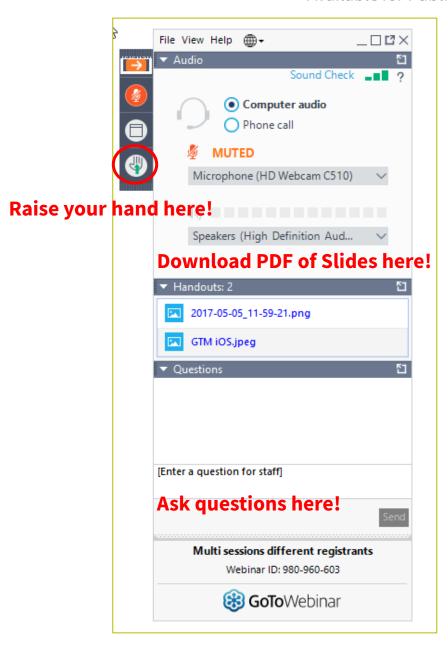


#### **DISCLAIMER:**

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.
- Use the "Raise Your Hand" button to be unmuted and ask a question to the team!



#### **Meet Our Team**



**Eric Overton** 

Program Manager | 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.

# **Program Updates**

**HCF Program Funding Request Office Hours** 

#### **Reminder: FCC Report and Order 19-78**

- <u>FCC Report and Order 19-78</u> 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 <u>recording</u> and <u>slides</u>

#### FCC Order DA 23-189

- On March 8, 2023, the FCC released FCC Order DA 23-189 extending the deadline for the FY2023 Application Filing Window to May 1, 2023.
- This means all funding requests (FCC Forms 462 or 466) must be submitted no later than 11:59 p.m. ET on May 1, 2023.

# 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 <u>FCC Report and Order 19-78</u>, 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 multiyear 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 May 1, 2023.
- For FY2023 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**

- Supporting documentation for invoices and proof of payment related to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Form 463 (Invoicing Form) is no longer required in RHC Connect to move forward with the submission of Form 463.
- 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: 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 <u>RHC Invoicing Deadline Tool</u> in the Open Data section of the USAC website to look up your invoicing deadline.
- For more information please see the <u>HCF invoice page</u> and <u>Telecom invoice page</u>.

# **Supply Chain Order**

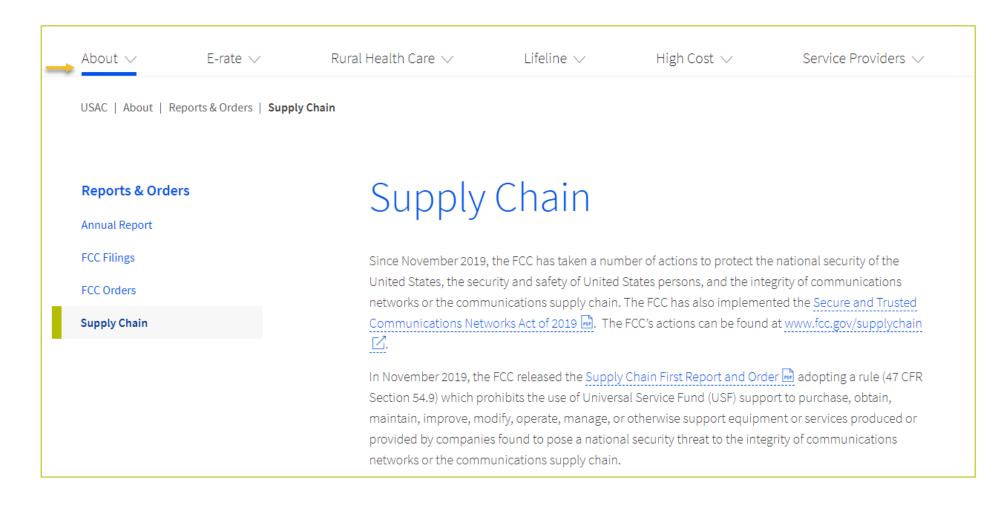
• As a reminder, when service providers login to <u>My Portal</u> they will see two new <u>supply chain certifications</u> included in the FCC Form 463 and Telecom program invoice.

The first certification affirms compliance with the <u>Section 54.9 prohibition</u> 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 <u>Section 54.10</u>, which prohibits the use of any Federal subsidies on any communications equipment and services on the <u>Covered List</u>, 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 <u>service substitution</u> 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



# **RHC Connect – Submitting the FCC Form 462**

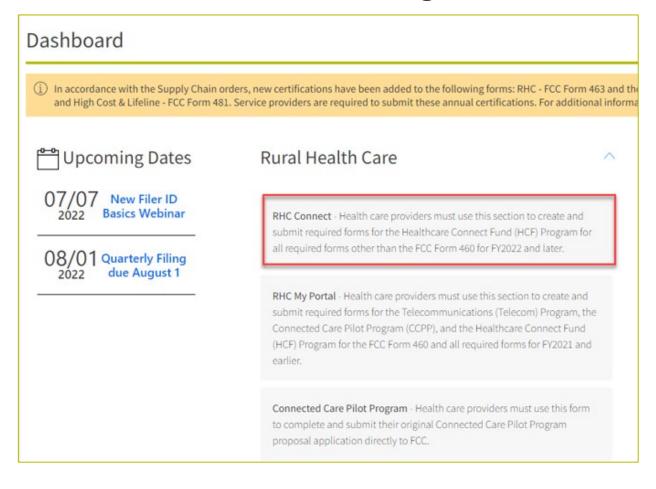
HCF Program Funding Request Office Hours

#### **RHC Connect Updates**

- Forms 461, 462 and 463 should be submitted in RHC Connect for FY2022 and FY2023.
- All information from the FCC Forms 460 will be migrated to RHC Connect.
- Over time, all FCC forms for the HCF and Telecom programs will move to RHC Connect.
- Use the following resources to submit the FCC Form 462 in RHC Connect:
  - Welcome to RHC Connect FCC Form 462 webpage
  - RHC Connect User Guide
  - Information Request tip sheet

