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Telecom Program Funding Request Office Hours

January 15, 2025

Universal Service Administrative Co.

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

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
- 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

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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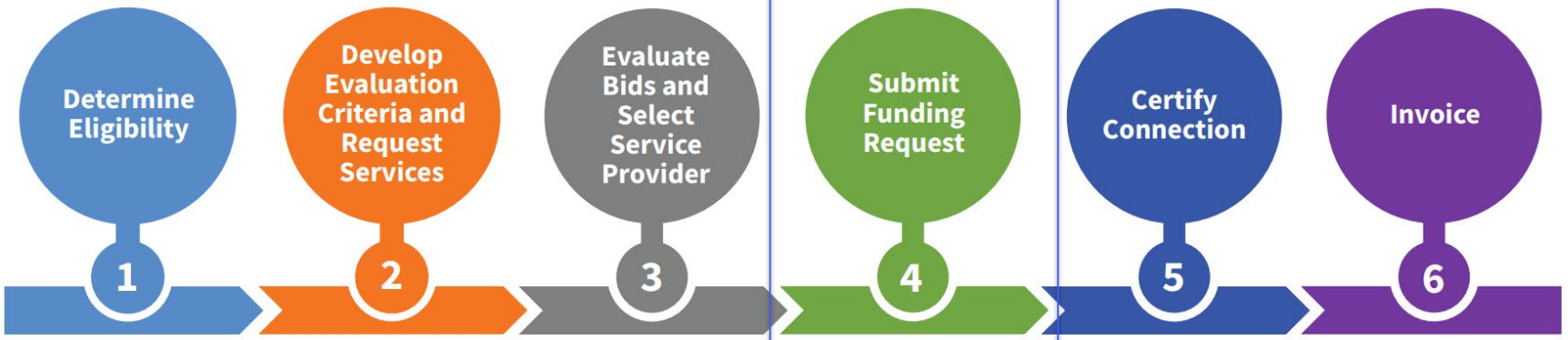
Program Reminders

Telecom Program Funding Request Office Hours

RURAL HEALTH CARE PROGRAM

Application Process



Must meet three eligibility criteria:

- Not-for-profit/public
- In a rural area
- One of the eligibility facility types

HCF Program: **FCC Form 460**
Telecom Program: **FCC Form 460**

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**

Once competitive bidding has ended, choose the most "cost-effective" service provider.

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**

Confirm service start and end dates.

HCF Program: **FCC Form 463**
Telecom Program: **FCC Form 469**

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: **FCC Form 469**

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.

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Program Updates

Telecom Program Funding Request Office Hours

FCC Order DA 24-1059 – Hurricane Milton Order

On October 9, 2024, the FCC released order DA 24-1059 waiving the following Rural Health Care Program (RHC) rules for participants and service providers located in areas affected by Hurricane Milton within the state of Florida:

- Waives the 60-day deadlines for requests for review or waiver of decisions by USAC or the FCC and provides an additional 60 days to file appeals and waivers. This waiver is in effect for all deadlines of appeals and waiver requests from October 5, 2024, through March 8, 2025.
- Waives the 14-day deadline for applicants in the affected areas to respond to Information Requests from USAC related to funding requests, appeals and waivers, invoices, audits, and other documentation submitted by program participants. This waiver will apply to all Information Requests issued on or after October 5, 2024, regardless of the related funding year. The new deadline for responding to Information requests is March 8, 2025.
- Due to possible lost records, the FCC waives the rule that applicants and service providers must retain all documents for at least five years after the last day of the supported services in a given funding year. If lost records are later requested by USAC or the FCC, program participants will not be penalized, but applicants and service providers will be held responsible for obtaining such records, where available, from a third party. Program participants that are affected also must certify that the records were destroyed in the hurricane. Current rules apply to all records that were not destroyed.
- Waives the invoice filing deadline for FY2023 funding requests and granted the automatic 120-day extension. Thus, for single-year funding commitments that previously had a deadline of October 28, 2024, the new deadline will be February 25, 2025.

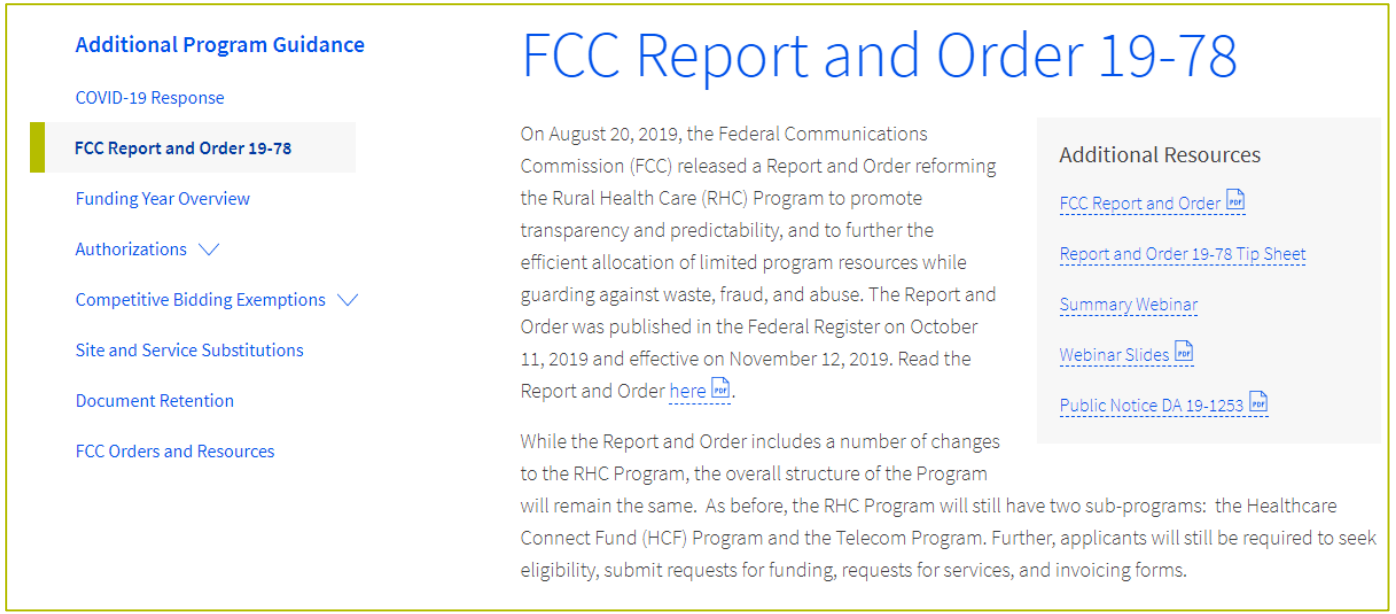
FCC Order DA 24-1025 – Hurricane Helene Order

On October 1, 2024, the FCC released order DA 24-1025 waiving the following Rural Health Care Program rules for participants and service providers located in areas affected by Hurricane Helene within the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia:

- Waives the 60-day deadlines for requests for review or waiver of decisions by USAC or the FCC and provides an additional 60 days to file appeals and waivers. This waiver is in effect for all deadlines of appeals and waiver requests from September 23, 2024, through February 28, 2025.
- Waives the 14-day deadline for applicants in the affected areas to respond to Information Requests from USAC related to funding requests, appeals and waivers, invoices, audits, and other documentation submitted by program participants. This waiver will apply to all Information Requests issued on or after September 23, 2024, regardless of the related funding year. The new deadline for responding to Information requests is February 28, 2025.
- Waives the September 30, 2024, deadline for the affected HCF participants to file their annual reports for FY2023. Affected program participants have until February 28, 2025, to file annual reports for FY2023.
- Due to possible lost records, the FCC waives the rule that applicants and service providers must retain all documents for at least five years after the last day of the supported services in a given funding year. If lost records are later requested by USAC or the FCC, program participants will not be penalized, but applicants and service providers will be held responsible for obtaining such records, where available, from a third party. Program participants that are affected also must certify that the records were destroyed in the hurricane. Current rules apply to all records that were not destroyed.
- Waives the invoice filing deadline for FY2023 funding requests and granted the automatic 120-day extension. Thus, for single-year funding commitments that previously had a deadline of October 28, 2024, the new deadline will be February 25, 2025.

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)

- **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. 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.
  - 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.
  - Simplifies urban rate calculations by eliminating the seldom-used “standard urban distance” component of the rule for determining urban rates in the Telecom Program.
  - Allows health care providers to request changes to the dates covered by an evergreen contract post-commitment.
  - 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.

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.

