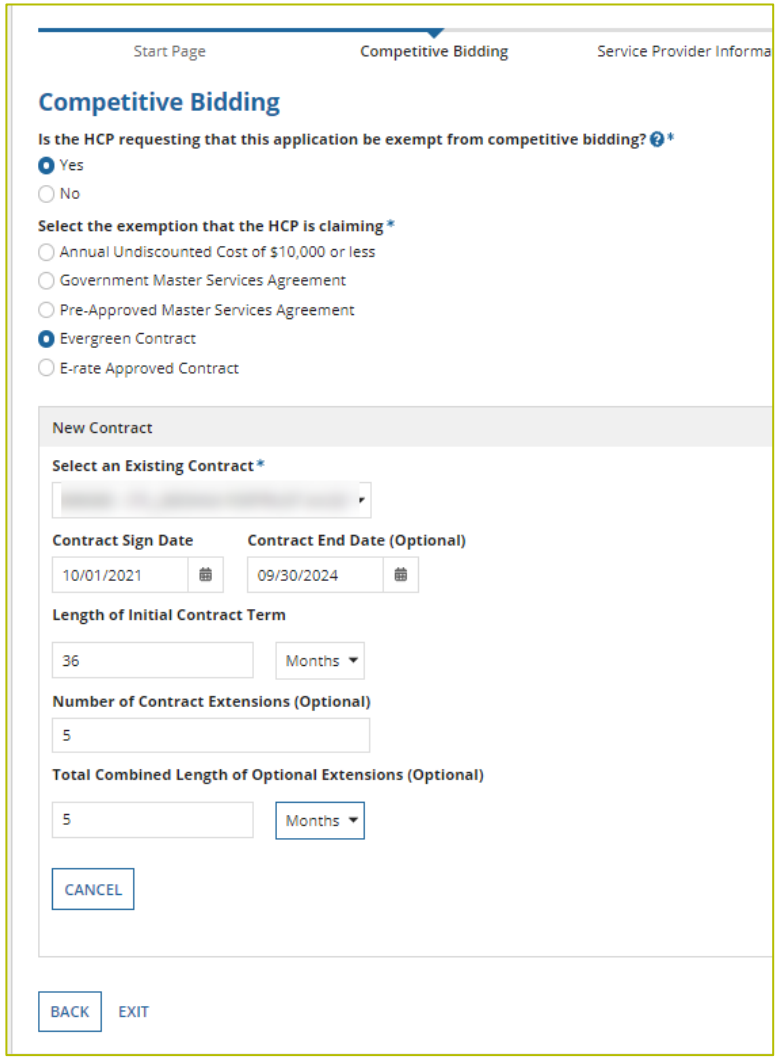


# Competitive Bidding Exemptions



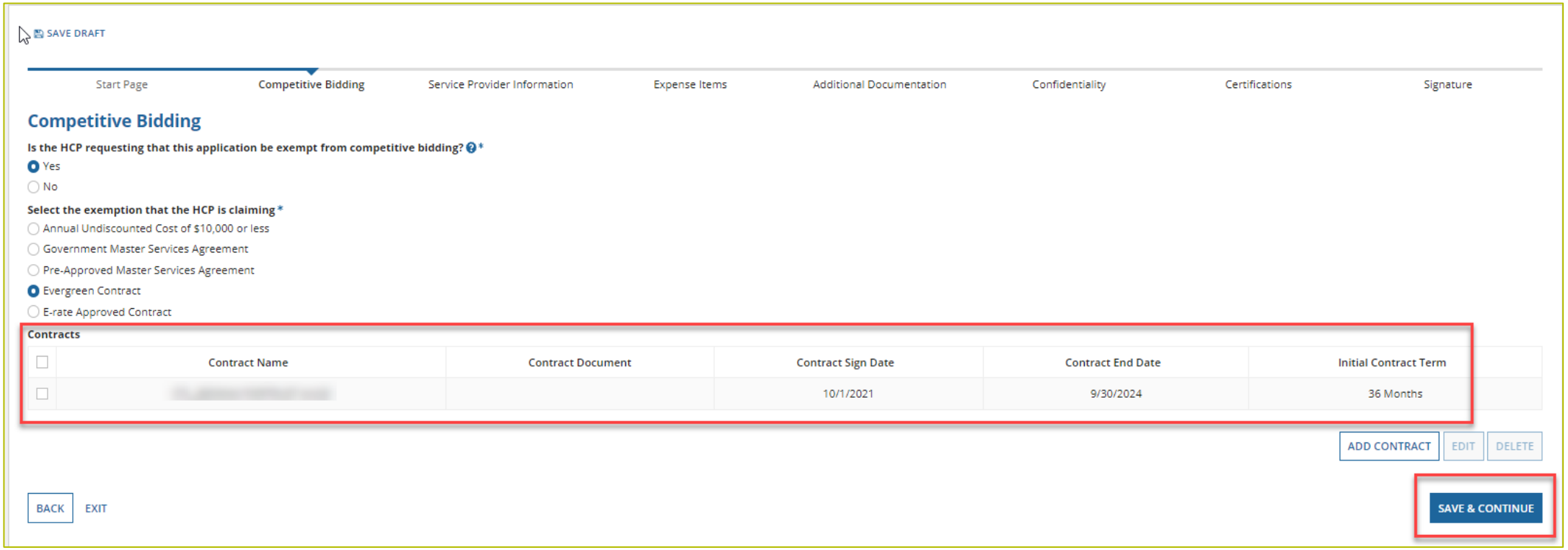
# Competitive Bidding Exemptions (Continued)

- If “Yes” is selected, choose the exemption type.
- Upload contract.
  - For Evergreen contracts, select a contract from the drop-down menu.
  - Evergreen exemption can only be selected if the contract was approved as Evergreen on a prior funding year funding requests.
- Enter the relevant contract information in the fields.
- Use the drop-down calendar to enter dates.



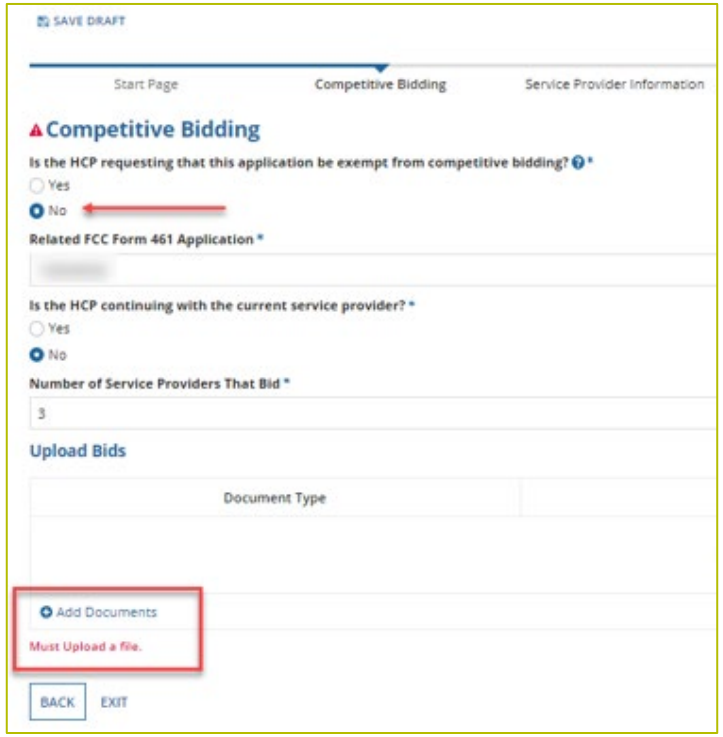
# Competitive Bidding Exemptions (Continued)

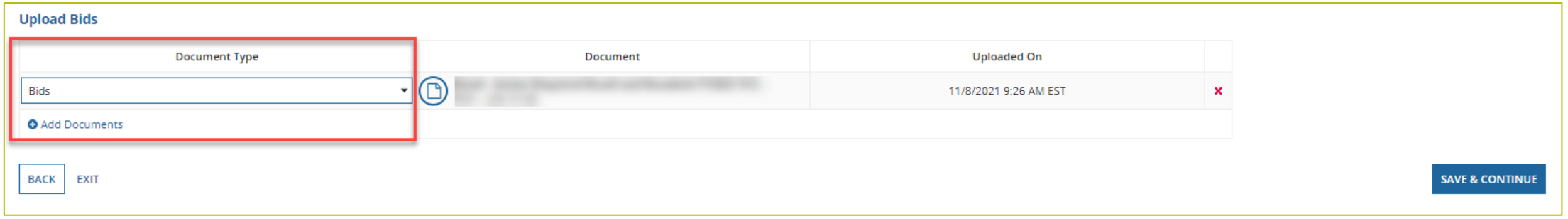
- Once the contract is selected, click “Save and Continue”.



# Competitive Bidding Non-Exempt

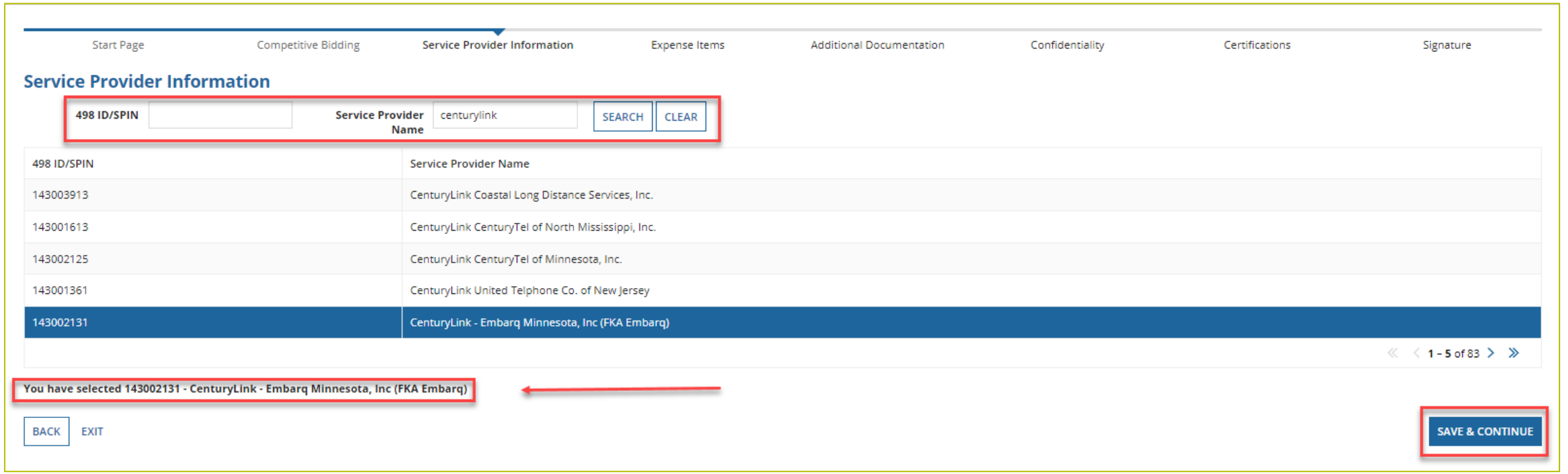
- Click “No” if the HCP is not exempt from competitive bidding.
- Choose the related FCC Form 461 from drop-down menu.
  - All FCC Forms 461 for the HCP will be available.
- Enter the number of bids received.
- Copies of all bids received must be uploaded.