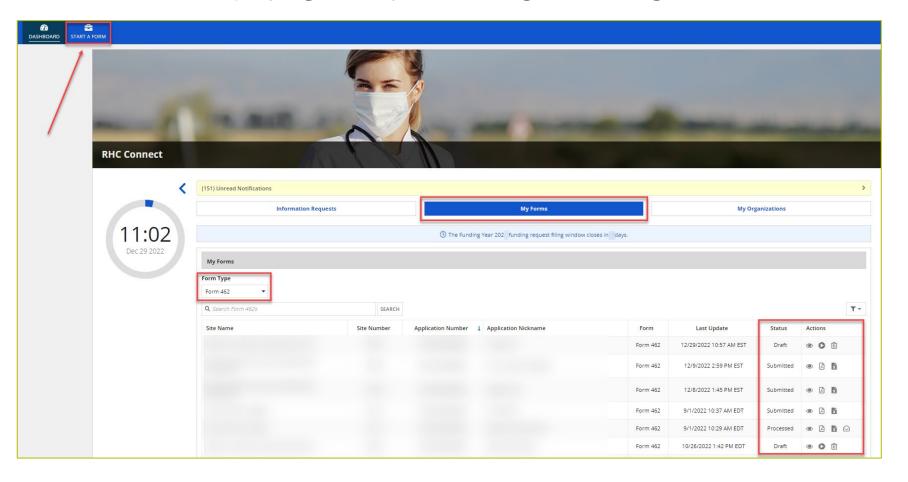
#### **My Portal Landing Page**

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



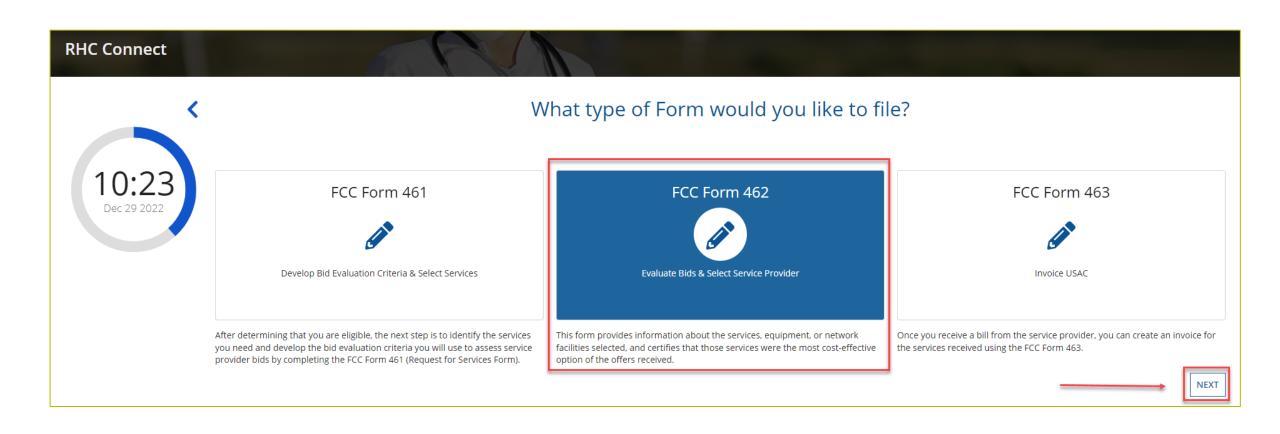
#### **Dashboard**

- 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.

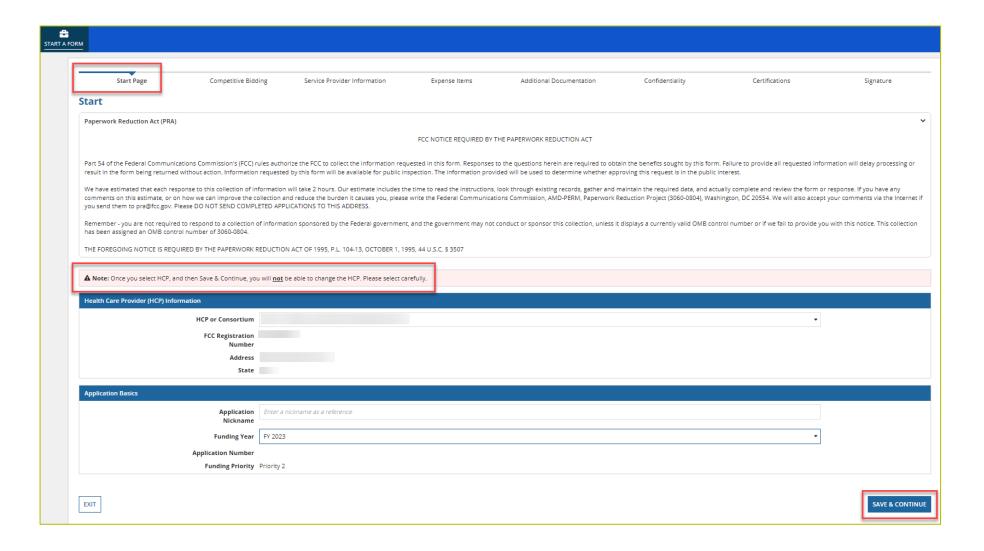


#### **Start a New Form**

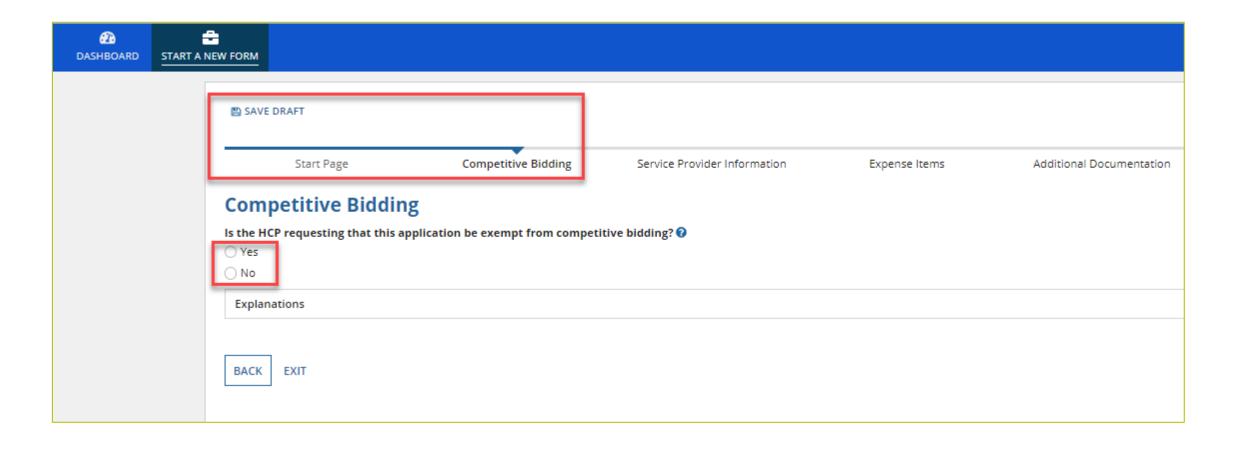
Select FCC Form 462, then click "Next".