FY2025 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 April 1, 2025.
- For FY2025 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 supply chain certifications included in the FCC Forms 463 and 469.
- 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.
- **FY2024 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.
- **FY2025 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?

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RHC Connect – Submitting the FCC Form 466

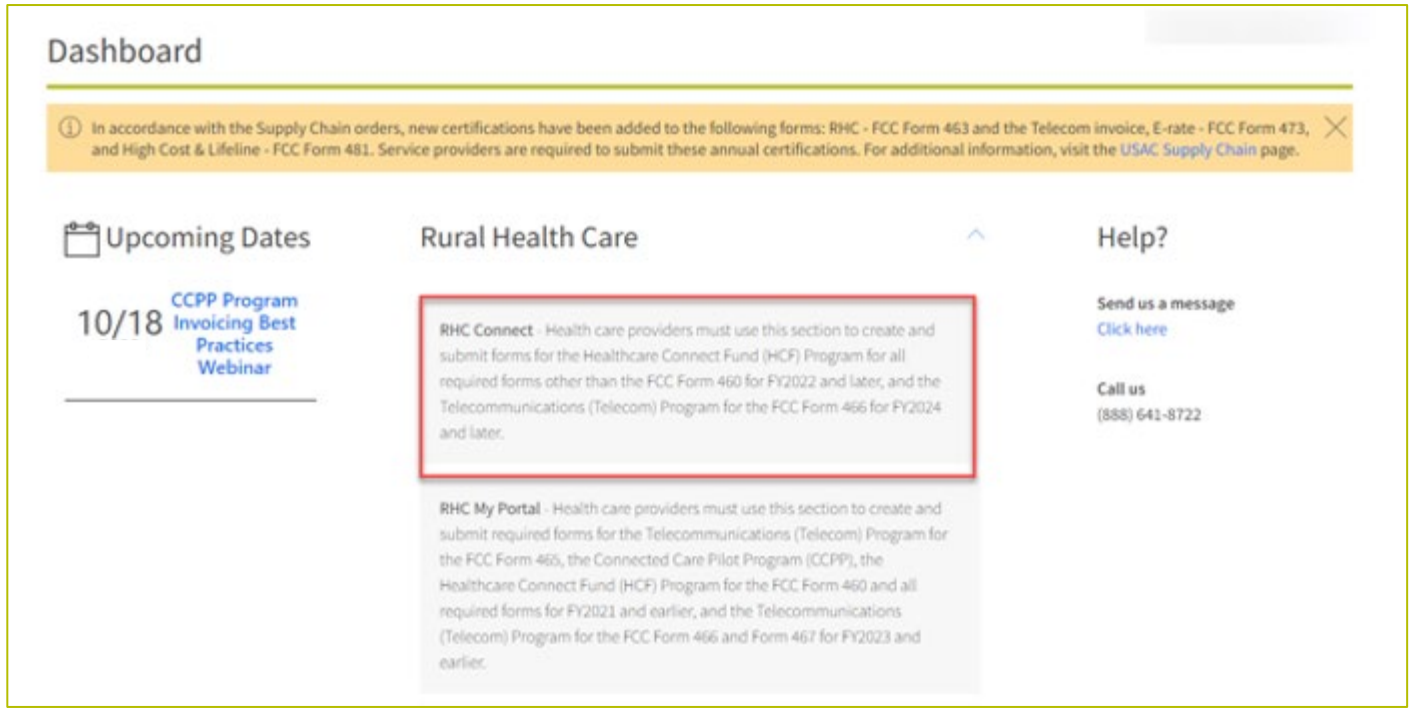
Telecom Program Funding Request Office Hours

RHC Connect Updates

Form	Current Platform	RHC Connect Migration
FCC Forms 460 & 465 - Letters of Agency (LOA) - Third Party Authorization (TPA)	RHC Connect My Portal My Portal	RHC Connect RHC Connect Currently in development
FCC Form 461	RHC Connect	FY2023 and forward
FCC Form 462	RHC Connect	FY2022 and forward
FCC Form 463	RHC Connect	FY2022 and forward
FCC Form 463	My Portal	FY2021 and prior – multi-year commitments
HCF Post-Commitment Change Requests	RHC Connect	FY2022 and forward
FCC Form 466	RHC Connect	FY2024 and forward
FCC Form 469 (Telecom Invoice Form)	My Portal	RHC Connect

