Telecom Program Funding Request Office Hours

March 20, 2024
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.
Meet Our Team

Simone Andrews
Senior Communications Specialist | RHC Outreach

Blythe Albert
Advisor of Program Management | RHC Outreach
Agenda

• Introduction – Office Hours
• Program Reminders
• Program Updates
• Submitting the FCC Form 466 in RHC Connect
• Best Practices and Resources
Introduction – Office Hours

• Subject matter experts are available to answer live questions from program participants.
• Today’s presentation will focus on the Telecom 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

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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<td>FCC</td>
<td>Federal Communications Commission</td>
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<td>HCF</td>
<td>Healthcare Connect Fund</td>
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<td>FY</td>
<td>Funding Year</td>
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<td>HCP</td>
<td>Health Care Provider (your site)</td>
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<td>HCP Number</td>
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<td>BAN</td>
<td>Billing Account Number</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPIN/498 ID</td>
<td>Service Provider Identification Number</td>
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Program Reminders

Telecom Program Funding Request Office Hours
RHC Program Application Process

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

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

3. Evaluate Bids and Select Service Provider
   - Once competitive bidding has ended, choose the most "cost-effective" service provider.

4. Submit Funding Request
   - Provide information about the services selected: cost, service provider information, and terms of service agreement(s).
   - HCF Program: FCC Form 462
   - Telecom Program: FCC Form 466

5. Certify Connection
   - Confirm service start and end dates.
   - HCF Program: FCC Form 463
   - Telecom Program: FCC Form 467

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

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

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

• It is helpful to also submit a cover letter that includes a summary of your submission.

• Recommended things to include in your cover letter:
  • Where to find information about your circuit in the supporting documentation (i.e. Ethernet 20M - $XX.XX – Page 5 of Invoice)
  • Highlight/label any documentation that is submitted.

• Information that isn’t clearly identified via supporting documentation may need to be confirmed by the service provider.
  • It is the HCPs responsibility to reach out to the service provider to get any missing information. USAC cannot reach out to the service provider on an HCP’s behalf.
Best Practices: Communicating with Your Service Provider

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

Telecom Program Funding Request Office Hours
# RHC Connect Updates

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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.
- We highly encourage you to submit your funding requests as early as possible in the filing window.
### Milestones for FY2024: Telecom Program

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<th>HCF Program Form</th>
<th>Last Day to Submit for Individual HCPs NOT using a Request for Proposal (RFP)</th>
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<tr>
<td>FCC Form 465 – Eligibility</td>
<td>February 8, 2024 Recommended Date</td>
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<td>FCC Form 465 – Request for Services</td>
<td>March 10, 2024 Recommended Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>FCC Form 466 – Funding Request</td>
<td>May 1, 2024 Deadline to Submit*</td>
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*Please note that these dates (except for the FCC Form 466 filing window deadline of May 1) are not mandatory deadlines, but rather recommended milestones to meet the close of the filing window.*
Reminder: FCC Report and Order 19-78

- FCC Report and Order 19-78 webpage summarizes the Report and Order’s major changes and includes the following resources:
  - FCC Report and Order 19-78
  - Public Notice DA 19-1253
  - FCC Report and Order 19-78 Tip Sheet
  - Webinar recording and slides
FCC 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.

- **Service Substitutions** – Telecom Program applicants will be allowed to submit service substitution requests.
  - HCPs in both the HCF and Telecom program are required to submit site and service substitutions by the service delivery deadline.
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 466 Application)
FCC Order DA 23-6

• On January 26, 2023, the FCC released Order DA 23-6, waiving the requirement that HCPs and service providers participating in the Telecom Program use the Rates Database to calculate urban and rural rates for FY2024 and FY2025.

• For FY2024 and FY2025, 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 FY2025, applicants and service providers using Methods 1 and 2 to calculate rural rates are not permitted to use previously approved rates.
  • 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 and urban 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 or urban rate.

• Please use the Urban and Rural Rate Information FY2024-2025 tip sheet as a resource.
FCC 23-110 Third Report and Order

- On December 14, 2023, the FCC released Order [FCC 23-110](https://www.fcc.gov/document/3rd-notice-federal-service-communication-telecommunication). 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 466, 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.
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.