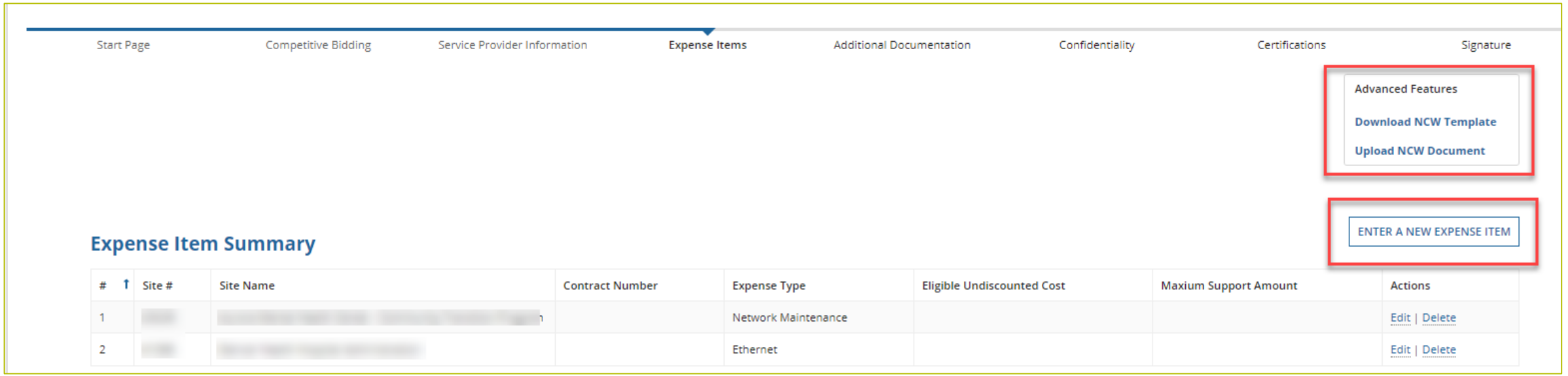
# Service Provider Information

- Select 498 ID/SPIN.
- Click “Save and Continue”.



# Expense Items – Summary Page

- Download the NCW Template and save.
- Populate all information and upload the NCW to RHC Connect.
- Any information entered manually will be overwritten by the NCW document once it's uploaded.



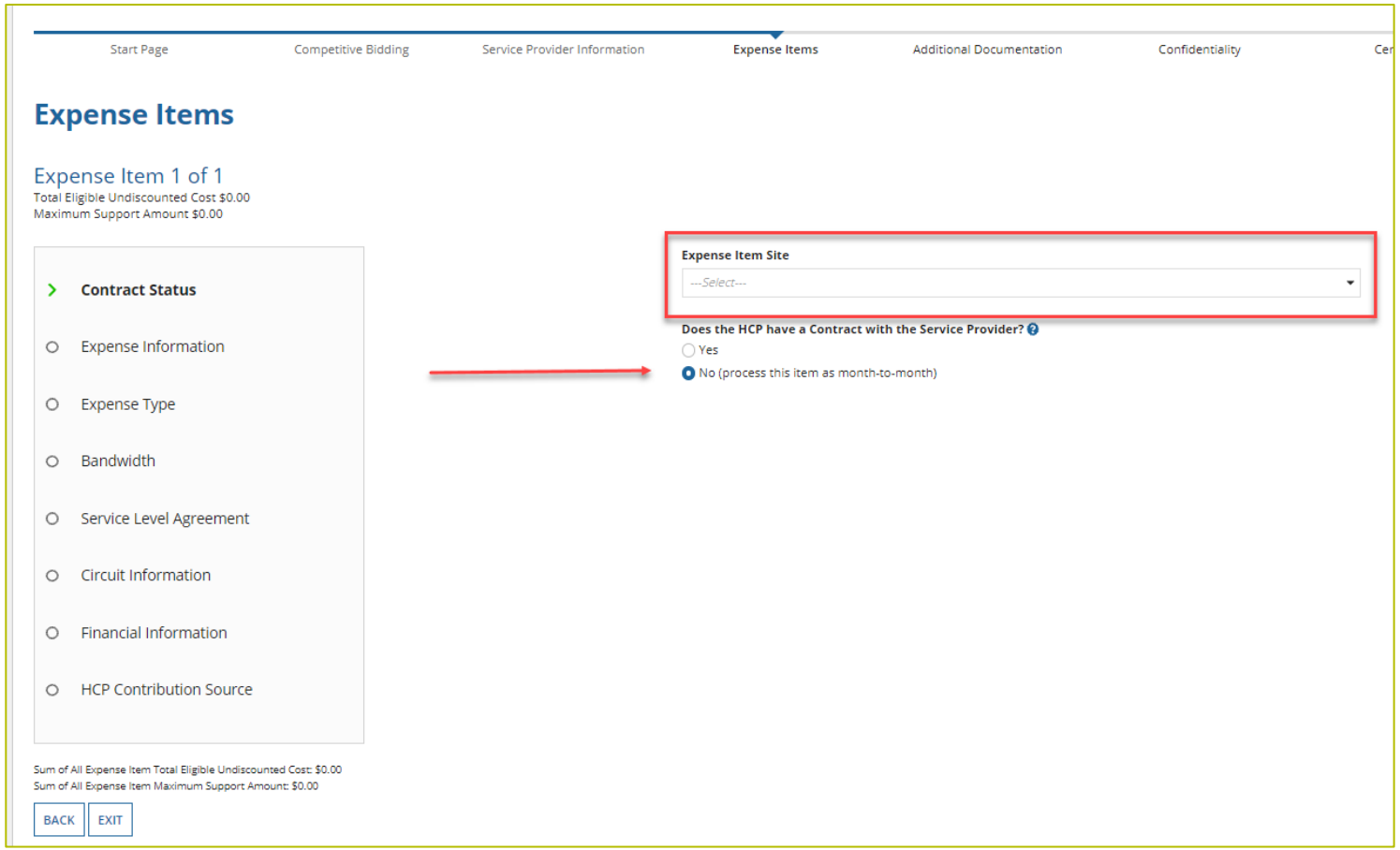
# Using the NCW Template

- Do not disturb the formatting.
  - When using “copy” and “paste” to enter data, be sure to paste using a “text” or “values” format.
  - If any data is entered manually prior to uploading the NCW, that data will be overwritten when the NCW is uploaded.
  - If after uploading the NCW data isn’t saved or you’re directed back to the summary page, the formatting has been changed.
    - Download a new NCW template and try again.

| | Contract Status | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Expense Information | | | | Expense Type | | | | | Bandwidth | | | | Service Level Agreement | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N | O | P | Q | R | S | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z | AA | AB | AC | AD | AE | AF | AG | AH | | |
| Line Number | Site Number | Site Name | Is there a contract with the service provider? | Contract ID | Contract Nickname | Contract Start Date (yyyy-mm-dd) | Initial Contract End Date (optional) (yyyy-mm-dd) | Contract Sign Date (yyyy-mm-dd) | Install Date (yyyy-mm-dd) | Number of Contract Extensions (optional) | Length of Initial Contract Term | Time unit of Length of initial contract term | Total Combined Length of Optional Extensions (optional) | Time Unit of Extensions (optional) | Is this is a newly installed circuit? | Billing Account Number (optional) | Expected Service Start Date (yyyy-mm-dd) | Installation Date (yyyy-mm-dd) | Category of Expense | Expense Type | Explanation of Expense (optional) | Total Number of Fiber Strands (optional) | Total Number of Fiber Strands Eligible for Support (optional) | Upload Speed | Upload Speed Unit | Download Speed | Download Speed Unit | Is there a service level agreement (SLA) with the service provider for this expense item? (Optional) | SLA for Latency | SLA for Jitter | SLA for Packet Loss | SLA for Packet Reliability | Circuit ID (optional) | Where is the site's location on the circuit? | Is this Member Site, Service Provider Site or Neither? | HCP Number |
| 1 | [redacted] | [redacted] | Yes | [redacted] | [redacted] | [redacted] | | | [redacted] | | | | | | No | | [redacted] | [redacted] | Data | Dark Fiber | [redacted] | | | 1.00 | Mbps | 1.00 | Mbps | Yes | <8 ms | <10 MS | <0.001 | 0.9999 | [redacted] | Circuit Start Location | | |
| 2 | [redacted] | [redacted] | Yes | [redacted] | [redacted] | [redacted] | | | [redacted] | | | | | | No | | [redacted] | [redacted] | Data | Ethernet | [redacted] | | | 500.00 | Mbps | 500.00 | Mbps | Yes | <8 ms | <10 MS | <0.001 | 0.9999 | [redacted] | Circuit Start Location | | |
| 3 | [redacted] | [redacted] | Yes | [redacted] | [redacted] | [redacted] | | | [redacted] | | | | | | No | | [redacted] | [redacted] | Data | Dark Fiber | [redacted] | | | 1.00 | Gbps | 1.00 | Gbps | Yes | <8 ms | <10 MS | <0.001 | 0.9999 | [redacted] | Circuit Start Location | | |
| 4 | [redacted] | [redacted] | Yes | [redacted] | [redacted] | [redacted] | | | [redacted] | | | | | | No | | [redacted] | [redacted] | Data | Ethernet | [redacted] | | | 100.00 | Mbps | 100.00 | Mbps | Yes | <8 ms | <10 MS | <0.001 | 0.9999 | [redacted] | Circuit Start Location | | |
| 5 | [redacted] | [redacted] | Yes | [redacted] | [redacted] | [redacted] | | | [redacted] | | | | | | No | | [redacted] | [redacted] | Data | Ethernet | [redacted] | | | 50.00 | Mbps | 50.00 | Mbps | Yes | <8 ms | <10 MS | <0.001 | 0.9999 | [redacted] | Circuit Start Location | | |