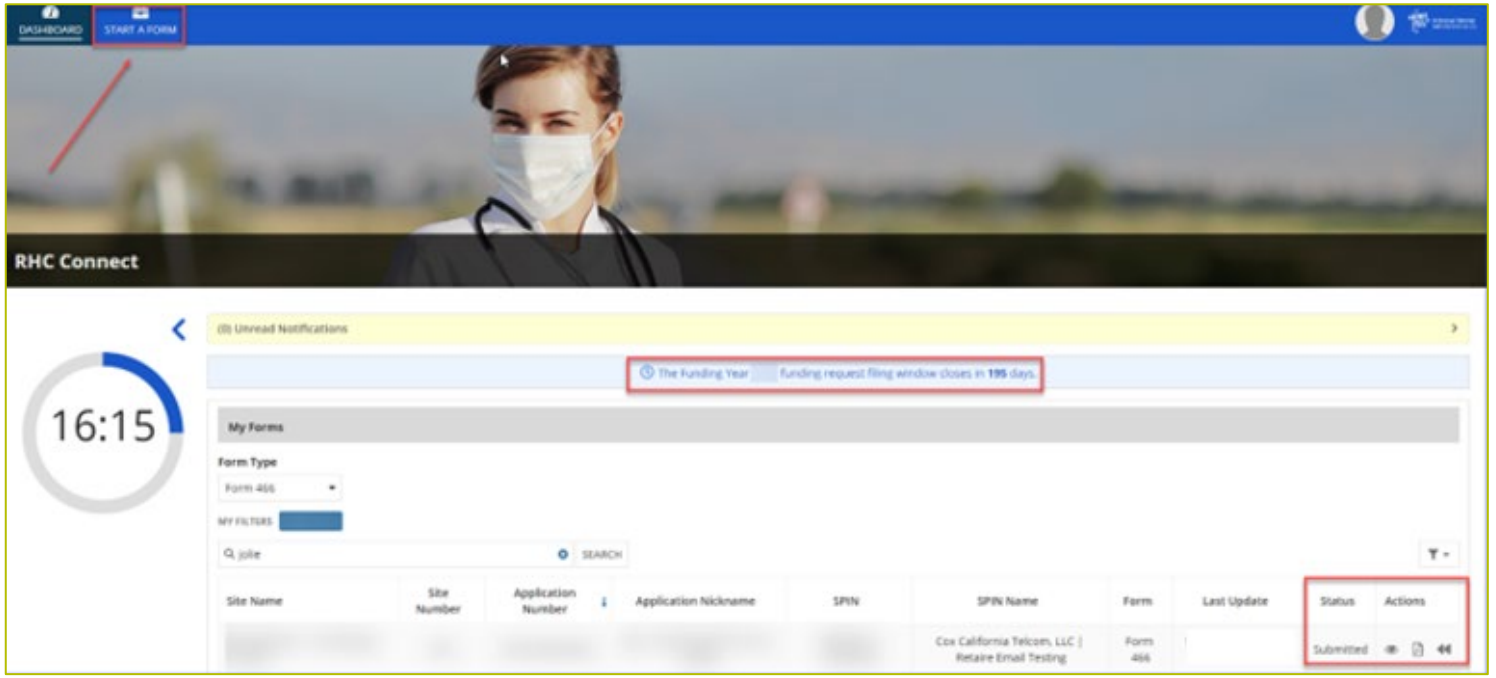
My Portal Landing Page

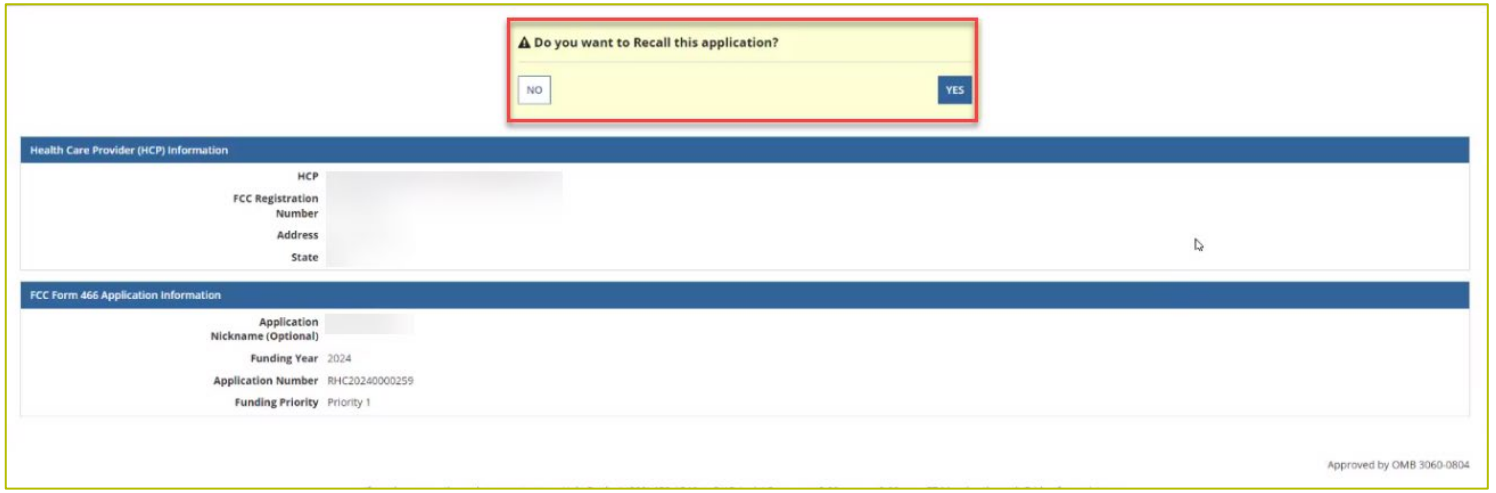
- Log into My Portal and click **Rural Health Care** then **RHC Connect**
- For all other forms that have not yet moved to RHC Connect, you will use **RHC My Portal**



Dashboard

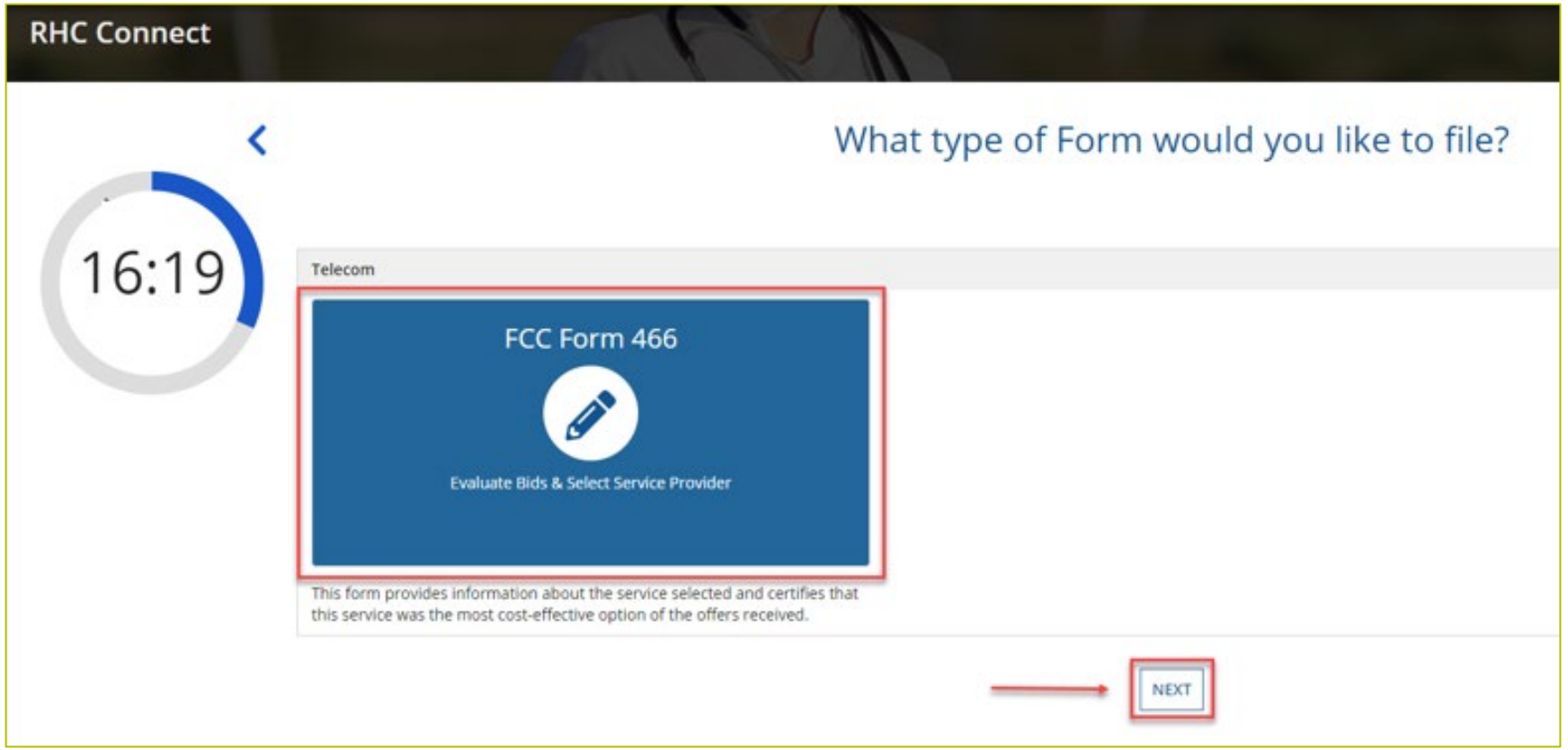
- Here you can start a new form, view the status of submitted and processed applications, resume working on a draft or delete a draft FCC Form 466.
- If the form is recalled, the bottom screen will appear, and an email will be sent to all account holders.
- There's a countdown banner displaying the days remaining in the filing window.





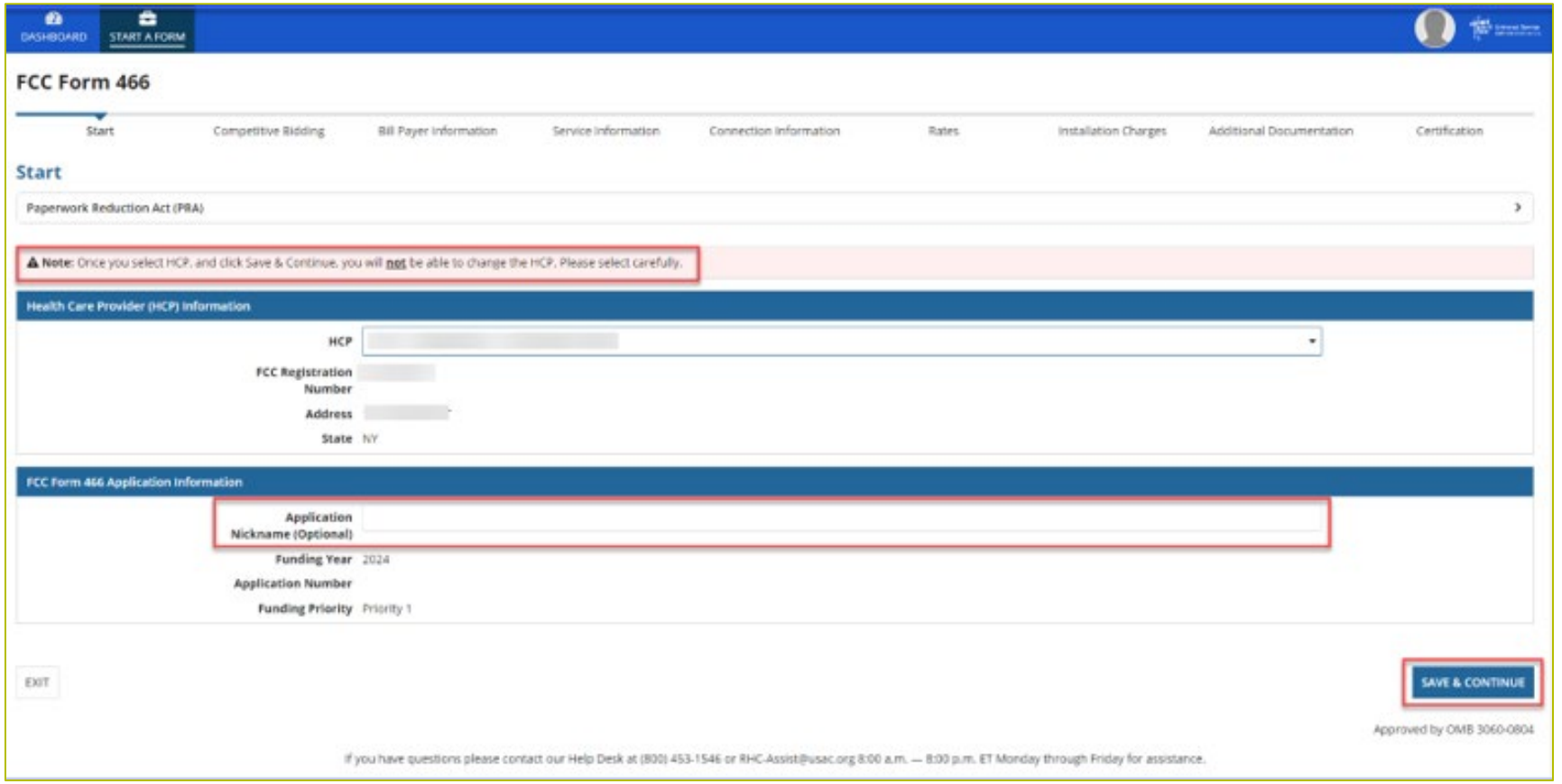
Start Form

- Click **FCC Form 466** then click **Next**.



