

## September 2024 RHC Monthly Newsletter

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September 5, 2024

### Latest News

#### **FY2023 Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) Program Participant Annual Report Due September 30, 2024**

Per [FCC Order 19-78](#), all HCF participants receiving HCF funding are required to submit an annual report to USAC using the provided Excel template to supplement information collected in Rural Health Care (RHC) program application forms. The reports for funding year (FY) 2023 (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024) are due September 30, 2024. This means any health care provider (HCP) who received funding in FY2023 in the HCF Program is required to submit the annual report by September 30, 2024.

#### **Who Is Required to Submit the Annual Report?**

All HCF Program participants, both individual and consortia, must submit an annual report for each funding year in which they received HCF Program support and for the life of a supported facility or service for which the program participant received large upfront payments. Email the completed report to [RHC-Outreach@usac.org](mailto:RHC-Outreach@usac.org) by September 30, 2024. **Please include the HCP name and number in the Excel file and in the subject line of the email.**

For instructions on how to complete and submit the FY2023 Annual Report, please visit the [Submit Annual Report](#) webpage.

#### **Invoice Filing Deadline**

The invoice filing deadline for most single-year FY2023 funding commitments is October 28, 2024. Per [FCC Order 19-78](#), the invoice filing deadline is four months (120 days) from the later of the service delivery deadline, the date of a revised FCL approving a post-commitment change request, or a successful appeal of a previously denied or reduced funding request. This invoice filing deadline applies to both RHC programs.

A single 120-day extension of the invoice filing deadline is available if the HCP is unable to meet the invoice filing deadline for any reason. The request for an extension must be submitted prior to the original invoice filing deadline. Thus, the deadline to request an extension of the invoice filing deadline for most single-year FY2023 funding commitments is also October 28, 2024.

#### **New! Commitments for Funding Year (FY) 2024**

To deliver funding decisions quicker, the RHC team began reviewing funding requests before the filing window closed. The first FY2024 funding commitments were issued on June 20, 2024, six weeks after the close of the filing window! To date, RHC's processing status is as follows:

- HCF Program: 10,178 out of 13,437 (75.75 percent) is committed/denied/withdrawn
- Telecommunication (Telecom) Program: 591 out of 1,779 (33.22 percent) is committed/denied/withdrawn.

As of August 23, 2024, RHC has processed 70.7 percent of applications received and 38.5 percent of total funds requested for both the Telecom and HCF programs for FY24.

During application review, applicants will receive Information Requests if their funding request is incomplete. Per RHC program rules, applicants have 14 calendar days to respond to Information Requests. Please be sure to reply by the deadline listed on the Information Request.

#### **FY2025 Competitive Bidding**

Beginning on July 1, 2024, applicants can start the competitive bidding process for FY2025. For the HCF Program, the FCC Form 461 (Request for Services Form) along with any other competitive bidding documents such as a request for proposal (RFP) may be submitted in RHC Connect. For the Telecom program, currently the FCC Form 465 (Request for Services Form) may be submitted in My Portal. The FCC Form 465 will be moving to RHC Connect later this month. The RHC outreach team will provide more information and resources when this form moves to RHC Connect.

Please use the following resources to submit these forms:

#### **HCF Program:**

- [Develop Bid Evaluation Criteria & Select Services](#) – webpage
- [Welcome to RHC Connect – FCC Form 461](#) – webpage
- [Competitive Bidding Exemptions](#) – webpage
- [RHC Connect FCC Form 461 User Guide](#)

## Telecom Program:

- [Prepare For Competitive Bidding and Request Services](#) – webpage
- [Competitive Bidding Exemptions](#) – webpage

## Coming Soon for Telecom Program Applicants!

- Welcome to RHC Connect – FCC Form 465 webpage
- RHC Connect FCC Form 465 – User Guide

## FY2025 Filing Window Dates Announced

The FY2025 filing window will open on December 1, 2024, and close on April 1, 2025. As a reminder, applicants can start submitting their FCC Forms 461 and 465 to request services and begin the competitive bidding process on July 1, 2024. View the [FY2025 Program Calendar](#).

# Rural Health Care Program: **Funding Year 2025**



## Upcoming Trainings and Webinars

Please join the RHC outreach team for the following webinars:

- FY2024 FRN Touch Base Webinar – September 18, 2024, at 2 p.m. ET - [Register](#)
- FY2024 Service Provider Training Webinar - October 9, 2024, at 2 p.m. ET - [Register](#)
- FY2025 HCF Program Funding Request Webinar – November 13, 2024, at 2 p.m. ET - [Register](#)
- FY2025 Telecom Program Funding Request Webinar – November 20, 2024, at 2 p.m. ET - [Register](#)

## FCC News

### FCC Announces Availability of Unused Funds to Fully Fund Rural Health Care Program Demand for FY2024

On June 14, 2024, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Wireline Competition Bureau directed USAC to carry forward up to \$161.57 million in unused funds from prior funding years to satisfy FY2024 demand for the RHC program. Because of this, all eligible RHC program funding requests filed during the FY2024 application filing window can now be fully funded without prioritization. Please read the [Public Notice](#) for more information.