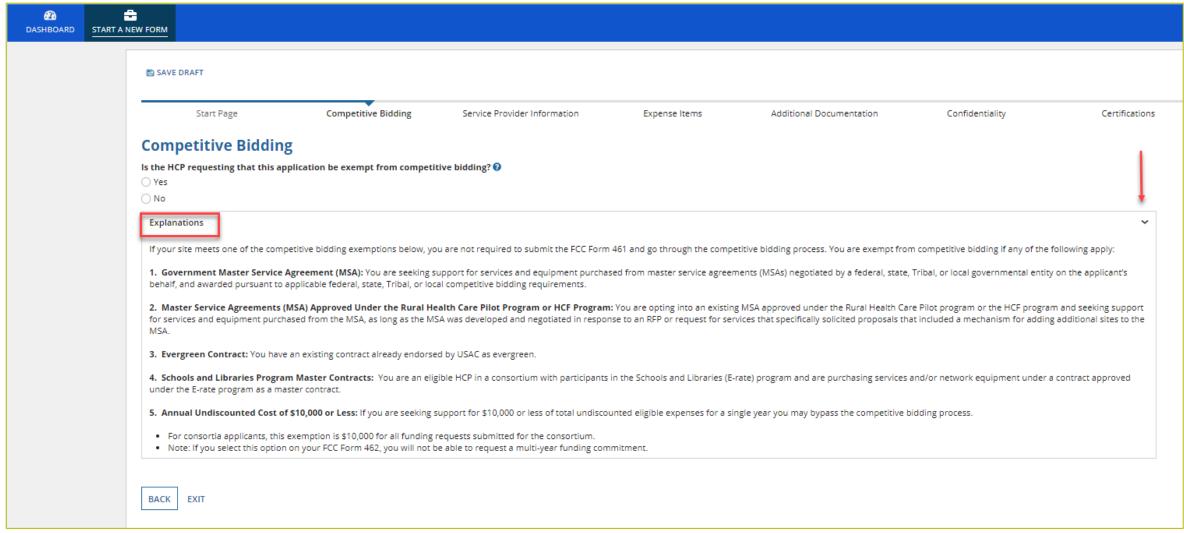
#### **Start**



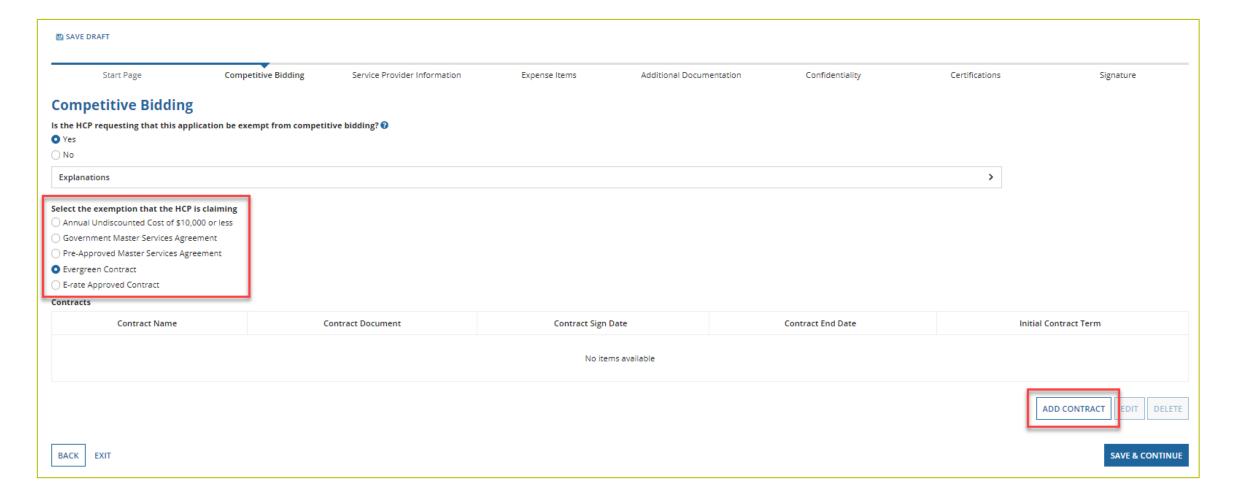
# **Competitive Bidding**



# **Competitive Bidding (Continued)**

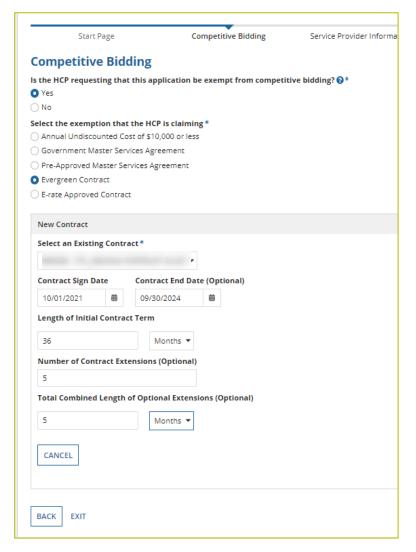


# **Competitive Bidding Exemptions**



# **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.



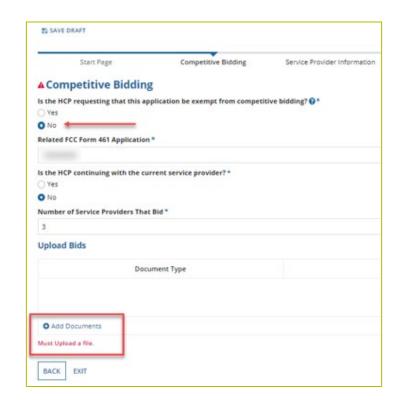
## **Competitive Bidding Exemptions (Continued)**

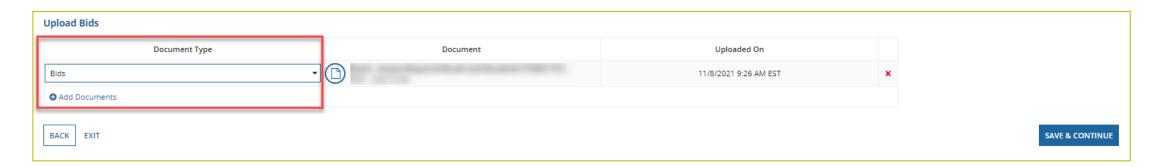
• Once the contract is selected, click "Save and Continue".