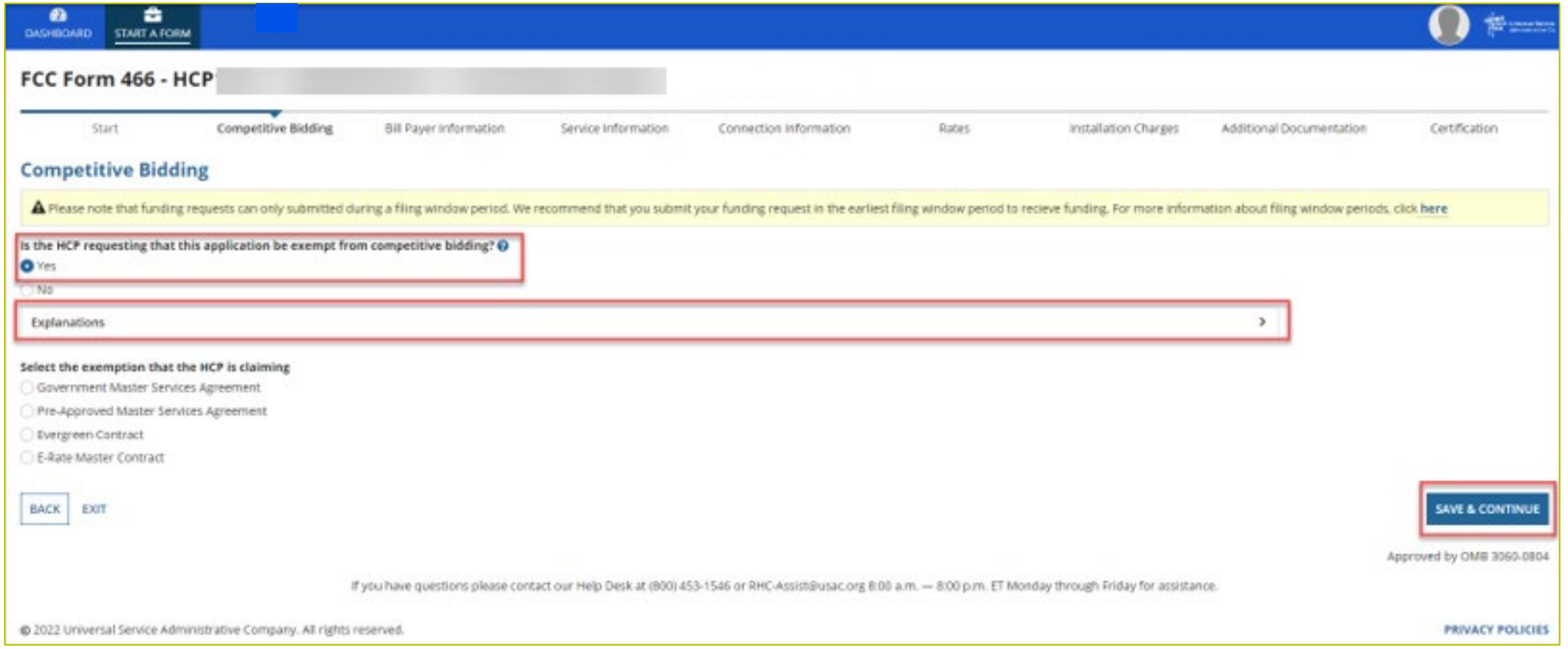
Start Page

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



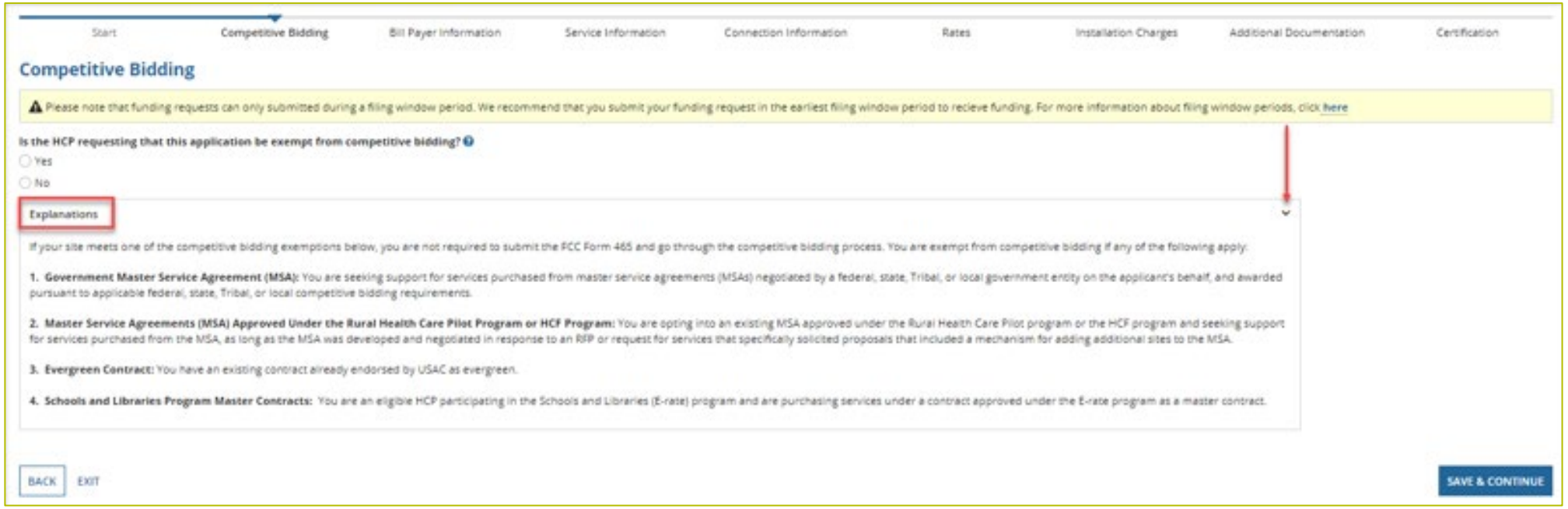
Competitive Bidding Page

- Select **Yes** if you are exempt from competitive bidding and **No** if you completed your competitive bidding process.



Competitive Bidding Page(continued)

- Click the arrow beside **Explanations** to view a description of each competitive bidding exemption.