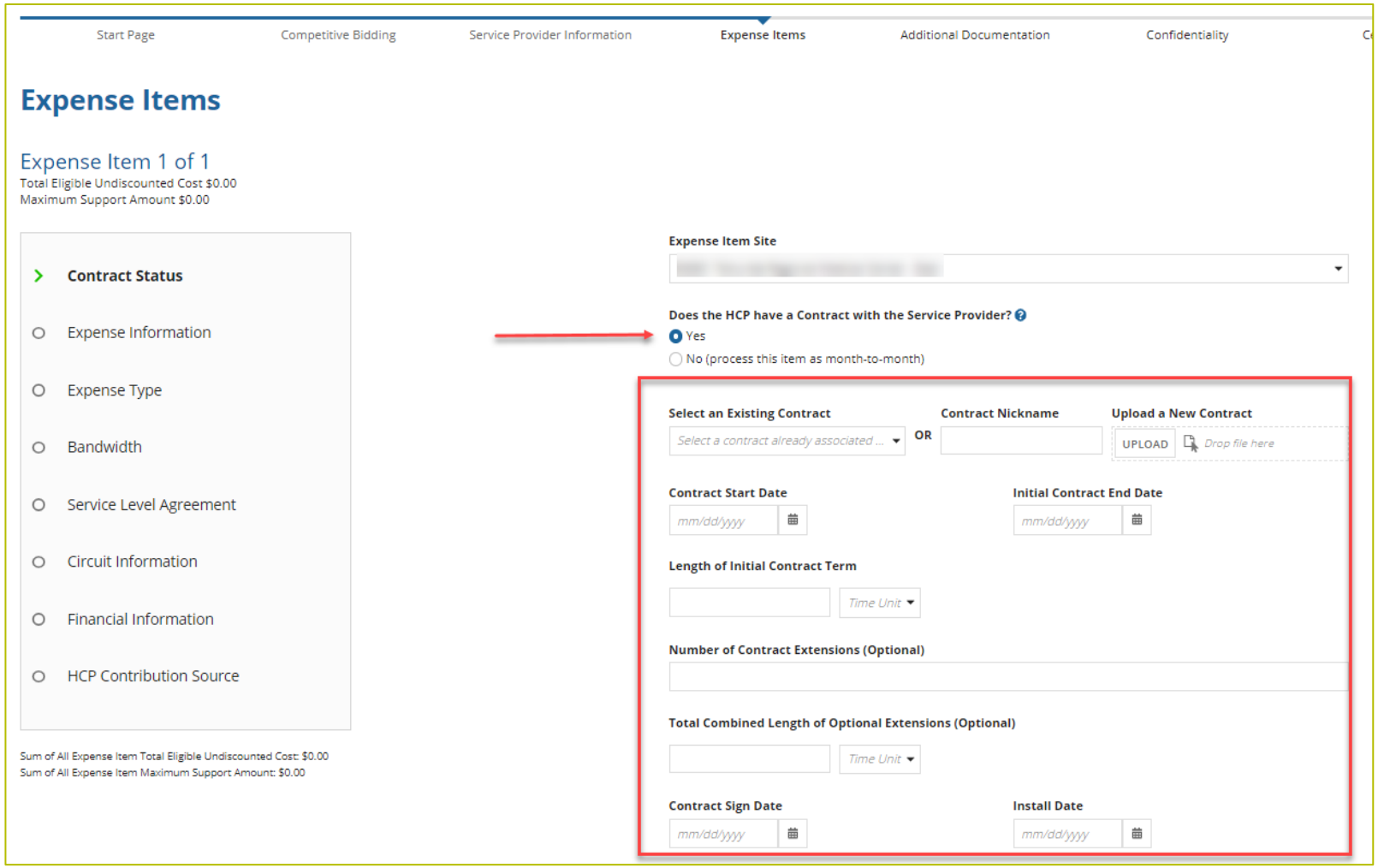
# Expense Items – Contract Status

- For consortia applicants, choose a member site for each expense from drop-down menu.
- Select “no” for submission without contract (month-to-month).



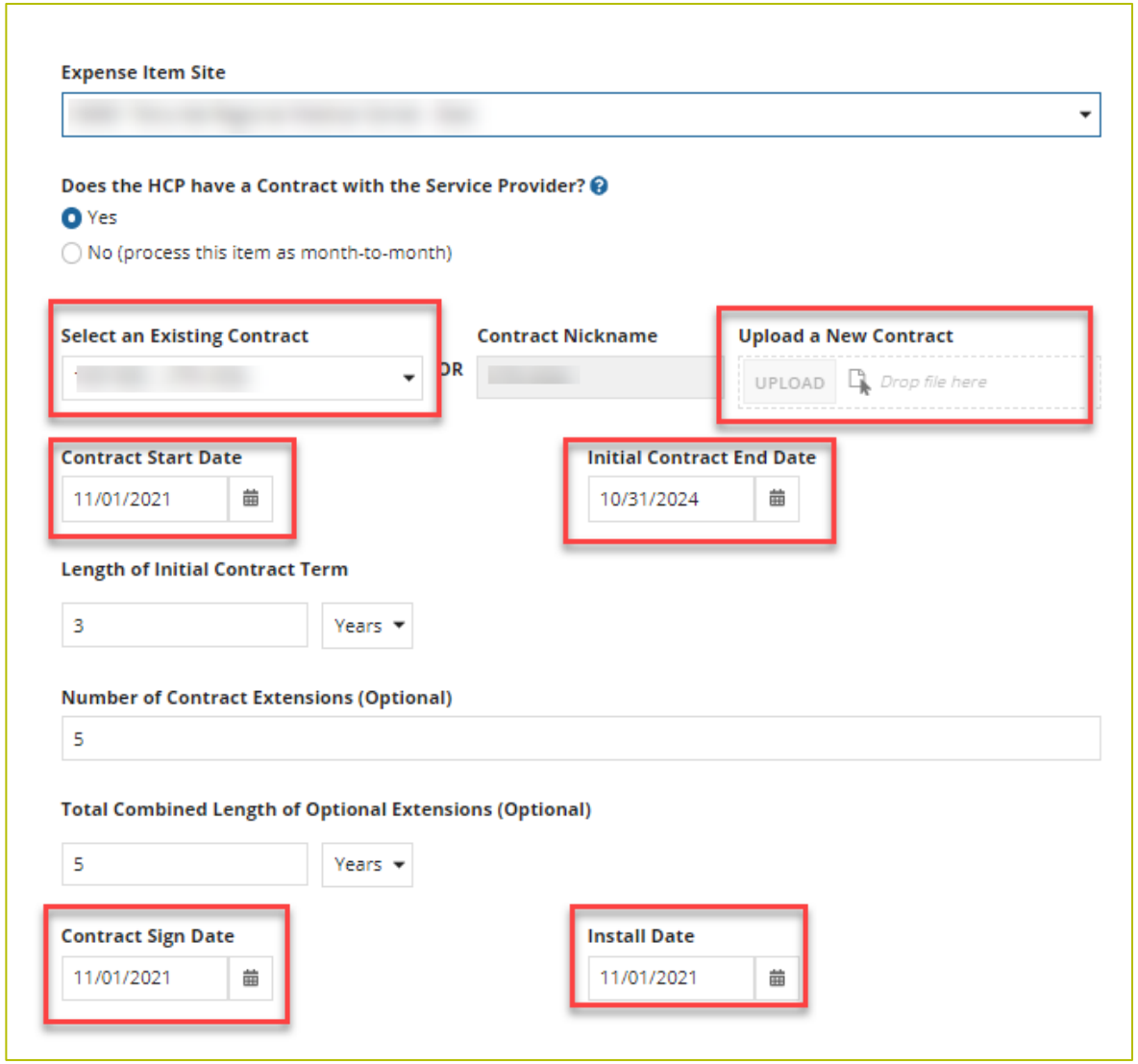
# Expense Items – Contract Status (Continued)

- Select “yes” for submission with contract.
- Select an existing contract or upload a new contract.
- Enter information about the contract.



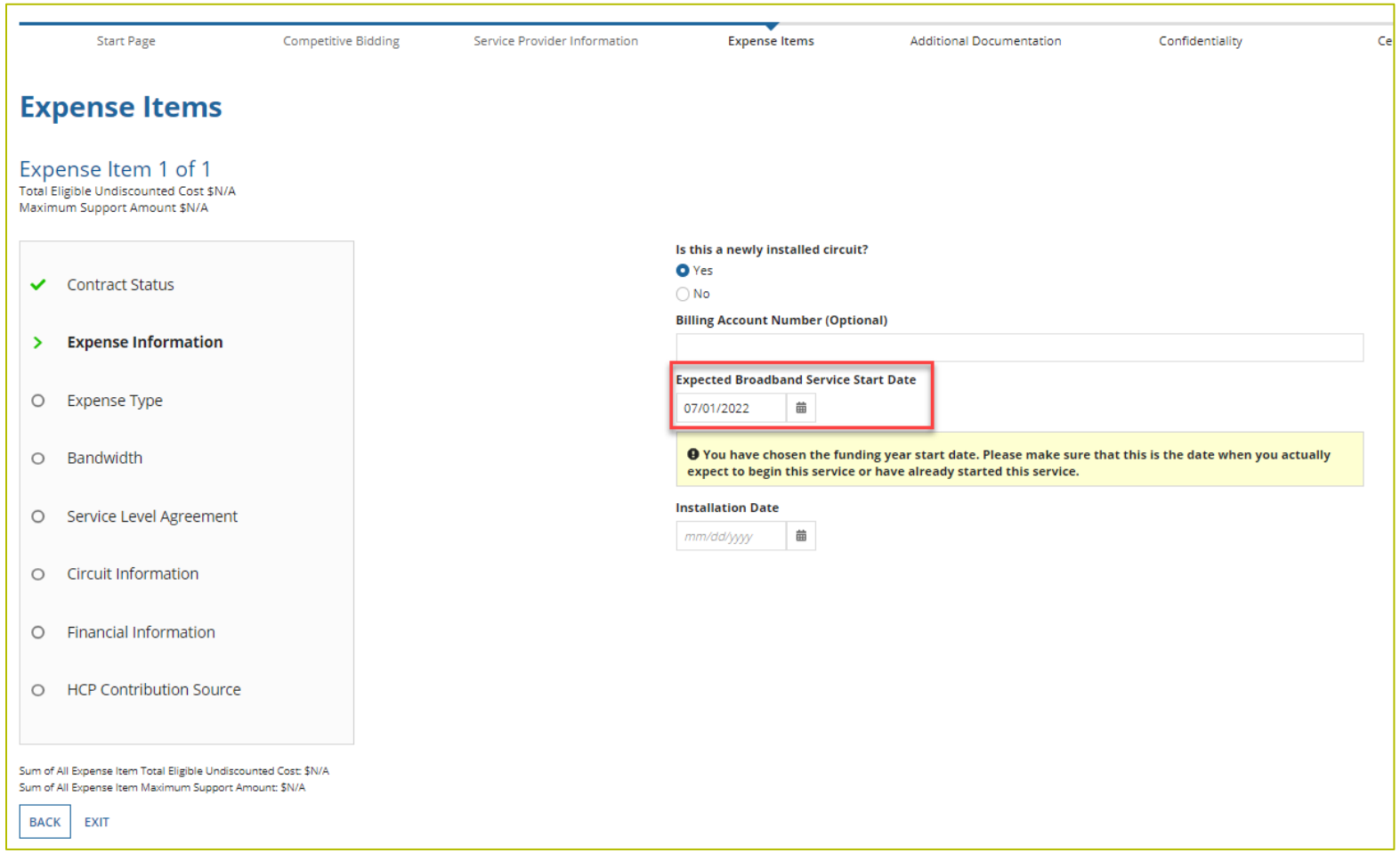
# Expense Items – Contract Status (Continued)

- Enter contract start date, initial contract end date, contract sign date and installation date for confirmation in review.