# **Competitive Bidding Non-Exempt**

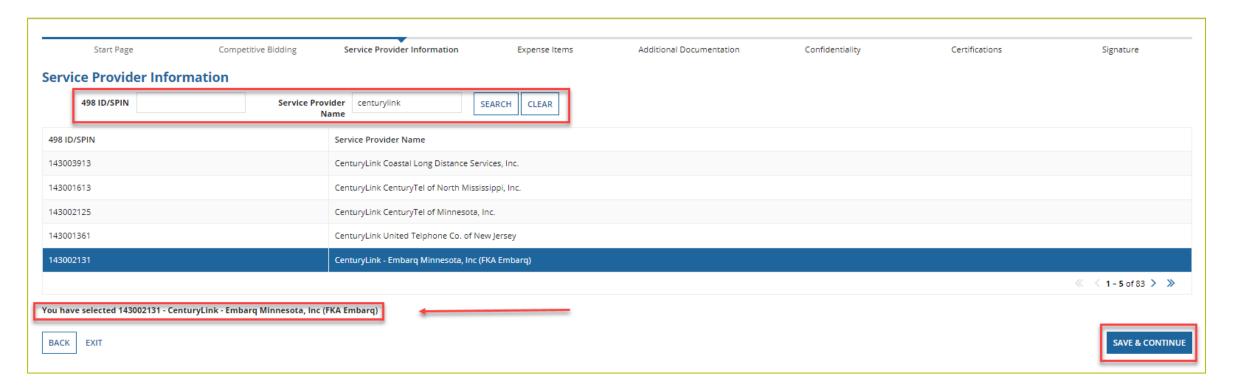
- Click "No" if the HCP is not exempt from competitive bidding.
- Choose the related FCC Form 461 from drop-down menu.
  - All FCC Forms 461 for the HCP will be available.
- Enter the number of bids received.
- Copies of all bids received must be uploaded.





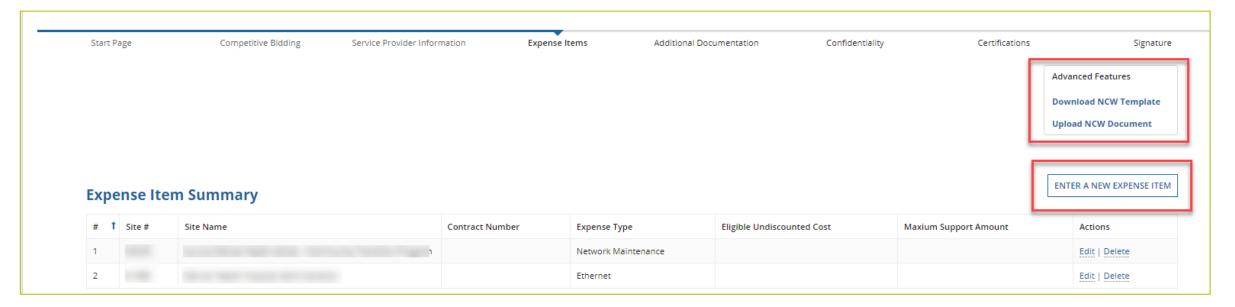
#### **Service Provider Information**

- 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.



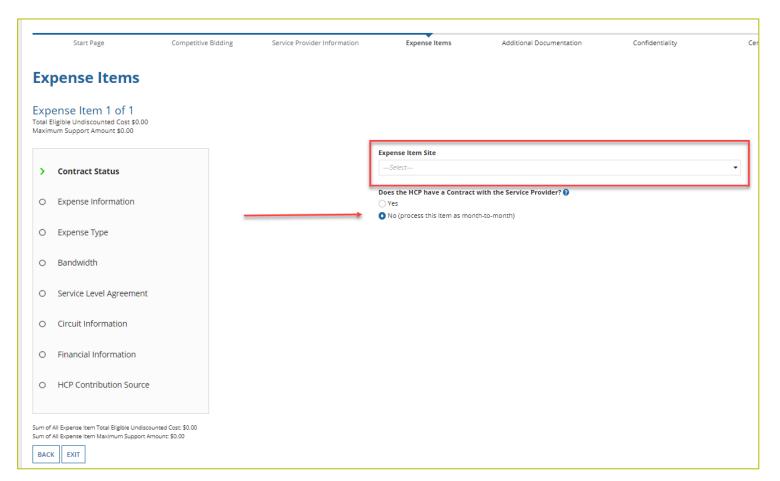
#### **Using the NCW Template**

- 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										
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3	-		Yes		-										No				Data	Dark Fiber				1.00	Gbps	1.00	Gbps	Yes	<8 ms	<10 MS	<0.001	0.9999		Circuit Start Location		
4	-	-	Yes												No			-	Data	Ethernet				100.00	Mbps	100.00	Mbps	Yes	<8 ms	<10 MS	<0.001	0.9999		Circuit Start Location		
5			Yes												No			-	Data	Ethernet				50.00	Mbps	50.00	Mbps	Yes	<8 ms	<10 MS	<0.001	0.9999		Circuit Start Location		

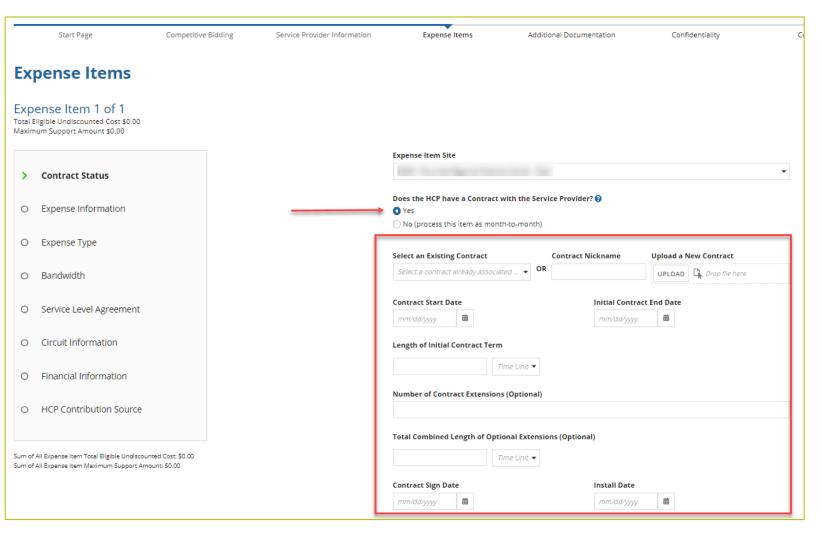
#### **Expense Items – Contract Status**

- For consortia applicants, choose a member site for each expense from dropdown menu.
- Select "no" for submission without contract (monthto-month).