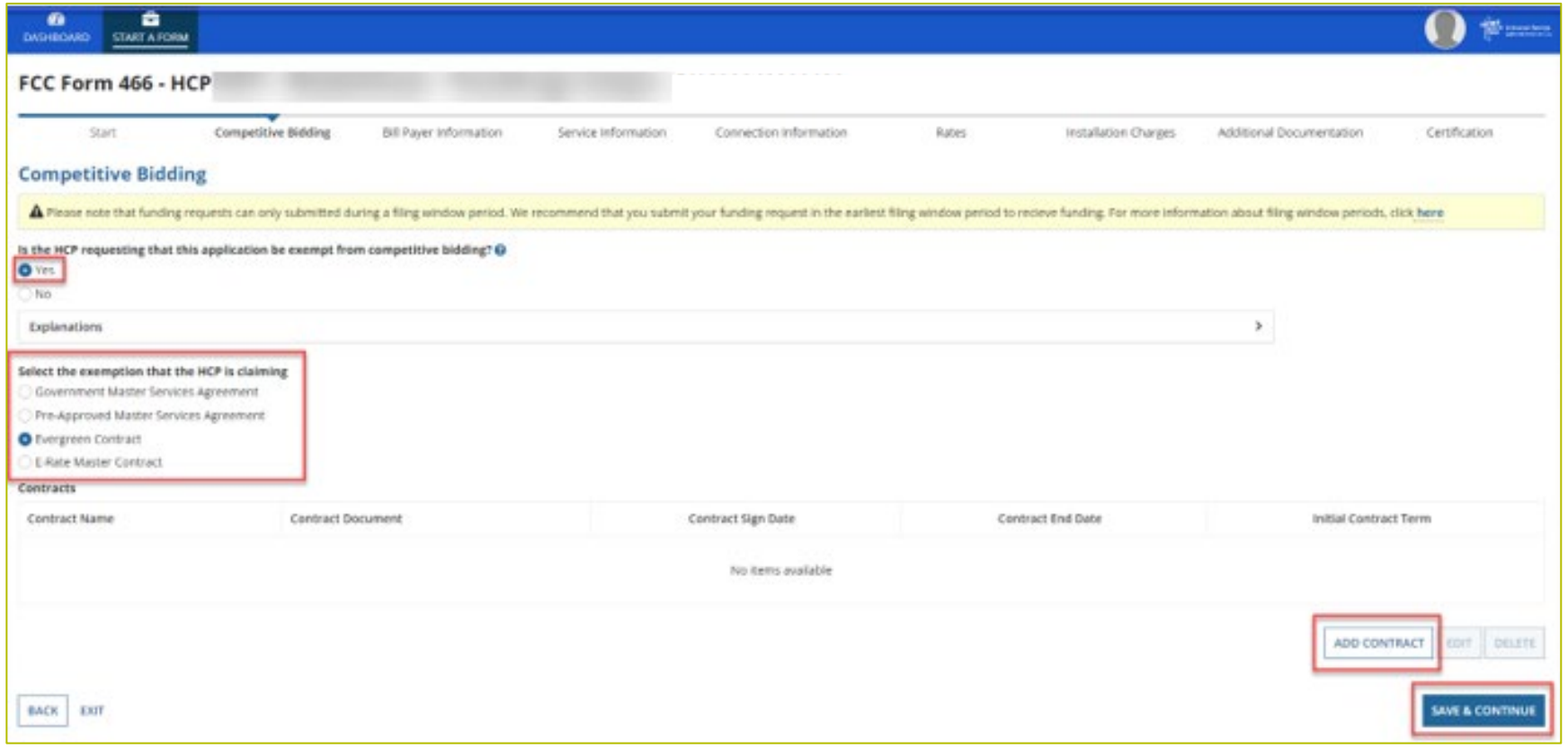


Competitive Bidding Exemptions

- 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.

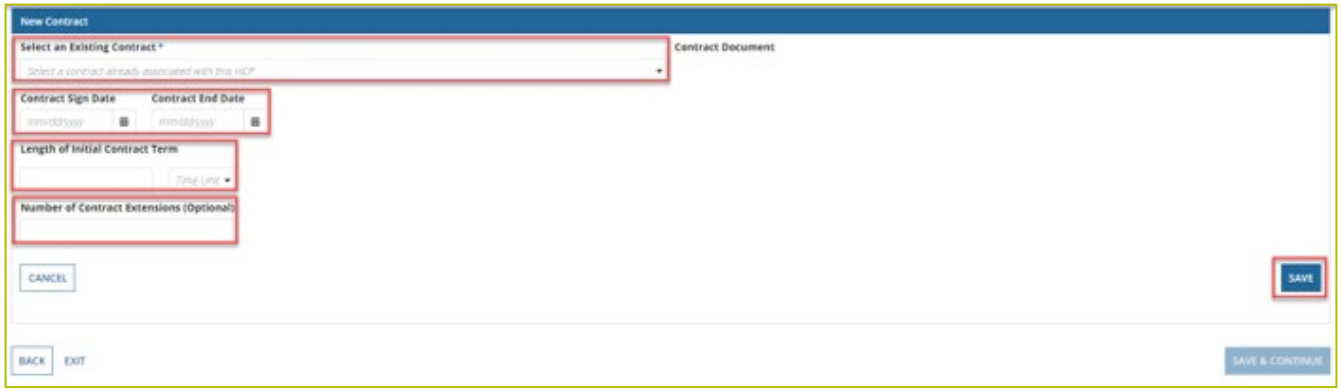
Competitive Bidding Page – Exemptions (continued)

- Select the exemption from the list of eligible exemptions.
- Click **Add Contract** at the bottom right on the screen



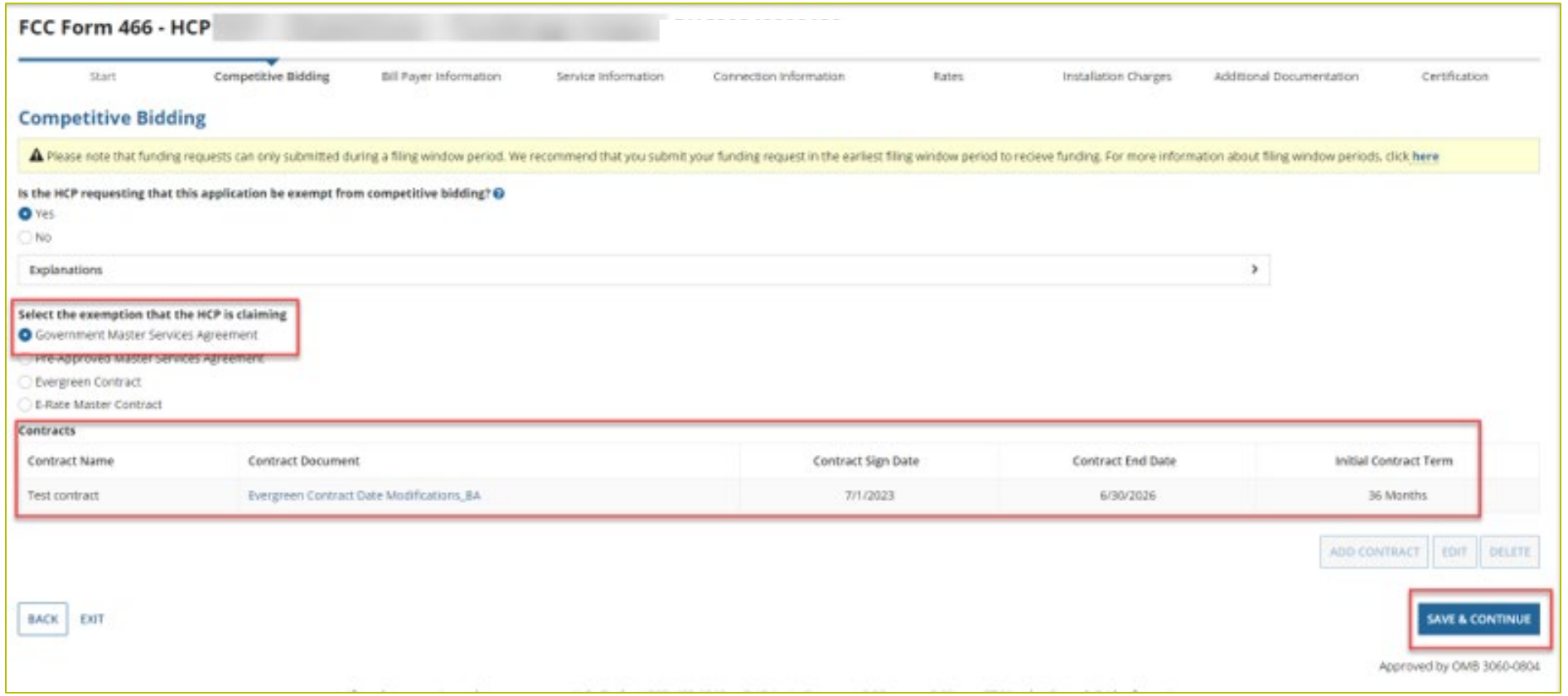
Competitive Bidding Page – Exemptions (continued)

- 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**.