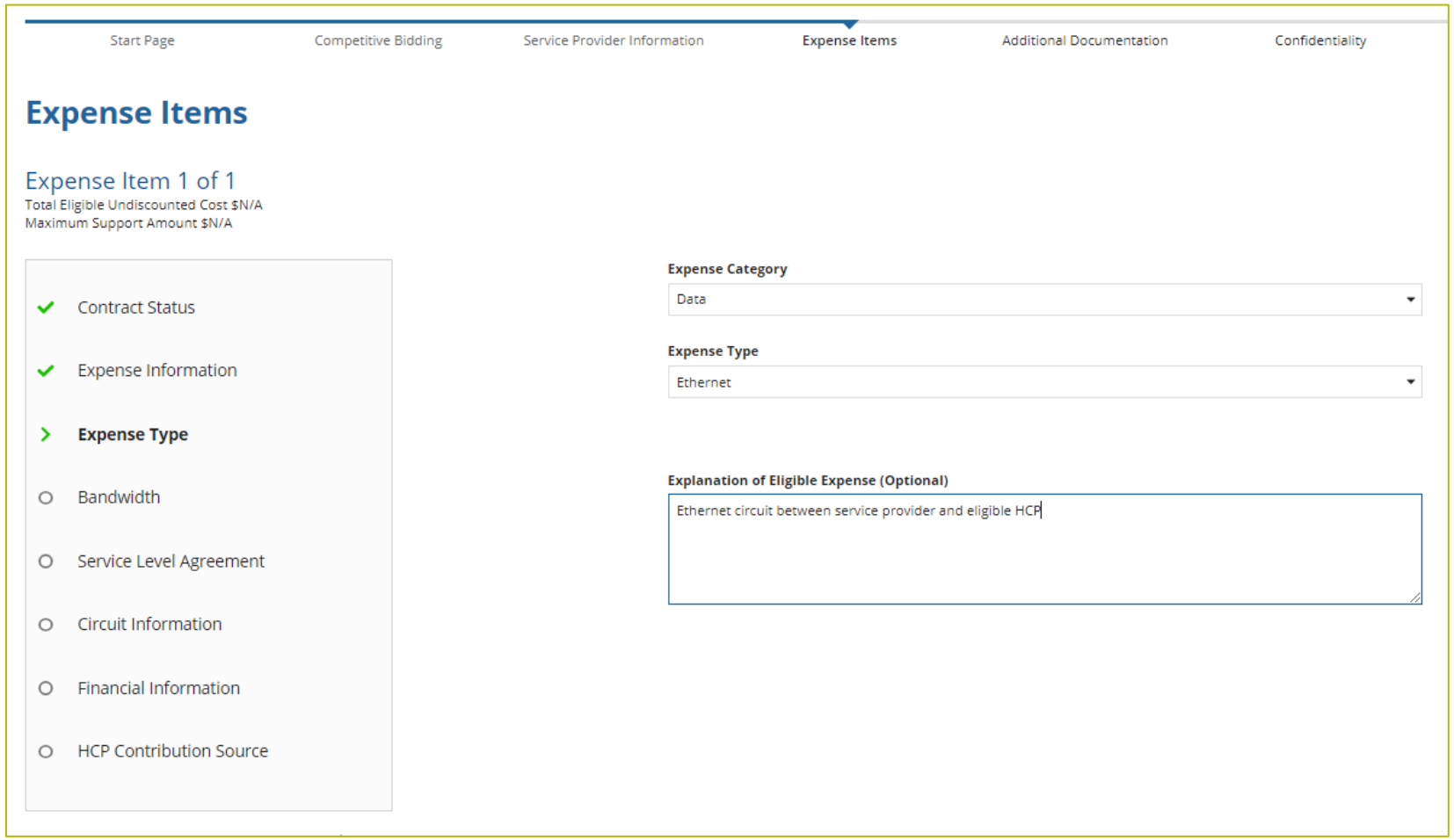
# Expense Items – Expense Information

- Enter the “Expected Broadband Service Start Date” and “Installation Date”.



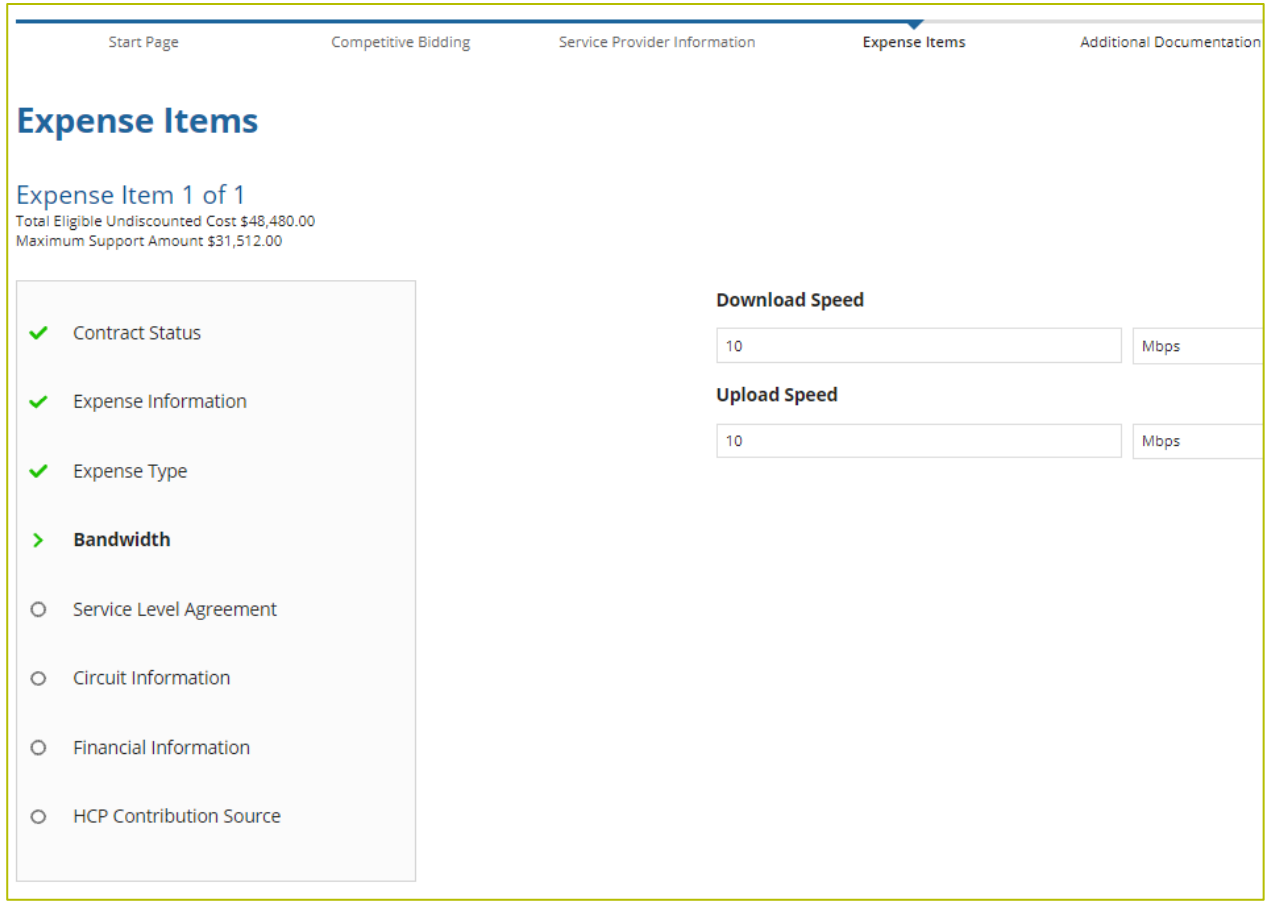
# Expense Items – Expense Type

- Enter “Expense Category” and “Expense Type” and an optional explanation of the eligible expense.



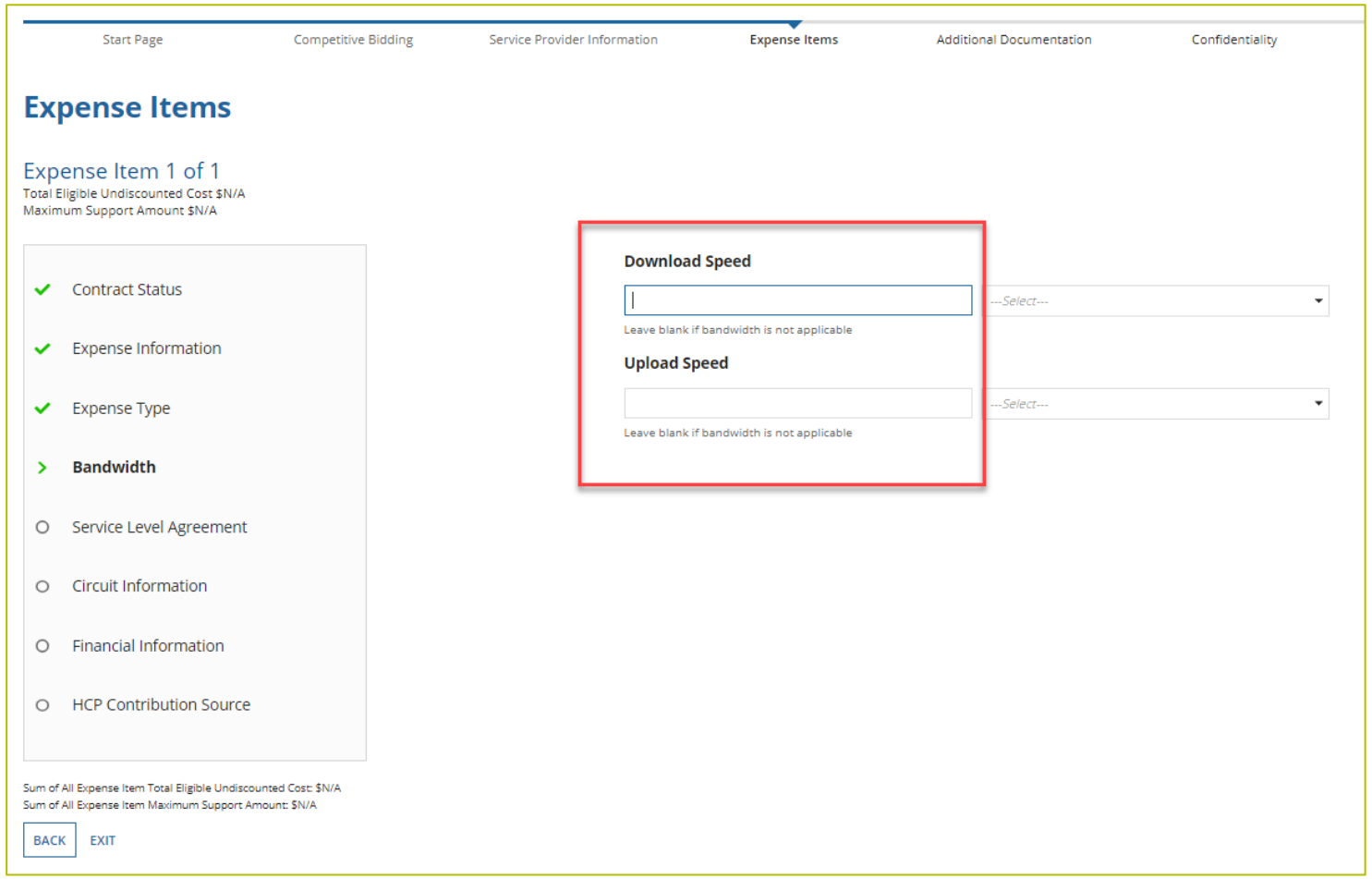
# Expense Items – Bandwidth

- Enter Bandwidth.