• 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

Supply Chain

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

In November 2019, the FCC released the Supply Chain First Report and Order adopting a rule (47 CFR Section 54.9) which prohibits the use of Universal Service Fund (USF) support to purchase, obtain, maintain, improve, modify, operate, manage, or otherwise support equipment or services produced or provided by companies found to pose a national security threat to the integrity of communications networks or the communications supply chain.
Questions?
RHC Connect – Submitting the FCC Form 466

Telecom Program Funding Request Office Hours
## RHC Connect Updates as of November 2023

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RHC Connect Updates (continued)

- All information from the FCC Forms 465 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 466 in RHC Connect:
  - Welcome to RHC Connect – FCC Form 466 webpage
  - RHC Connect User Guide – FCC Form 466
  - Information Request tip sheet
My Portal Landing Page

- Log into My Portal and click **Rural Health Care** then **RHC Connect**
- For all other forms that have not yet moved to RHC Connect, you will use **RHC My Portal**
Dashboard

- Here you can start a new form, view the status of submitted and processed applications, resume working on a draft or delete a draft FCC Form 466.

- If the form is recalled, the bottom screen will appear, and an email will be sent to all account holders.

- There’s a countdown banner displaying the days remaining in the filing window.
Start Form

• Click **FCC Form 466** then click **Next**.
Start Page

- Select HCP from the drop-down menu.
- Enter an **Application Nickname**.
Competitive Bidding Page

- Select **Yes** if you are exempt from competitive bidding and **No** if you completed your competitive bidding process.
Click the arrow beside Explanations to view a description of each competitive bidding exemption.
Competitive Bidding Exemptions

- Purchasing services from a government master service agreement (MSA) negotiated by a federal, state, Tribal, or local governmental entity 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 Page – Exemptions (continued)

- Select the exemption from the list of eligible exemptions.
- Click **Add Contract** at the bottom right on the screen
• If using an evergreen contract, an existing contract must be selected from the drop-down menu.
• For all other exemptions, upload a new contract or choose an existing contract.
• Enter the relevant information about the contract in the fields and click Save.
Competitive Bidding Page – Exemptions (continued)

- Once the contract is selected, click **Save and Continue**.
Competitive Bidding Page - Non-Exempt

- Click **No.**
- Choose related FCC Form 465 from drop-down menu.
- Enter number of bids received.
- Upload copies of bids by clicking **Add Documents** hyperlink.
- Select the document type from the drop-down menu, then click **Save & Continue.**
Bill Payer Information Page

- Click **Yes** to copy **Bill Payer Information** from another FCC Form 466.
- Click **No** to enter required information, then click **Save and Continue**.
Service Information Page

- Select the **Service Category** and the **Service Type** from the drop-down menus.
- For voice services, enter **Number of Lines**, then click **Save and Continue**.
Service Information Page (continued)

- Answer **Yes** or **No** for the question *Is entire expense eligible for support?*
  - If **No**, enter **Percent eligible for support**, enter an explanation about the eligible percentage calculation, and upload supporting documentation.
- Answer **Yes** or **No** for question *Are you a Mobile Rural health care provider?*
  - If **Yes**, upload the required lists of sites the mobile clinic visits, then click **Save and Continue**.
• For data services, answer the question **Is this service symmetrical?** and enter bandwidth.

• If **No** is selected, enter **Download Bandwidth** and **Upload Bandwidth**.

• If **Yes** is selected, only one bandwidth is required, then click **Save & Continue**.
Connection Information Page

- On the **Connection Information** page, click the hyperlink titled **Enter a New Connection**.
  - If the service is a multi-carrier connection, each connection should be added using that hyperlink.
- If the HCP is a consortium member or the circuit uses more than one carrier, please attach a circuit diagram as indicated on this page, the click **Save & Continue**.
• Select your service provider’s 498 ID/SPIN.
• You can search by service provider name or the 498 ID/SPIN.
• Click Save & Continue.
Add Connection Page - Circuit

- Select the radio button that describes where the site is located on the requested circuit.
- This should align with submitted service provider confirmed documentation.
- Information will pre-populate based on information in the FCC Form 465.
Add Connection Page – Billing Information

- Enter **Billing Information** in fields shown.
- Click **Save & Continue**.
Add Connection Page – Evergreen

- Select Yes to the question Are you submitting a new contract to be reviewed for Evergreen endorsement?
- Select No if submitting as a month-to-month application.
Add Connection Page – Evergreen (continued)

- If Yes, enter information about the contract in the fields as shown.
- Click Save & Continue.
Add Connection Page – Service Level Agreement

- Select **Yes** or **No** to answer the question about a service level agreement.
- If **Yes**, enter the information shown. **Click Save & Continue**.
Enter the **Monthly Undiscounted Cost** and **Monthly Taxes and Fees** listed on the bill or invoice.