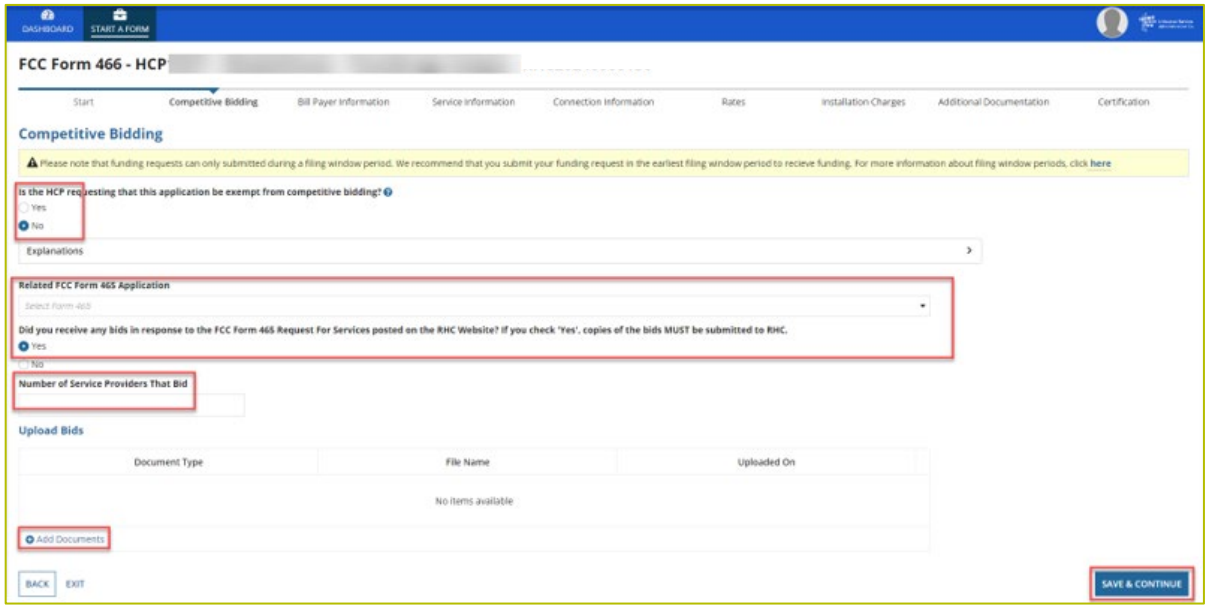
Competitive Bidding Page – Exemptions (continued)

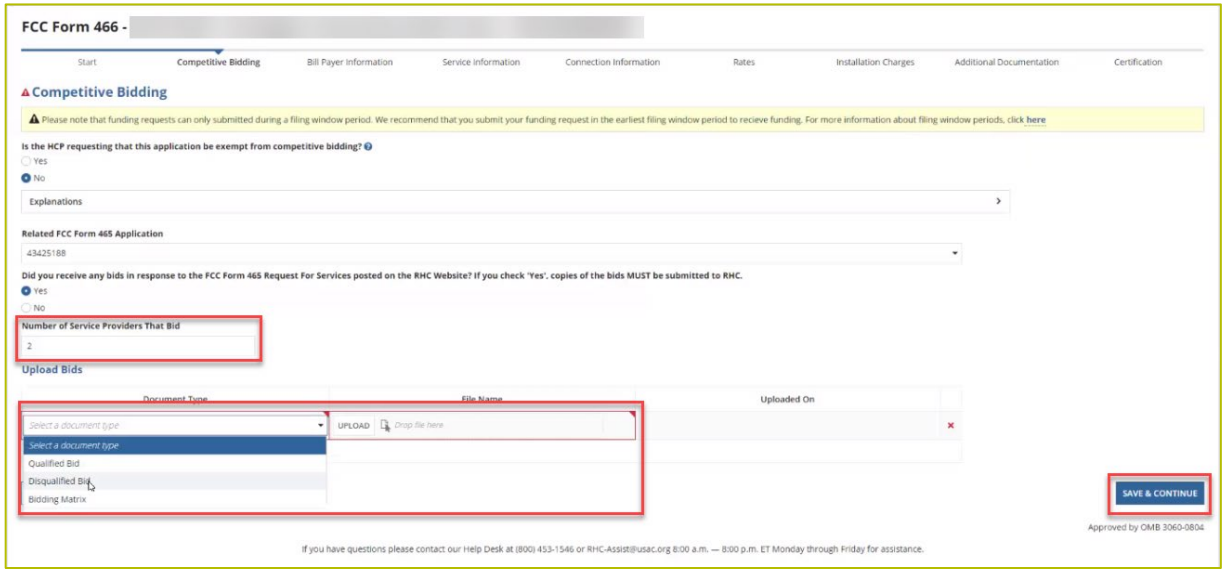
- Once the contract is selected, click **Save and Continue**.



Competitive Bidding Page - Non-Exempt

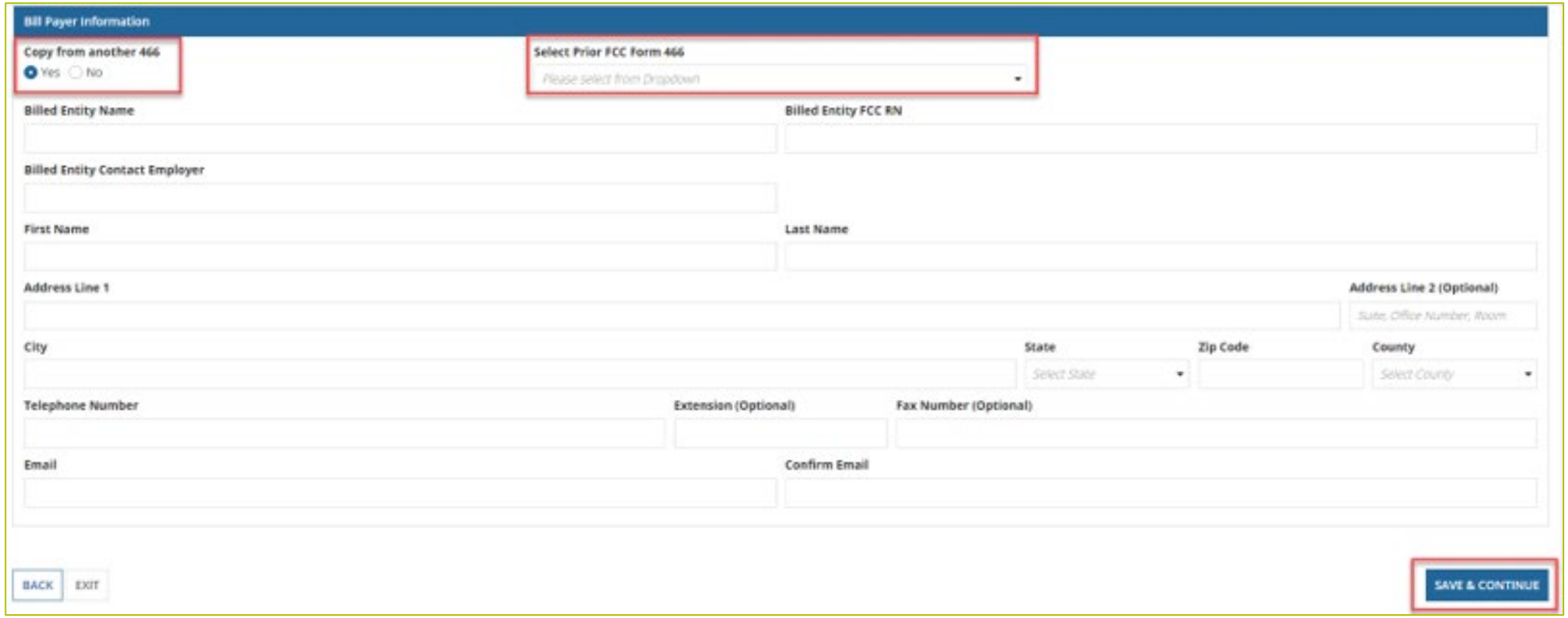
- Click **No**.
- Choose related FCC Form 465 from drop-down menu.
- Enter number of bids received.
- Upload copies of bids by clicking **Add Documents** hyperlink.
- Select the document type from the drop-down menu, then click **Save & Continue**.