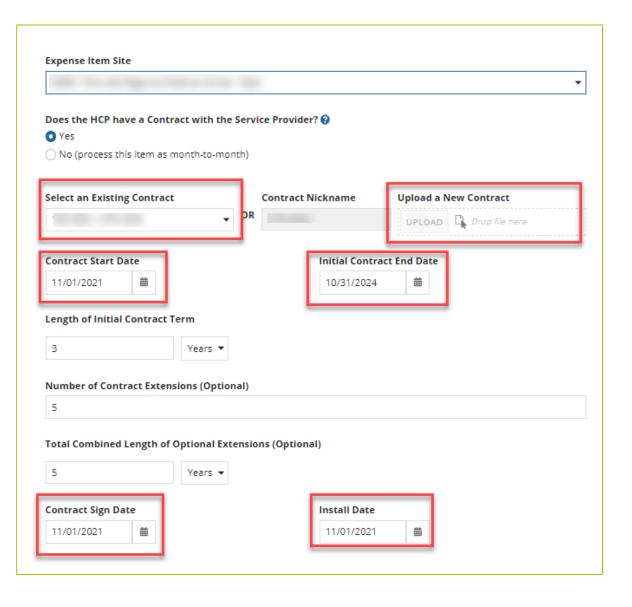
#### **Expense Items – Contract Status (Continued)**

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



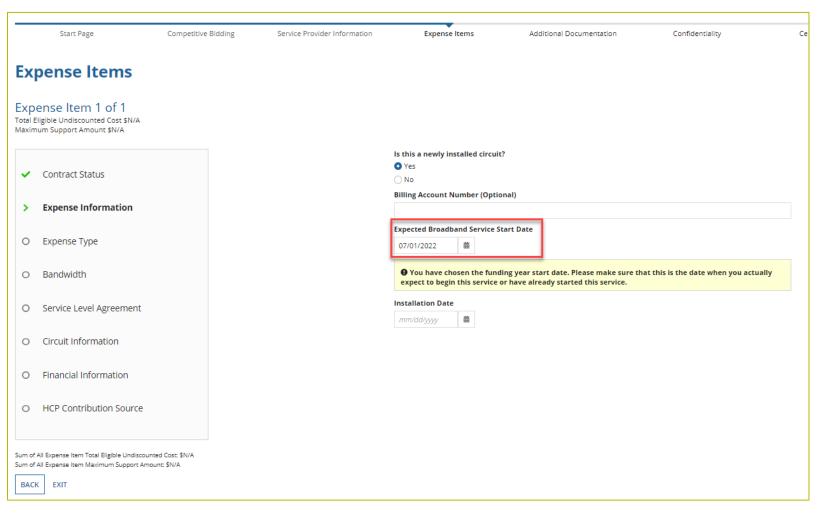
### **Expense Items - Contract Status (Continued)**

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



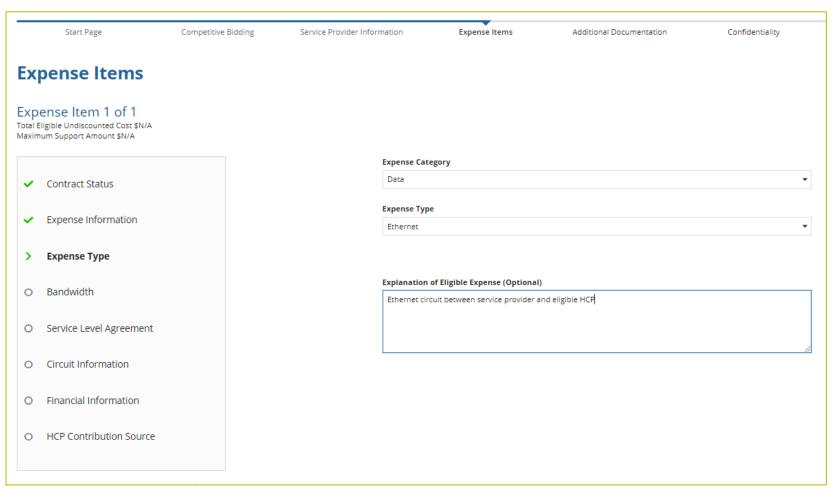
# **Expense Items - Expense Information**

Enter the "Expected Broadband Service Start Date" and "Installation Date".



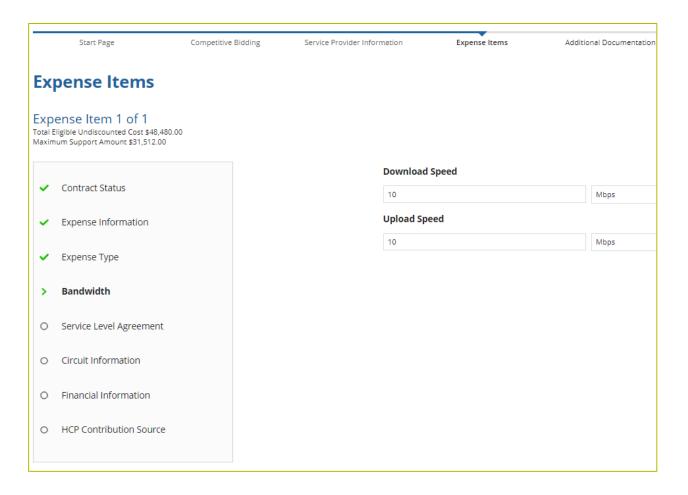
# **Expense Items – Expense Type**

• Enter "Expense Category" and "Expense Type" and an optional explanation of the eligible expense.



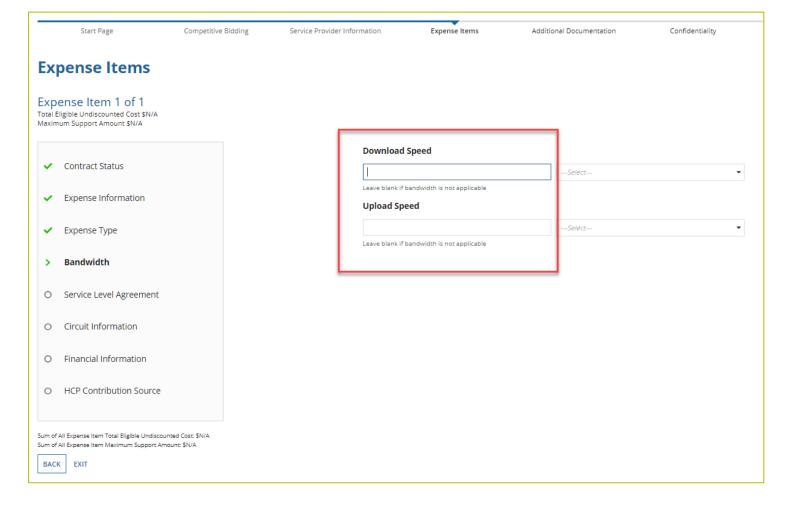
# **Expense Items - Bandwidth**

Enter Bandwidth.