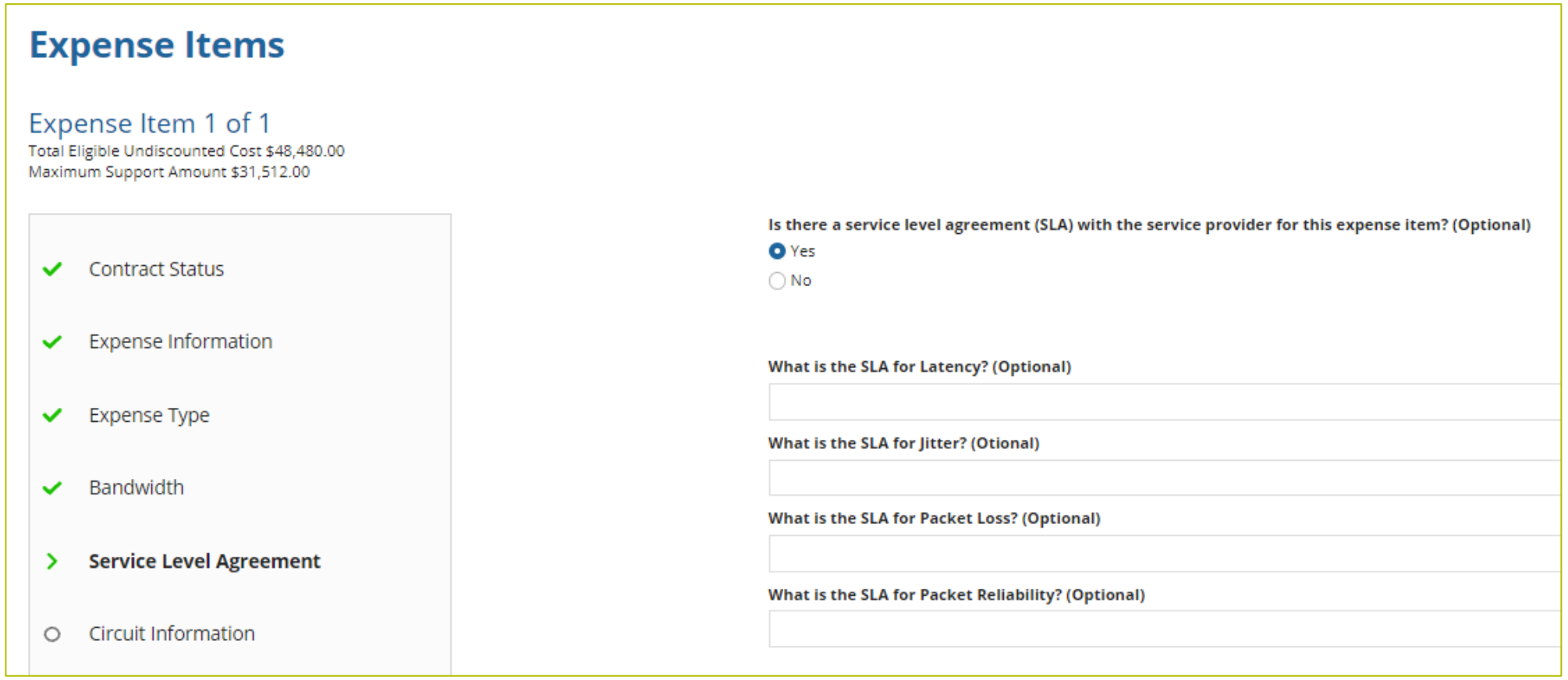
# Expense Items – Bandwidth (Continued)

- For equipment, installation, construction and network management services, bandwidth does not have to be entered if not applicable.
- For all other services, bandwidth is required.



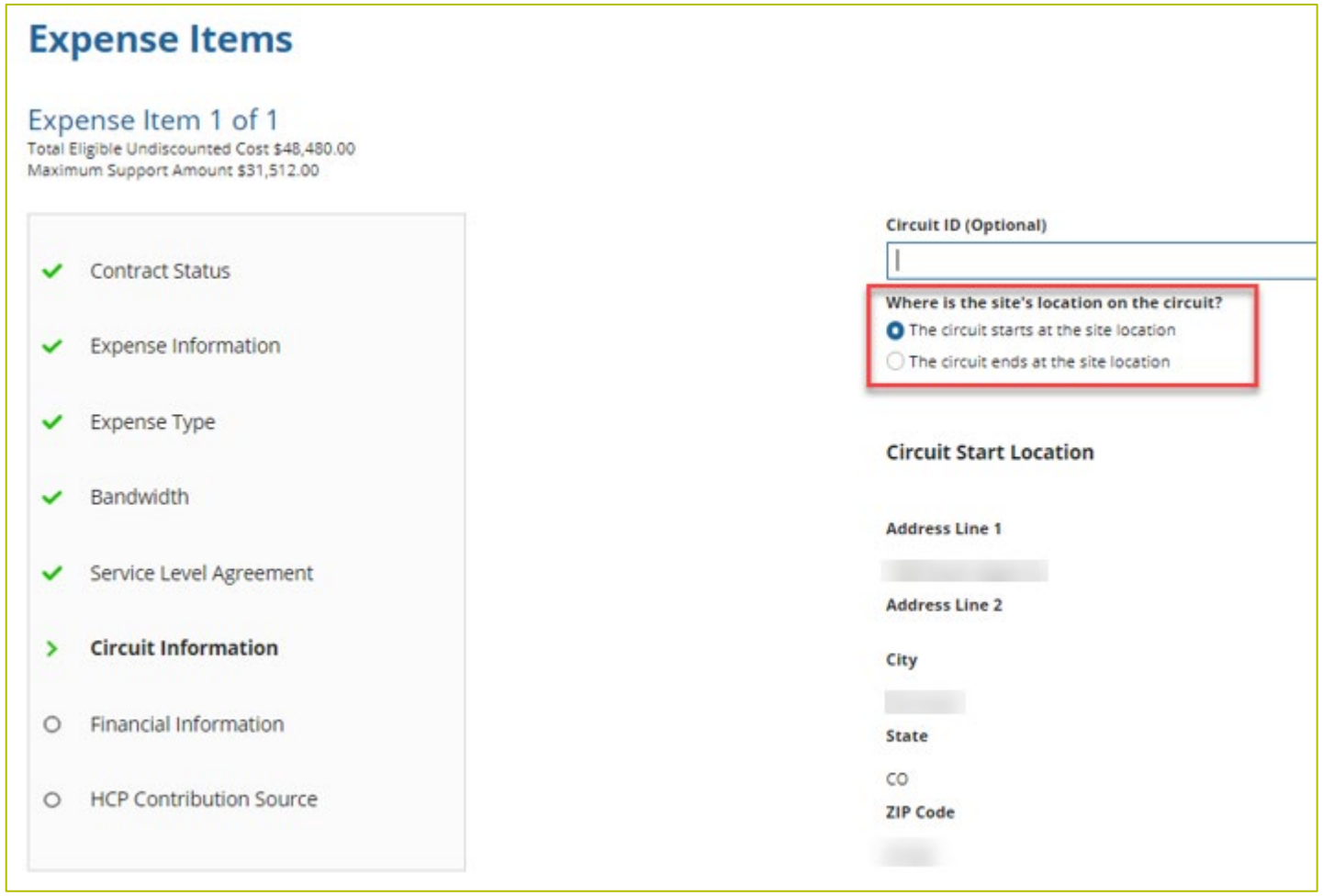
# Expense Items – Service Level Agreement (SLA)

- If “no” is selected, fields will not appear.
- If “yes” is selected, enter the information about the SLA.