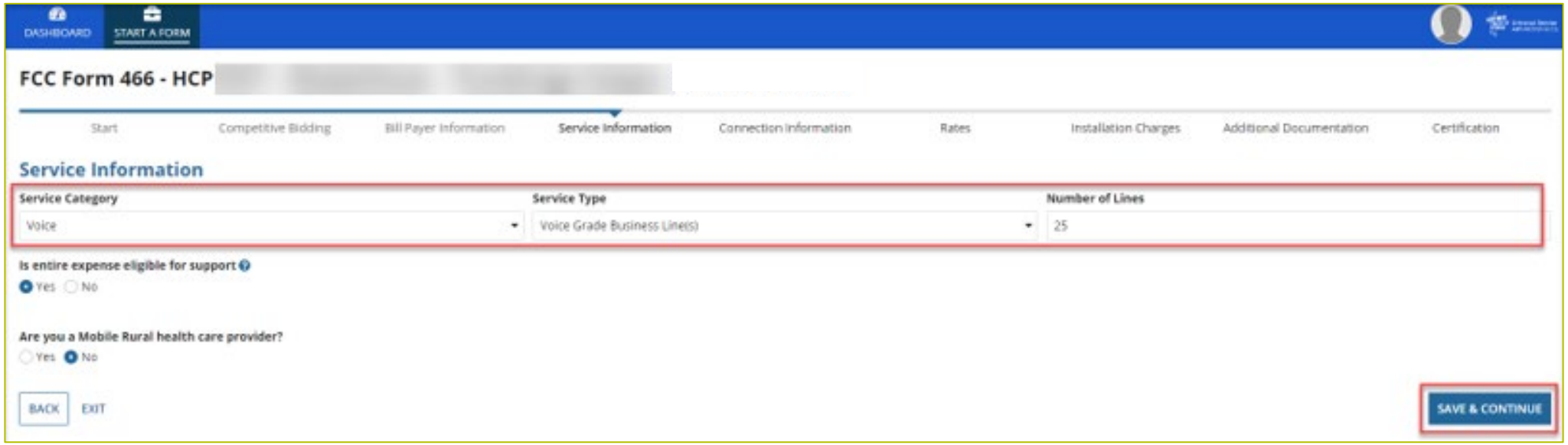
Bill Payer Information Page

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



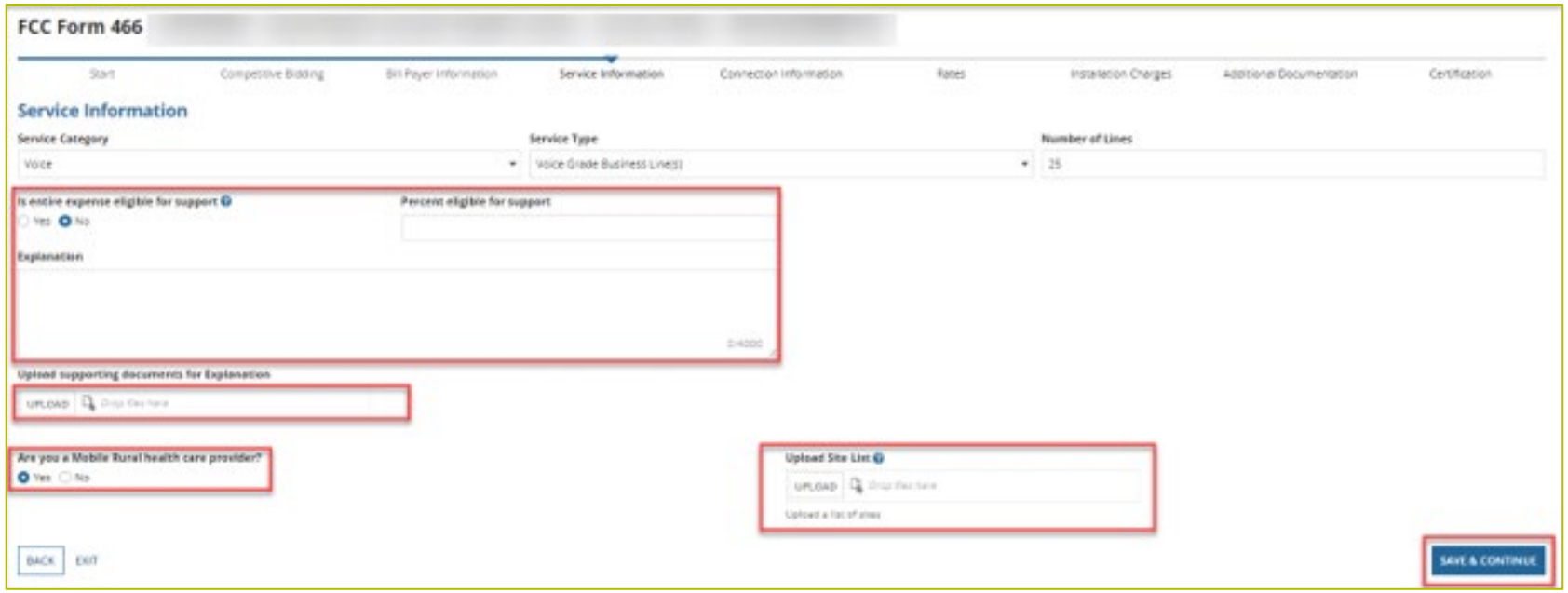
Service Information Page

- 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**.



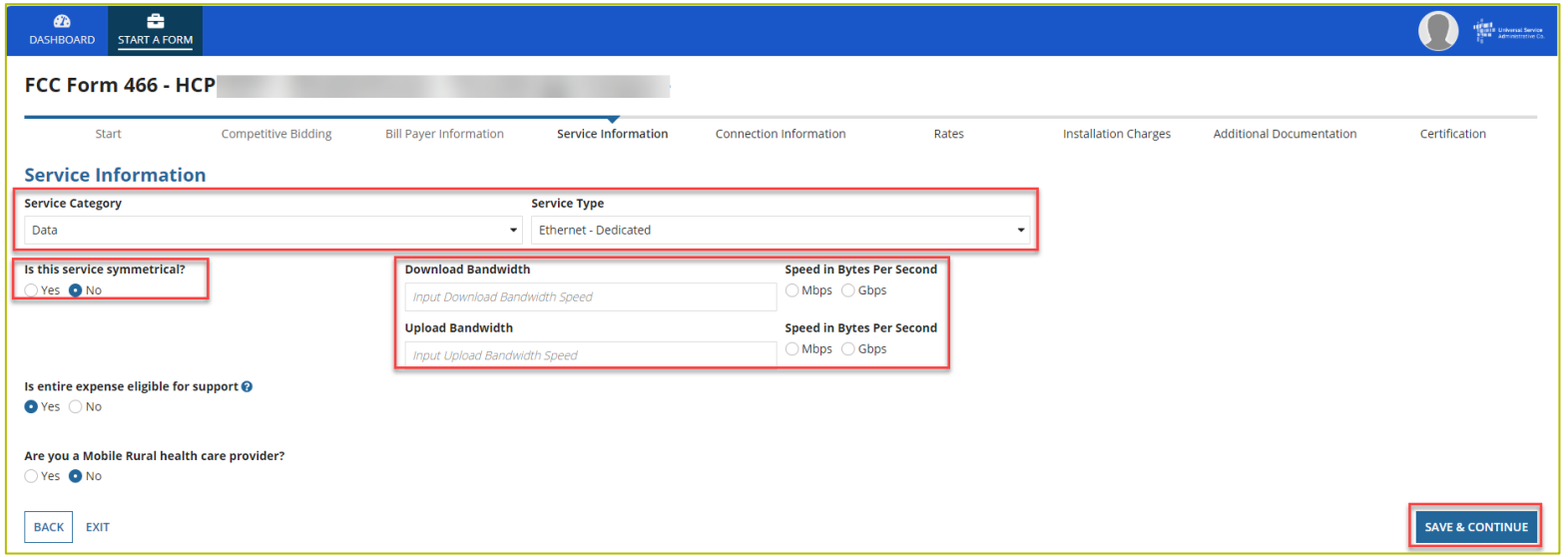
Service Information Page (continued)