Upload the documentation that supports these costs.

Click **Save & Continue**.
Enter each section of the service as a new connection by clicking **Enter a New Connection**.

Upload a Circuit Diagram to support the data entered.

Connections may be edited or deleted by clicking the hyperlinks under the Actions column.

Click **Save & Continue**.
FCC Order DA 23-6

- On January 26, 2023, the FCC released Order DA 23-6, waiving the requirement that HCPs and service providers participating in the Telecom Program use the Rates Database to calculate urban and rural rates for FY2024 and FY2025.

- For FY2024 and FY2025, 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 FY2025, applicants and service providers using Methods 1 and 2 to calculate rural rates are not permitted to use previously approved rates.
  - 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 and urban 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 or urban rate.

- Please use the Urban and Rural Rate Information FY2024-2025 tip sheet as a resource.
Choose the **Method for determining the Rural Rate** and the **Method for determining the Urban Rate**.

Enter the monthly calculated rural and urban rates that comply with the method per Telecom Program rules.

Use the [Urban and Rural Rate Information FY2024-2025](#) tip sheet for information about Telecom Program rules.

Upload documentation to support the rural and urban rates below the data fields on this page.

Click **Save & Continue**.
Rates Page (continued)

- Select methods for determining the rural and urban rates from the drop-down menus.
- Upload the documentation, then click **Save & Continue**.
Installation Charges Page

- Enter **One-time Rural Rate Charge** and **One-time Urban Rate Charge**, if applicable.
- This is optional and can be skipped if no installation costs were incurred.
- Upload supporting documentation.
- Click **Save & Continue**.
Additional Documentation Page

- Upload any additional supporting documentation.
- Add a description of the document in the required field.
- Click **Save & Continue**.
Certifications Page

• Each certification must be checked to continue.
• Enter your first and last name as it appears in RHC Connect in the Digital Signature field.
• Click Certify & Submit.
After Submitting

• Once submitted, this screen will appear with a link to the My Forms tab and a link to view the submitted form.

• The submitted form with all other FCC Forms 466 will appear on the My Forms tab.
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.
Information Requests

• Forms with missing or incomplete information cannot be processed.
• If an Information Request is sent, it will come from rhcadmin@usac.org.
  • Respond to the Information Request in RHC Connect.
  • Email notifications sent from RHC Connect are from an unattended mailbox.
  • Use the Information Request tip sheet on the USAC website as a resource.
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.
Questions?
Best Practices and Resources

Telecom Program Funding Request Office Hours
Upcoming Trainings

Please join the RHC Outreach team for the following webinars:

• Service Provider Training:
  • Wednesday, March 27, 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 Requests
- Funding Request Summary
- Rural and Urban Rate Information for FY2021 and FY2022
- Competitive Bidding Exemptions
- Blank FCC Form 466
- Examples of Eligible Products and Services Telecom Program
RHC Program Customer Service Center

Email: RHC-Assist@usac.org

- Include in your email
  - HCP Number
  - FRN Number

Phone: (800) 453-1546

- Hours are 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. ET
- Monday- Friday
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<th>The RHC Customer Service Center CAN</th>
<th>The RHC Customer Service Center CANNOT</th>
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<tr>
<td>Answer general questions regarding both programs</td>
<td>Determine eligibility of a specific site or service before an official form submission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide account holder information for an HCP</td>
<td>Review a form or document for accuracy before an official submission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide clarity regarding FCC Report and Order 19-78 and other FCC orders</td>
<td>Contact a service provider or other account holder on someone else’s behalf</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide helpful resources and best practices for forms</td>
<td>Provide documents that are not already accessible in My Portal and RHC Connect</td>
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<td>Assist with My Portal and RHC Connect</td>
<td>Transfer a call to a specific form reviewer</td>
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Questions?
Thank You!