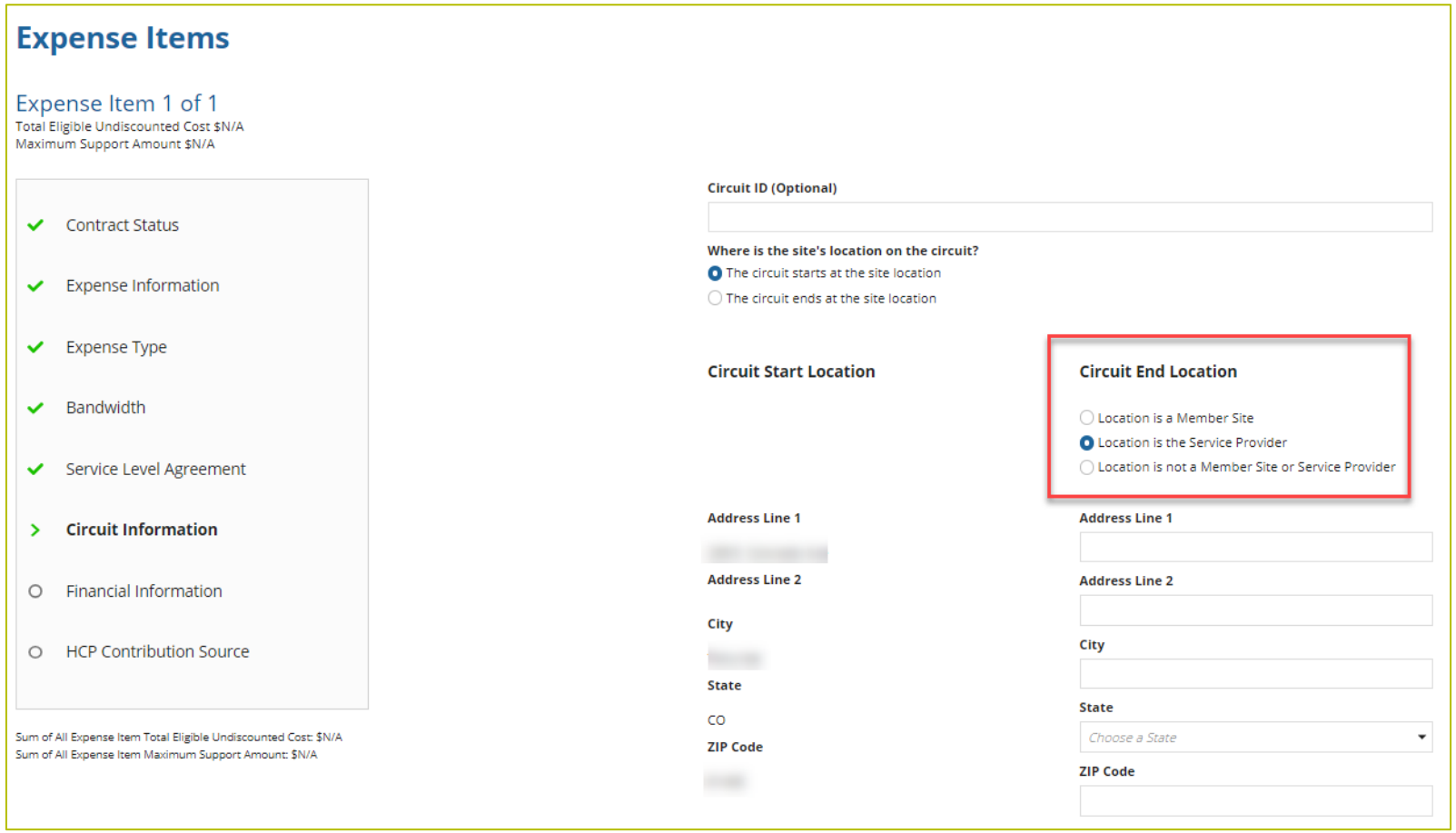
# Expense Items – Circuit Information

- Address of the HCP on expense item will pre-populate based on information in the FCC Form 460.
- “Start location” and “End location” cannot be the same address.



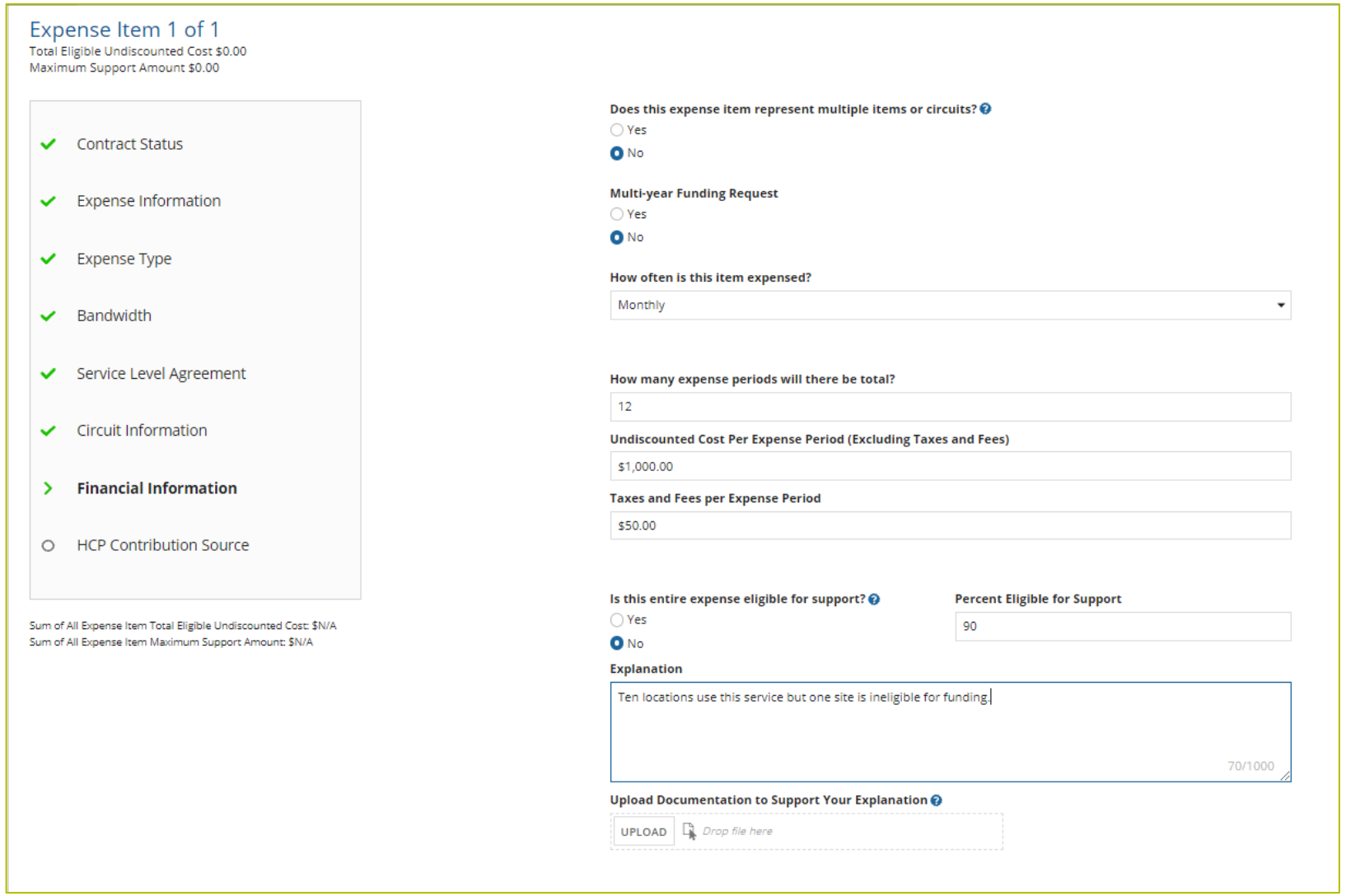
# Expense Items – Circuit Information (Continued)

- If the HCP is an Off-Site Administrative Office or Data Center, the location on the other end of the circuit is required.



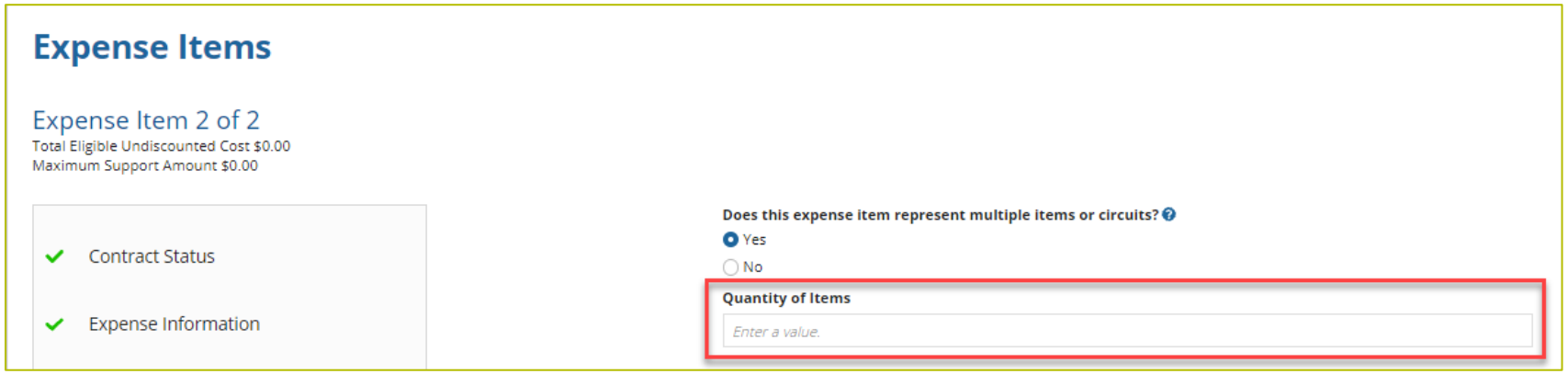
# Expense Items – Financial Information

- If you select “no” for “is this entire expense eligible for support”, you’re indicating that this expense is cost-allocated.
- Enter the eligible percentage and an explanation of the methodology used to determine percent entered
- Upload the required document



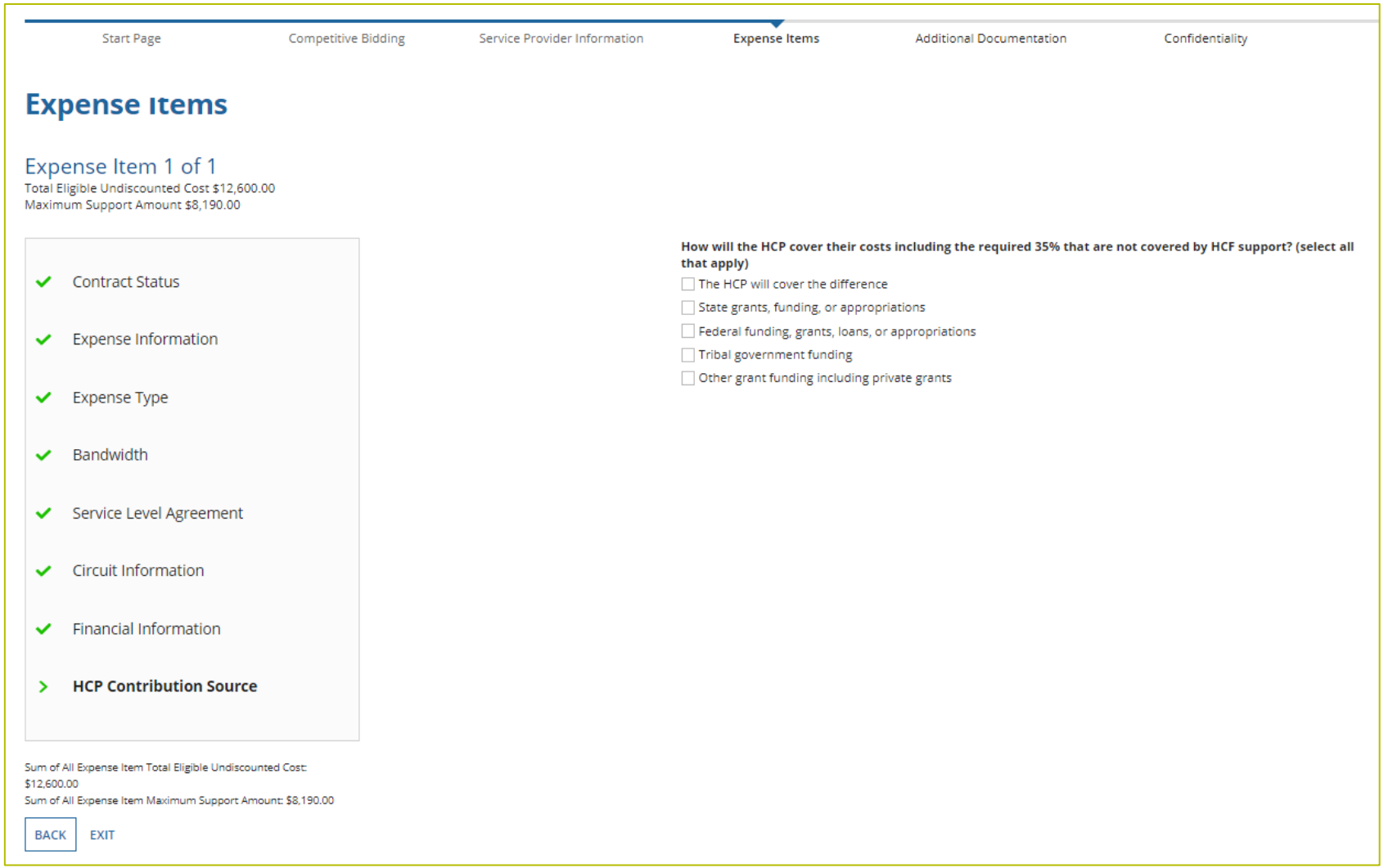
# Expense Items – Multiple Items

- The quantity of items should match the quantity on the documentation.