### RHC Program Inflation-Based Cap Announced for FY2024

The RHC program funding cap for FY2024 is \$706,926,603. The internal cap for upfront payments and multi-year commitments under the HCF Program is \$178,496,951. The internal cap for upfront payments and multi-year commitments will apply only if RHC program demand exceeds available funding. These new caps represent a 3.6 percent inflation-adjusted increase to the \$682,361,586 RHC program funding cap and the \$172,294,354 internal cap on multi-year commitments and upfront payments from FY2023. The FCC has announced that all eligible FY2024 funding requests can be funded without prioritization. Read the FCC [announcement](#) regarding FY2024 caps and the FCC [announcement](#) regarding fully funding eligible funding requests.

### FCC Released Order FCC 23-110: Continuing Improvements to Rural Health Care Program Procedures

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 HCPs 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.

## Rule Changes

This Third Report and Order:

- Permits HCPs to be granted conditional eligibility, thus allowing them to initiate competitive bidding and request funding before they meet all eligibility requirements. An HCP must meet all eligibility requirements before it receives a funding commitment.
- Provides HCPs more time to complete Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN) changes by moving the SPIN change deadline to align with the invoice filing deadline.

- Simplifies urban rate calculations by eliminating the seldom-used “standard urban distance” component of the RHC program rule for determining urban rates in the Telecom Program.
- Allows HCPs to request changes to the dates covered by an evergreen contract.
- Adopts the FCC Form 460 for eligibility determinations in the Telecom Program, which will eliminate the need for program participants to seek an eligibility determine every time they engage in competitive bidding.

For more information, read [Order FCC 23-110](#).

## RHC Connect Updates

### Status of Migration to RHC Connect

RHC Connect migration is still underway. Here is an update for the relevant forms and funding years.

Form	Current Platform	RHC Connect Migration
FCC Forms 460 & 465	TBD	TBD
- Letters of Agency (LOA)	TBD	TBD
- Third Party Authorization (TPA)	TBD	TBD
FCC Form 461	RHC Connect	FY2023 and forward
FCC Form 462	My Portal	FY2021 and prior - multi-year commitments
FCC Form 462	RHC Connect	FY2022 and forward
FCC Form 463	My Portal	FY2021 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
Telecom Invoice	My Portal	FY2023
FCC Form 469	N/A	FY2024 and forward - Estimated release 9/2024

**PLEASE NOTE: The FCC Forms 460 and 465 will be released in RHC Connect after the FCC receives approval for the updated FCC Forms 460 and 465 required by the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA). The RHC outreach team will provide updates and resources once these forms move to RHC Connect.**

### Submit Your Post-Commitment Change Requests in RHC Connect

The following post-commitment change requests are now available in RHC Connect for HCF Program applicants:

- SPIN changes (corrective and operational)
- Site and service substitutions
- Service delivery deadline extensions for non-recurring charges
- Invoice filing deadline extensions

A webpage for [Post-Commitment Actions](#) is available on the USAC website as well as specific webpages for [SPIN Changes](#) and [Site and Service Substitutions](#). A step-by-step [Post-Commitments Change Request](#) user guide is available to help you submit these requests correctly.

A user guide for [Invoice Filing Deadline Extension Requests](#) specifically for service providers is posted under the Additional Resources section of the [Invoice USAC](#) webpage in the [Service Providers](#) section of the USAC website.

### The FCC Form 463 Is Available in RHC Connect for FY2022 and FY2023 Funding Commitments

For FY2022 and forward, the FCC Form 463 will be submitted in RHC Connect. HCF Program applicants submitting an FCC Form 463 for funding years prior to FY2022 will continue to do so in My Portal. Telecom Program and Connected Care Pilot Program (CCPP) applications will not be affected. To learn more, please visit the [Welcome to RHC Connect – FCC Form 463](#) webpage.

### RHC Connect for Service Providers

For FY2022 and forward, the FCC Form 463 will be submitted in RHC Connect. As you submit the FCC Form 463, please keep in mind that the General Contact on the FCC Form 498 is the only user for the company who can create additional logins for other users in that company.

**If you have trouble accessing RHC Connect, it may be a result of outdated information on the FCC Form 498 (Service Provider and Billed Entity Identification Number and General Contact Information Form). To correct the issue, please update your FCC Form 498 as soon as possible and, if applicable, your Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) on the [SAM.gov](#) webpage.** For more information, please visit the [Manage Your 498 ID](#) webpage on the USAC website.

A [user guide for the FCC Form 463](#) specifically for service providers is now available on the [Step 5: Invoice USAC](#) webpage in the RHC service provider section of the USAC website.

## Important Reminders

### Consortium Rurality Percentage

All current and new HCF Program consortia must be “majority rural.” Majority rural means that more than 50 percent of participating HCPs in a consortium are rural. For example, if a consortium has five participating HCPs, at least three of those HCPs must be in a rural area for the consortium to be deemed majority rural. Funding requests filed by consortia that are not in compliance with this rule will be denied.