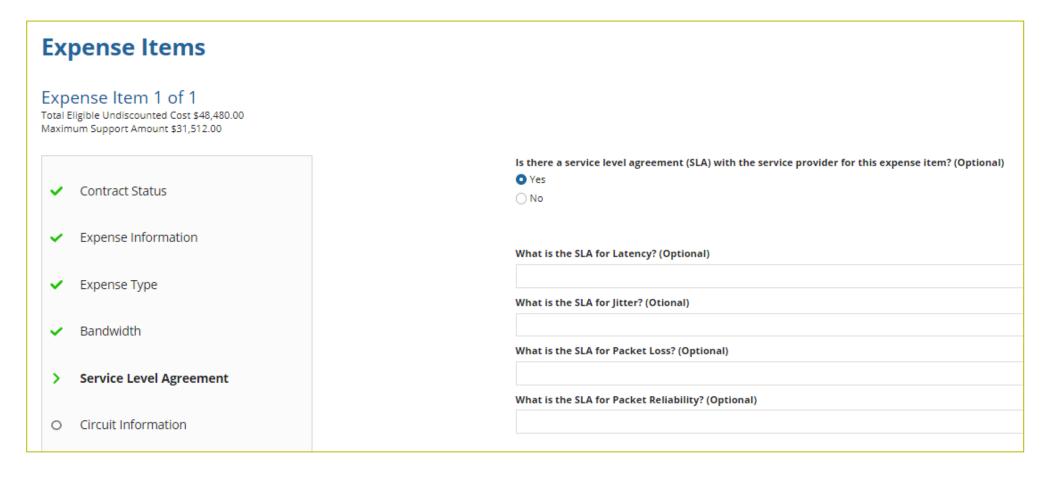
## **Expense Items - Bandwidth (Continued)**

- 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)**

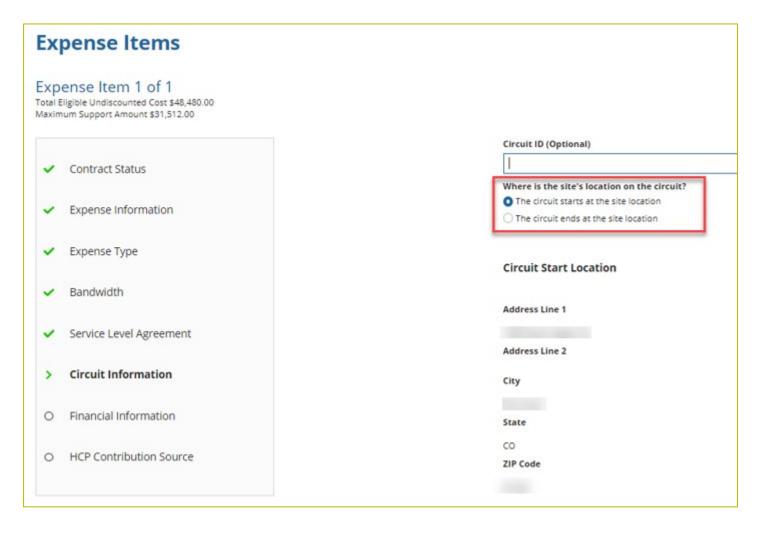
- If "no" is selected, fields will not appear.
- If "yes" is selected, enter the information about the SLA.



# **Expense Items - Circuit Information**

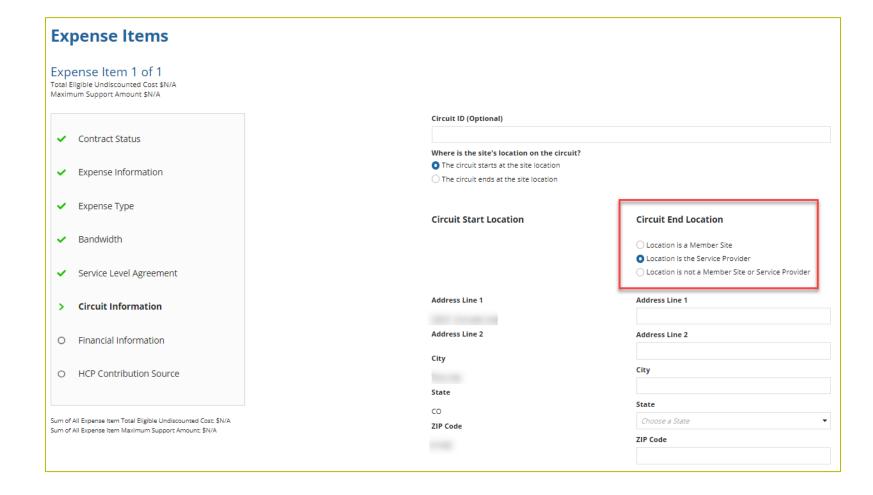
Address of the HCP on expense item will pre-populate based on information in

the FCC Form 460.