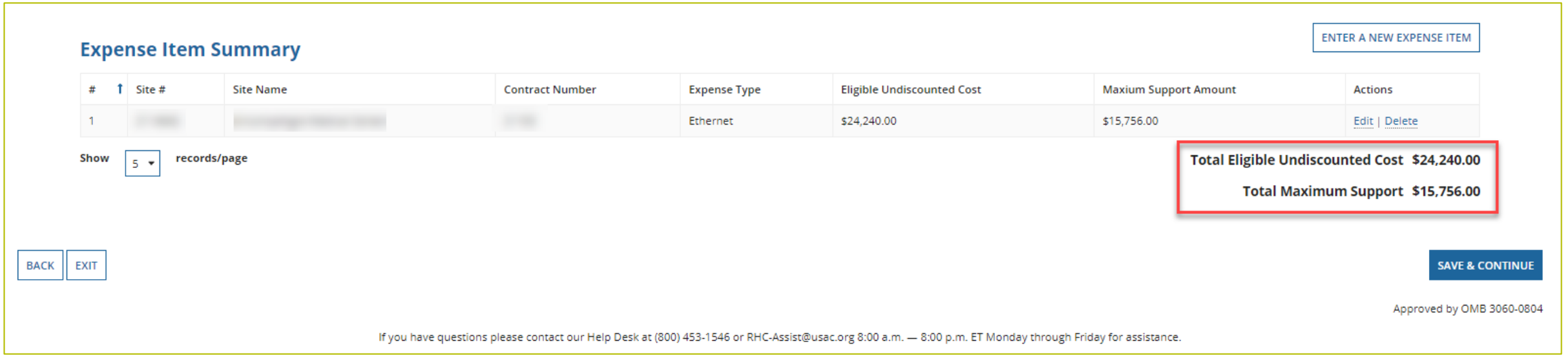


# Expense Items – Financial Information (Continued)

- Check all that apply.

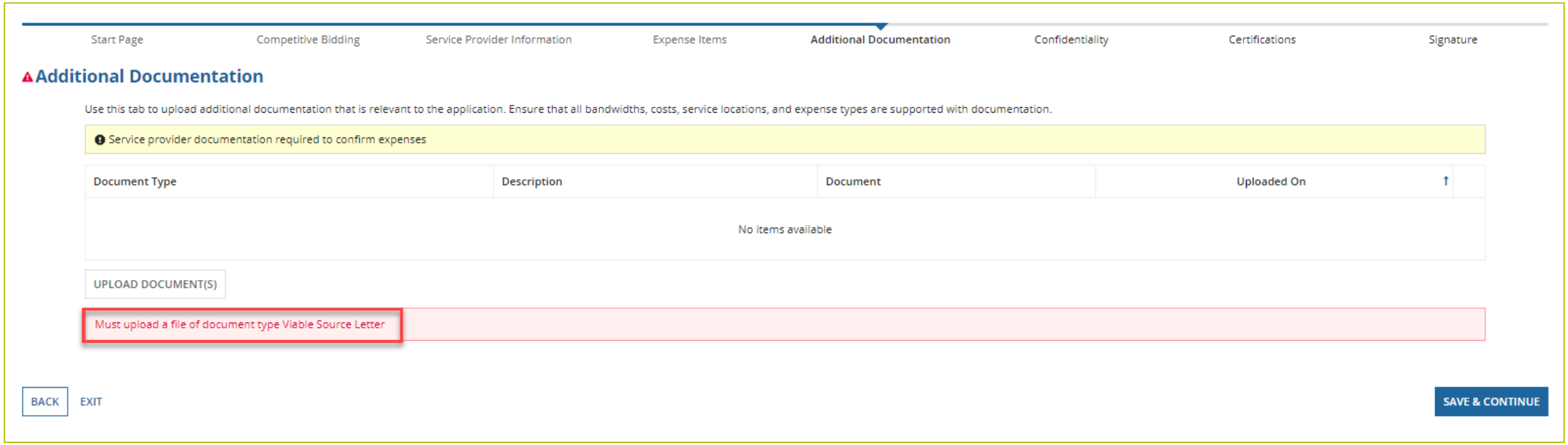


# Expense Items – Summary



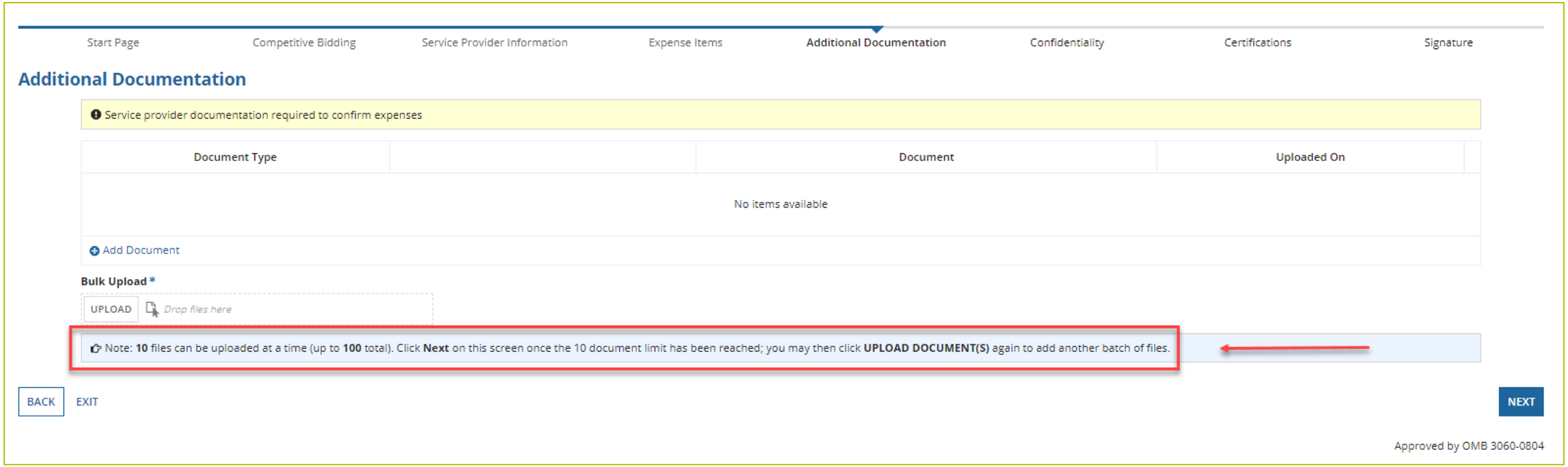
# Additional Documentation

- Consortia applicants are required, at minimum, to upload a Viable Source Letter before continuing.