Download the [Consortia Rurality Compliance Tip Sheet](#).

### Duplicate Funding Prohibited

Please remember: FCC rules prohibit duplicate funding for the same service, for the same locations, during the same period, from more than one FCC program. This includes the RHC programs (HCF and Telecom), the COVID-19 Telehealth program, and the CCPP.

## What To Do When You Receive an Information Request

As part of their review of eligibility, requests for services, funding requests, and invoicing forms, RHC reviewers will contact all account holders (the primary and all secondary and tertiary account holders associated with the HCP) with a request for additional information ("Information Request"). This request will assist with the collection of any missing documentation, address deficiencies, or gather general information required to address questions of FCC form reviewers.

### Information Request Tips for the Telecom Program

- For FY2024 FCC Forms 466, an auto-generated email will be sent directing HCPs to RHC Connect to respond. HCPs should respond through RHC Connect only. Please use the [Information Request Tip Sheet](#) to help you navigate Information Requests sent through RHC Connect.
- For prior years and all other Telecom Program forms, HCPs can receive Telecom Program Information Requests through My Portal or by email.
  - For Information Requests received through My Portal, HCPs should respond through My Portal only.
  - For Information Requests received by email, HCPs should "Reply All" to the email message.
- Use only Chrome, Firefox, or Microsoft Edge Internet browsers when using My Portal and RHC Connect.
- When uploading a document as a response, the file must be limited to 10MB and its file name should not contain any special characters, only letters and numbers.

### Information Request Tips for the HCF Program

- For FY2024 FCC Forms 462, an auto-generated email will be sent directing HCPs to RHC Connect to respond. HCPs should respond through RHC Connect only. Please use the [Information Request Tip Sheet](#) to help you navigate Information Requests sent through RHC Connect.
- HCPs that receive HCF Program Information Requests through email should "Reply All" to the email message.
- When uploading a document as a response, the file must be limited to 10MB and its file name should not contain any special characters, only letters and numbers.

### Reminders for Account Holders

Per RHC program rules, the primary and secondary account holder for an individual HCP must be an officer, director, or authorized employee of the HCP. For consortium applicants in the HCF Program, the Project Coordinator must be an officer, director, or other authorized employee of the Consortium Leader. If you are an HCP participating in the HCF or Telecom Program, and a consultant or other third party will file forms on your behalf, you must file a [third-party authorization \(TPA\)](#).

Note: The primary account holder is responsible for all activities associated with submitting and certifying forms, and for all activities in the RHC program for their HCP site.

### Letter(s) of Agency and Third-Party Authorizations

Please be sure that all authorizations including Letters of Agency (LOA) and TPAs are current and up to date, at minimum, through the end of FY2025 and forward. For more information about LOAs, visit the [Letter of Agency](#) webpage. For more information about TPA requirements, see the [Third Party Authorization \(TPA\)](#) webpage.

## Online Tools

### Invoice Filing Deadlines

The [Invoicing Deadline tool](#) has replaced the Invoicing Deadline spreadsheet. The tool allows service providers and HCPs to look up the deadline to submit invoices for funding commitments without having to set up specific Excel configurations.

### Open Data Platform

As part of USAC's Open Data initiative, we make RHC program data open and accessible to the general public. Anyone is free to use, re-use, and redistribute the data in our data sets to access all of the raw data submitted by universal service program participants. The following data sets are available on the Open Data platform for the RHC program:

- [Rural Health Care Commitments and Disbursements \(FCC Form 462/466/466A\)](#) - This dataset contains data about funding decisions, total committed amounts, and total disbursement amounts for the RHC program.
- [Rural Health Care Posted Services \(FCC Form 461/465\)](#) - This dataset allows service providers to view service request information provided by the RHC program. The data is collected from the FCC Forms 461 and 465, which includes the service request information.

## News You Can Use

### Certifications Requirements for National Supply Chain

As a reminder, when service providers log in to My Portal, two Supply Chain certifications included in the FCC Form 463 and Telecom Program invoice will be displayed. The first certification affirms compliance with the [Section 54.9](#) prohibition on 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](#).

**Please note:** If you requested services or equipment that provide or contain components of products produced by any company on the [Covered List](#), or any of their parents, affiliates, and subsidiaries you cannot invoice for these funds. Instead, you should immediately request a service substitution prior to invoicing to ensure complete program compliance. In addition, 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.

USAC updated the [Supply Chain](#) webpages to include three new subpages: [COVID-19 Broadband Programs](#), [Audits](#), and [FAQs](#).

**Need Help? Contact Us!**

For questions about the Rural Health Care program, contact [RHC-Assist@usac.org](mailto:RHC-Assist@usac.org) or the RHC Customer Service Center at (800) 453-1546 from 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. ET Monday through Friday for assistance. Use the [Customer Service Center Tip Sheet](#) to learn about what the RHC Customer Service Center can and cannot help you with.