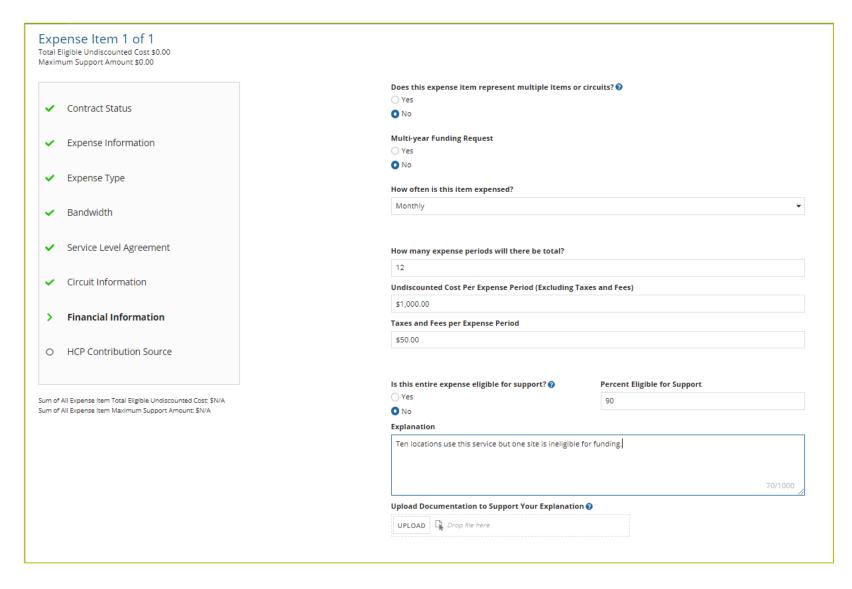


## **Expense Items – Circuit Information (Continued)**

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

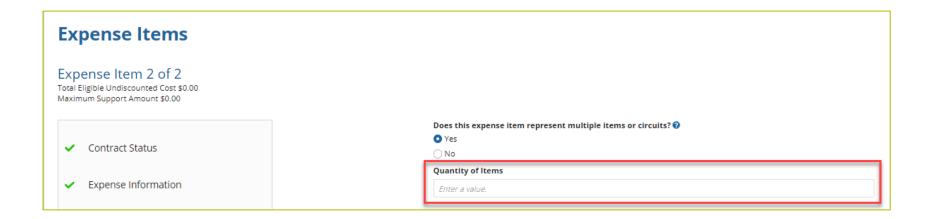


### **Expense Items - Financial Information**



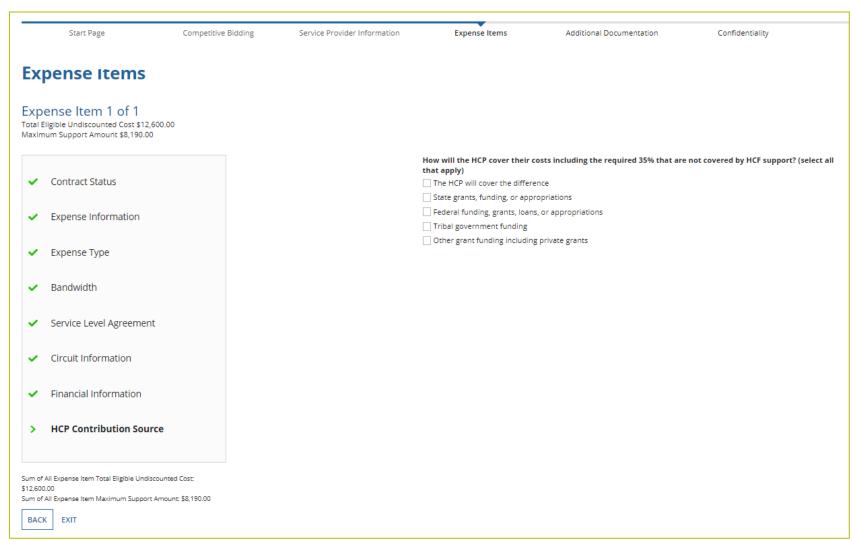
### **Expense Items – Multiple Items**

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

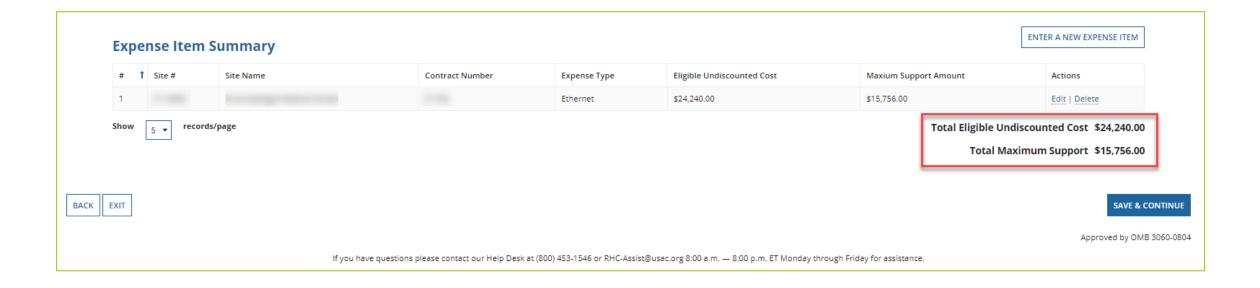


# **Expense Items – Financial Information (Continued)**

• Check all that apply.