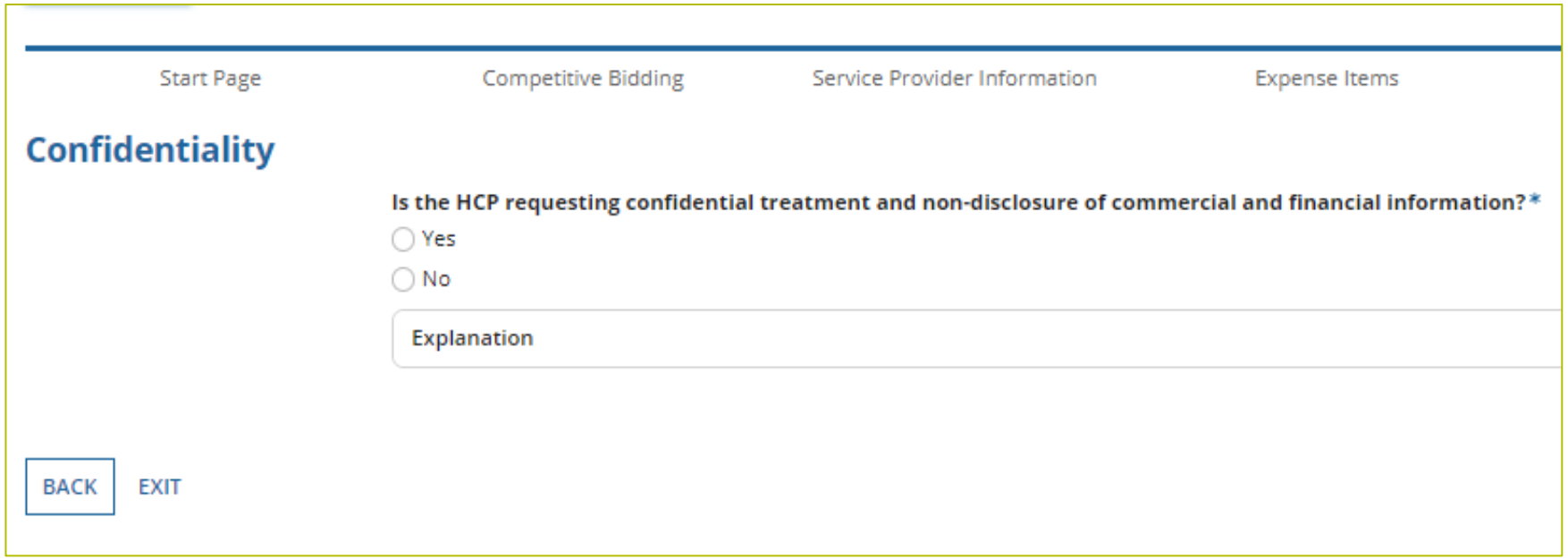


# Additional Documentation (continued)

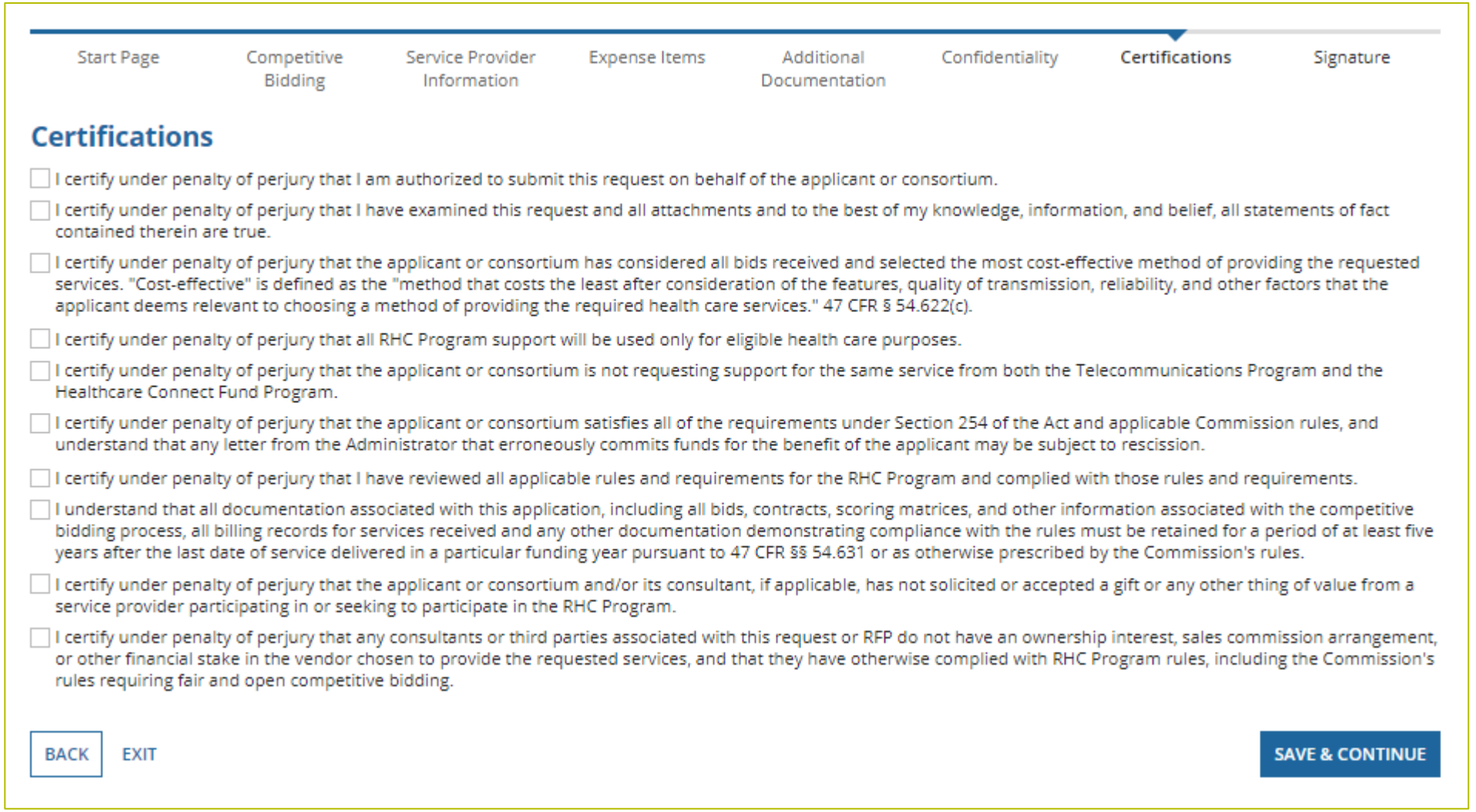
- To upload more than 10 documents, follow the instructions in the blue banner.



# Confidentiality

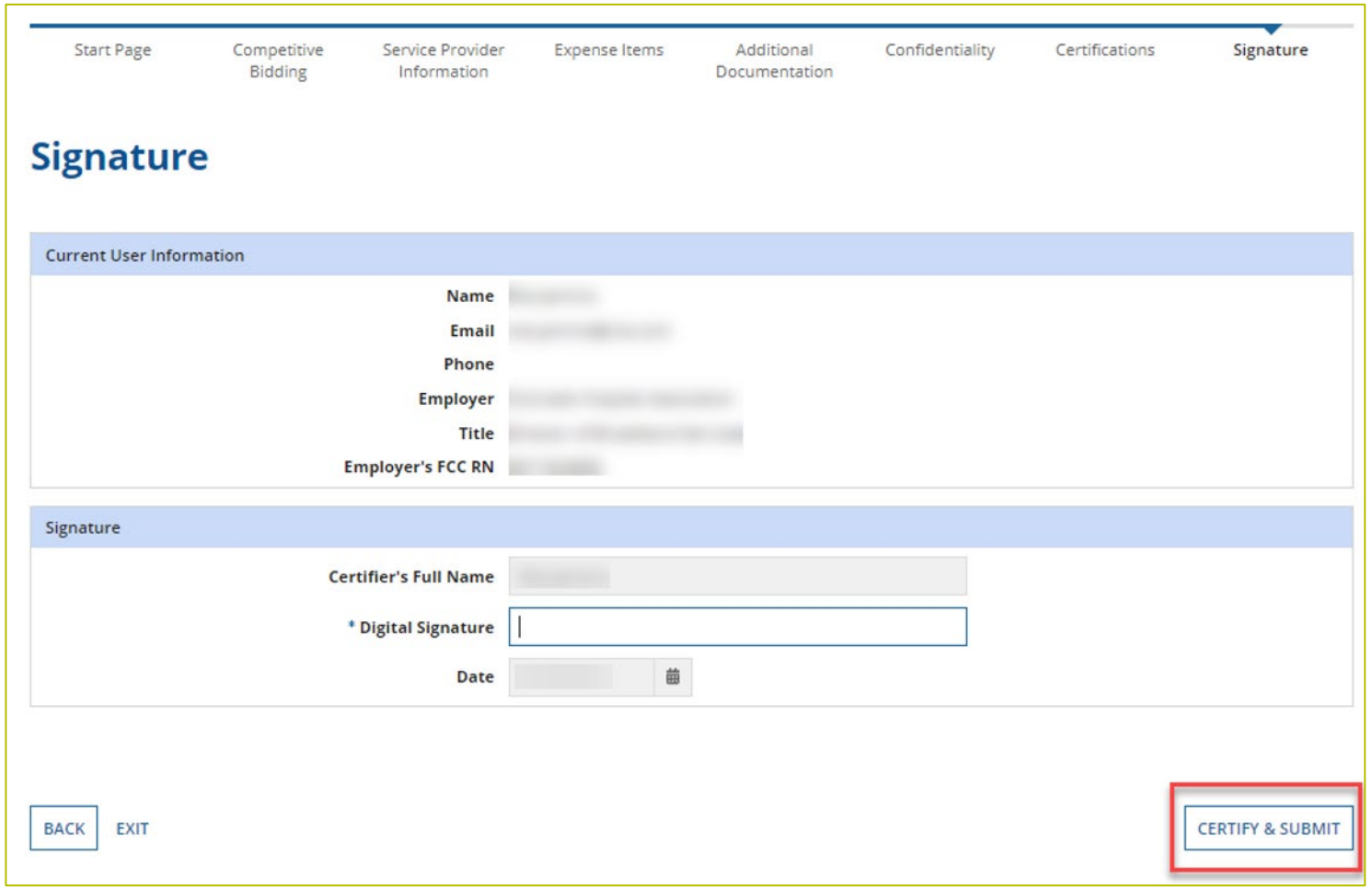


# Certifications



# Signature

- Sign by typing your first and last name in the “Digital Signature” field.



# 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.
- Draft forms remain in RHC Connect but are not considered submitted until signed, certified, and submitted.
- 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.

# Questions?

Available for Public Use

# Best Practices

## HCF Program Funding Request Office Hours

# 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 services 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 (upon request)
- ❑ Copies of any correspondence with service providers prior to and during the competitive bidding process (upon request)
- ❑ A copy of any new contract signed for your services
- ❑ Award letter to winning vendor (upon request)
- ❑ Contact information for the service provider and all responsible account holders
- ❑ The start and end location of your services.
- ❑ Viable source letter for consortia applicants (35 percent contribution)

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

# Best Practices – Competitive Bidding

- Begin your competitive bidding process early.
  - Bidding period opened on July 1, 2023, for FY2024.
- Once the ACSD has passed and you've chosen a service provider, include them when you reply to Information Requests via email.
- Ensure your service provider is aware of all the necessary documentation needed for future steps in the application process.
- All bid correspondence should be handled via email for audit purposes.
- HCPs and service providers are required to retain documentation for a minimum of five years.

# Best Practices – FCC Form 462 (Funding Request)

- Do not enter into an agreement with a service provider until after the ACSD has passed.
- Include all required documentation when submitting your FCC Form 462.
- Include a cover letter if needed to clarify information entered into the FCC Form 462.
- If submitting funding requests for equipment, data center or administrative offices or network expenses, tip sheets can be found on the Step 4: Submit Funding Requests webpage under the Additional Resources section.
- Be sure to actually sign, certify and submit all FCC Forms 462 before 11:59 p.m. ET on May 1, 2024 (Drafts are not considered submitted).
- HCPs and service providers are required to retain documentation for a minimum of five years.

# Resources

HCF Program Funding Request Office Hours

# Upcoming Trainings

Please join the RHC Outreach team for the following webinars:

- Telecom Office Hours Webinar:
  - When: Wednesday, April 24, 2024, from 2-3 p.m. ET - Register
- Service Provider Training:
  - When: Wednesday, June 12, 2024, from 2-3 p.m. ET - Register
- For a list of upcoming webinars, check the RHC Upcoming Dates webpage for dates and details.

# Online Resources

- RHC Learn
- Step 4: Submit Funding Request webpage
- Welcome to RHC Connect – FCC Form 462 webpage
- Competitive Bidding Exemptions
- Consortia Majority Rural Compliance Tip Sheet
- Request for Proposals (RFPs)
- Network Plans
- Funding Limitations Tip Sheet
- Off-site Data Centers and Admin Offices Tip Sheet
- Equipment Tip Sheet

# Online Resources - RHC Connect

- Welcome to RHC Connect - FCC Form 461 webpage
  - RHC Connect User Guide
  - Welcome to RHC Connect – FCC Form 461 self-paced video training guide
- Welcome to RHC Connect – FCC Form 462 webpage
  - RHC Connect User Guide
  - RHC Connect - FCC Form 462 self-paced video training guide
- Welcome to RHC Connect – FCC Form 463 webpage
  - RHC Connect Form User Guide
  - RHC Connect – FCC Form 463 self-paced video training guide
- Information Request Tip Sheet

# RHC Program Customer Service Center

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
- **Additional Hours – Filing Window Close:**

# The RHC Customer Service Center

| The RHC Customer Service Center CAN | The RHC Customer Service Center 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 and other FCC orders | 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 and RHC Connect | Transfer a call to a specific form reviewer |

# Questions?

# Thank You!

Available for Public Use

Universal Service
Administrative Co.