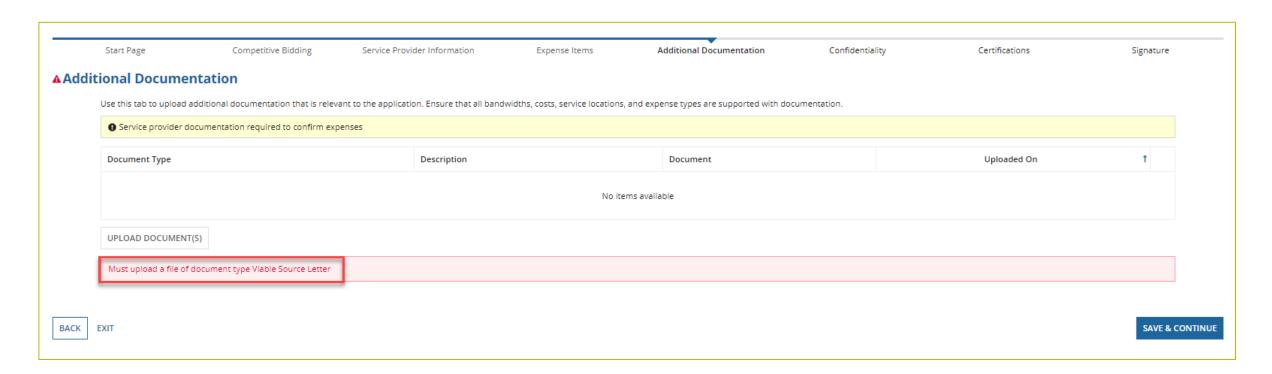


### **Expense Items - Summary**



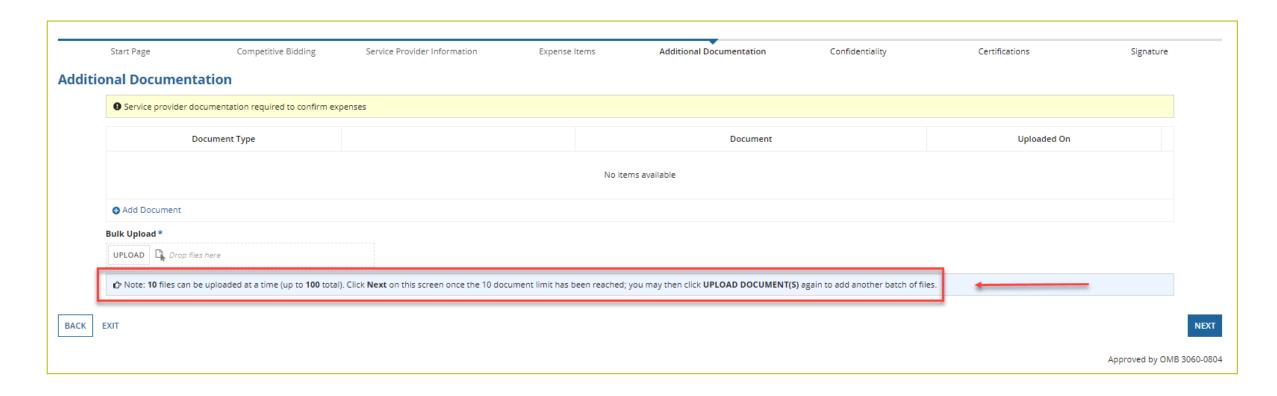
### **Additional Documentation**

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

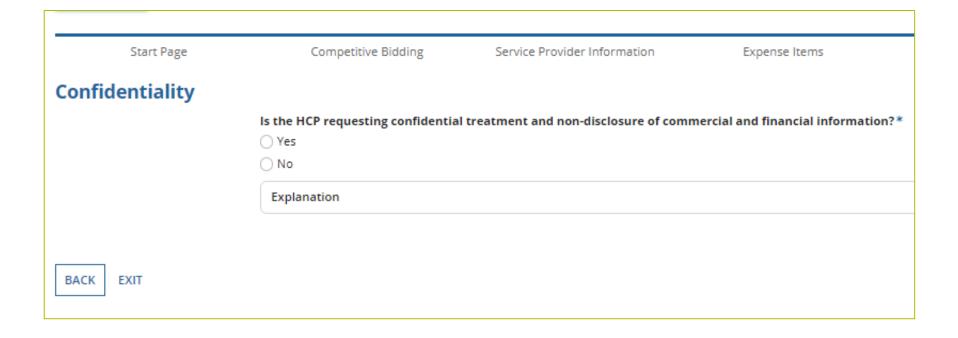


### **Additional Documentation (continued)**

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



# **Confidentiality**

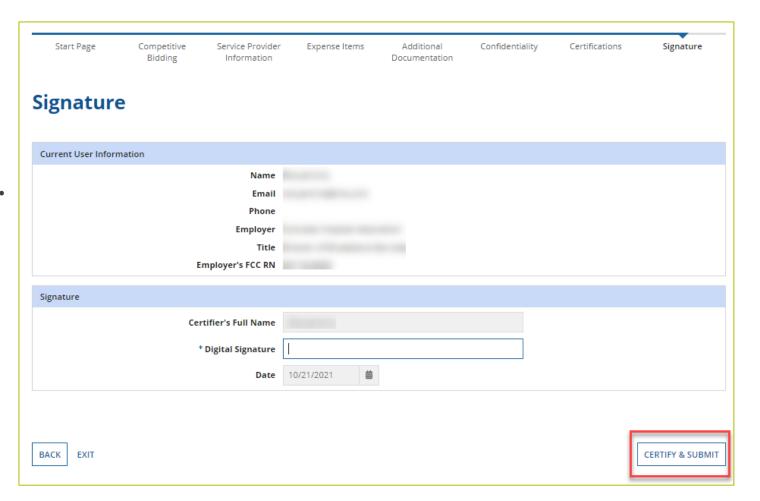


### **Certifications**

Start Page	Competitive Bidding	Service Provider Information	Expense Items	Additional Documentation	Confidentiality	Certifications	Signature
Certification	s						
I certify under per	alty of perjury that I a	am authorized to submi	t this request on beha	alf of the applicant or co	onsortium.		
I certify under per contained therein		nave examined this requ	iest and all attachme	nts and to the best of n	ny knowledge, informa	ation, and belief, all sta	tements of fact
services. "Cost-eff	ective" is defined as tl	e applicant or consortion he "method that costs the method of providing th	ne least after conside	ration of the features, o	quality of transmission		
I certify under per	alty of perjury that al	I RHC Program support	will be used only for e	eligible health care pur	poses.		
I certify under per Healthcare Conne		e applicant or consortiu	ım is not requesting s	support for the same se	ervice from both the T	elecommunications Pro	ogram and the
		e applicant or consortion					ion rules, and
I certify under per	alty of perjury that I h	nave reviewed all applic	able rules and require	ements for the RHC Pro	gram and complied w	ith those rules and req	uirements.
bidding process, a	II billing records for s	sociated with this applic ervices received and an ered in a particular fund	other documentatio	n demonstrating comp	liance with the rules r	must be retained for a	period of at least five
		e applicant or consortiu		ant, if applicable, has no	ot solicited or accepte	d a gift or any other thi	ng of value from a
or other financial		ny consultants or third p nosen to provide the red ve bidding.					_

# **Signature**

 Sign by typing your first and last name in the "Digital Signature" field.



# **Questions?**

### **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 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 (if applicable).
- Contact information for the service provider and all responsible account holders.
- ☐ The start and end location of your services.
- ☐ Viable source letter (35% contribution).

<sup>\*</sup> 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, 2022, for FY2023.
- 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 <a href="Step 4: Submit Funding Requests">Step 4: Submit Funding Requests</a> 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 April 3, 2023 (Drafts are not considered submitted).
- HCPs and service providers are required to retain documentation for a minimum of five years.

### **Virtual Site Visits and Success Stories**

- Virtual Site Visits: A great opportunity to expose RHC staff to the people and the communities that benefit from the RHC programs and to deepen the relationship between RHC staff and applicants.
- Success Stories: We will begin collecting stories of first-hand experiences showing how applicants are using their funding to improve access to healthcare in rural communities.
- If you're interested in either of these opportunities, send an email directly to <u>Blythe Albert</u> with "Virtual Site Visit" or "Success Story" in the subject line.

### **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 26, 2023, from 2-3 p.m. ET Register
- For a list of upcoming webinars, check the RHC <u>Upcoming Dates</u> 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
  - Coming soon! 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:

### **Customer Service Center - Extended Hours**

- The RHC Customer Service Center will provide additional support prior to the close of the FY2023 filing window to Include in your email:
- Extended hours:
  - Friday, April 28 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET.
  - Saturday, April 29 CLOSED
  - Sunday, April 30 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. ET.
  - Monday, May 1 8 a.m. to 11:59 p.m. ET.

### **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?**