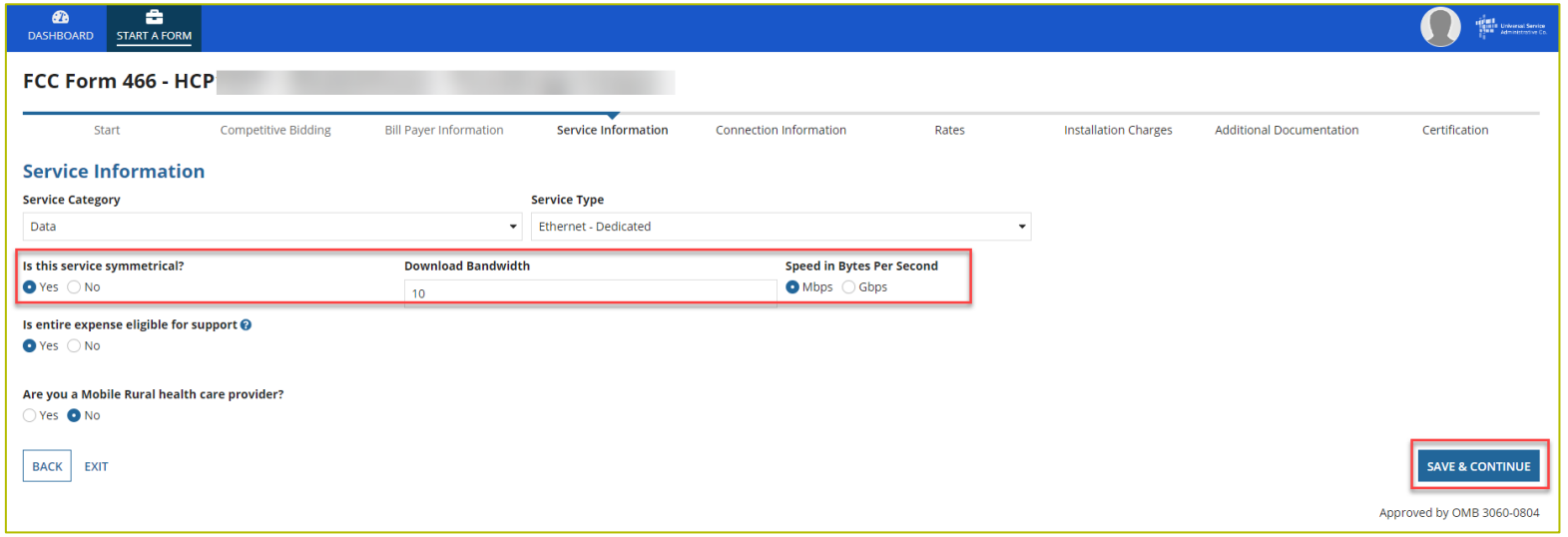
- Answer **Yes** or **No** for the question **Is entire expense eligible for support?**
  - If **No**, enter **Percent eligible for support**, enter an explanation about the eligible percentage calculation, and upload supporting documentation.
- Answer **Yes** or **No** for question **Are you a Mobile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



Service Information Page (continued)

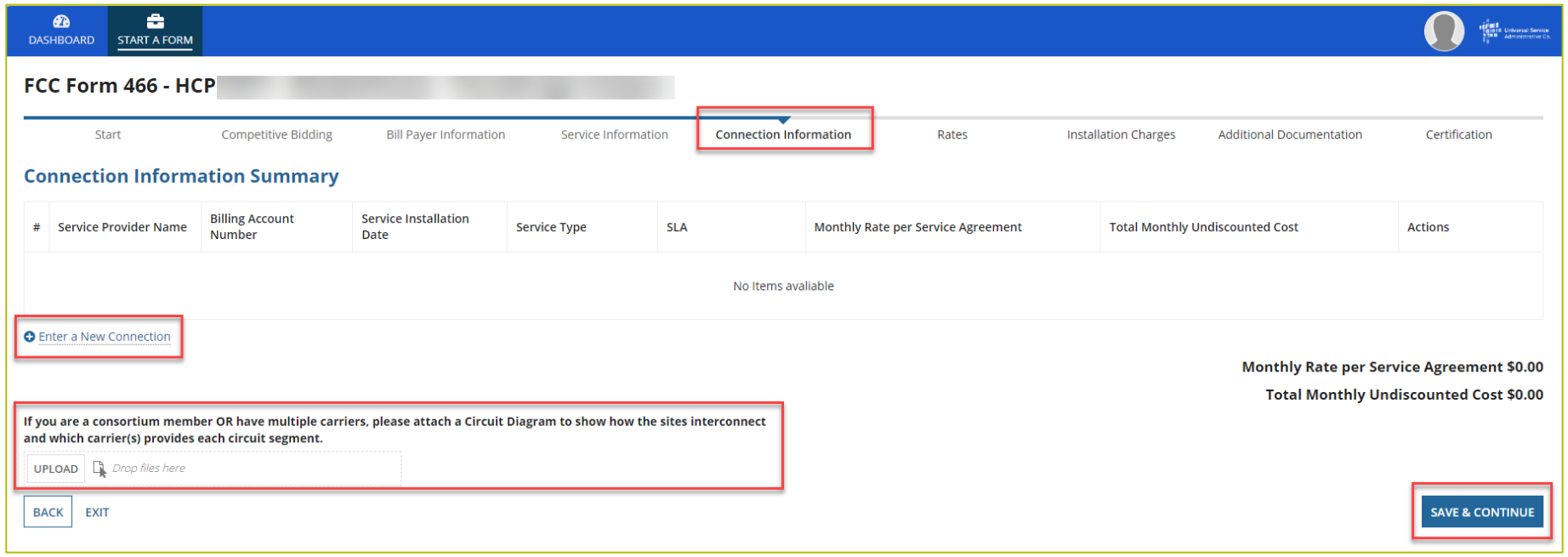
- For data services, answer the question **Is this service symmetrical?** and enter bandwidth.
- If **No** is selected, enter **Download Bandwidth** and **Upload Bandwidth**.
- If **Yes** is selected, only one bandwidth is required, then click **Save & Continue**.





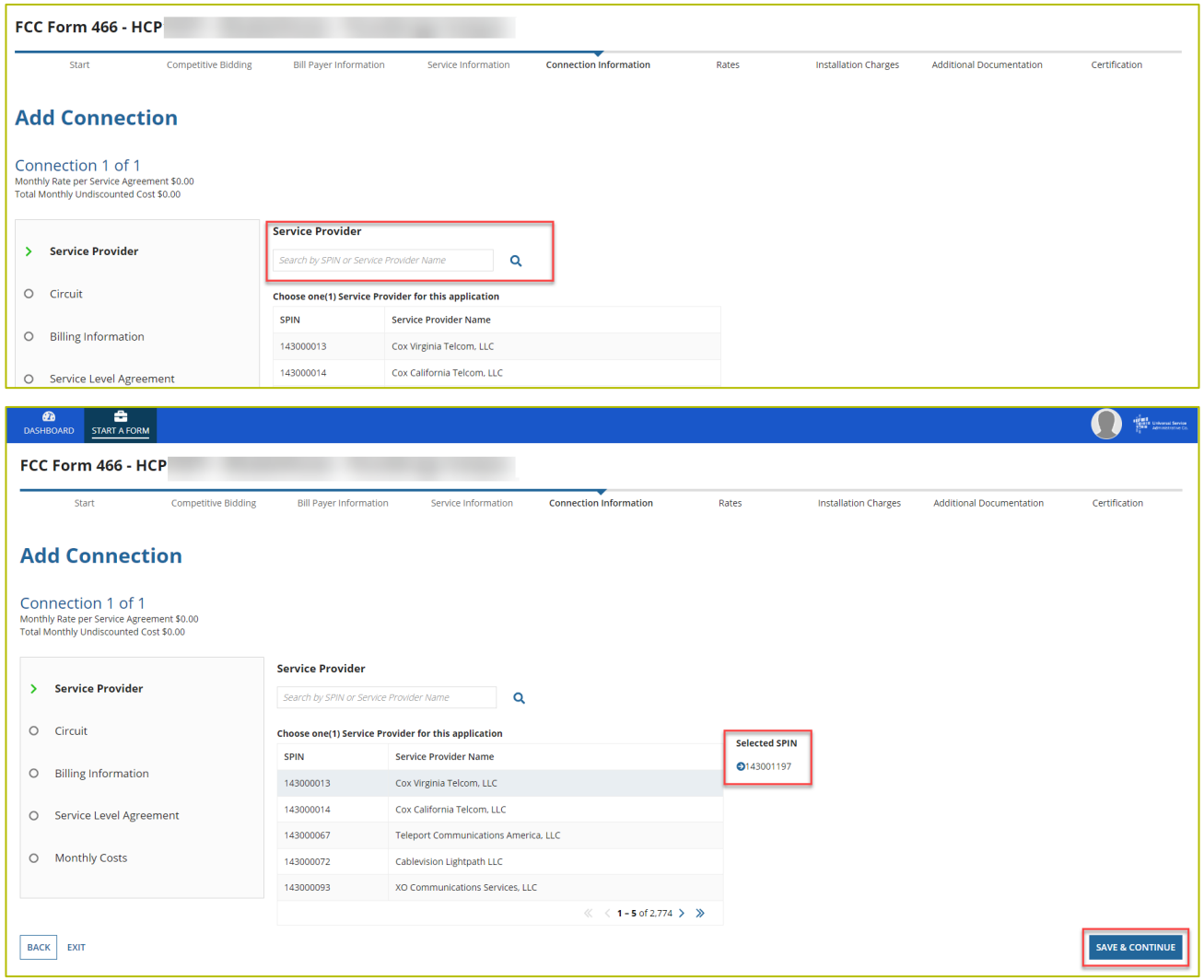
Connection Information Page

- 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**.



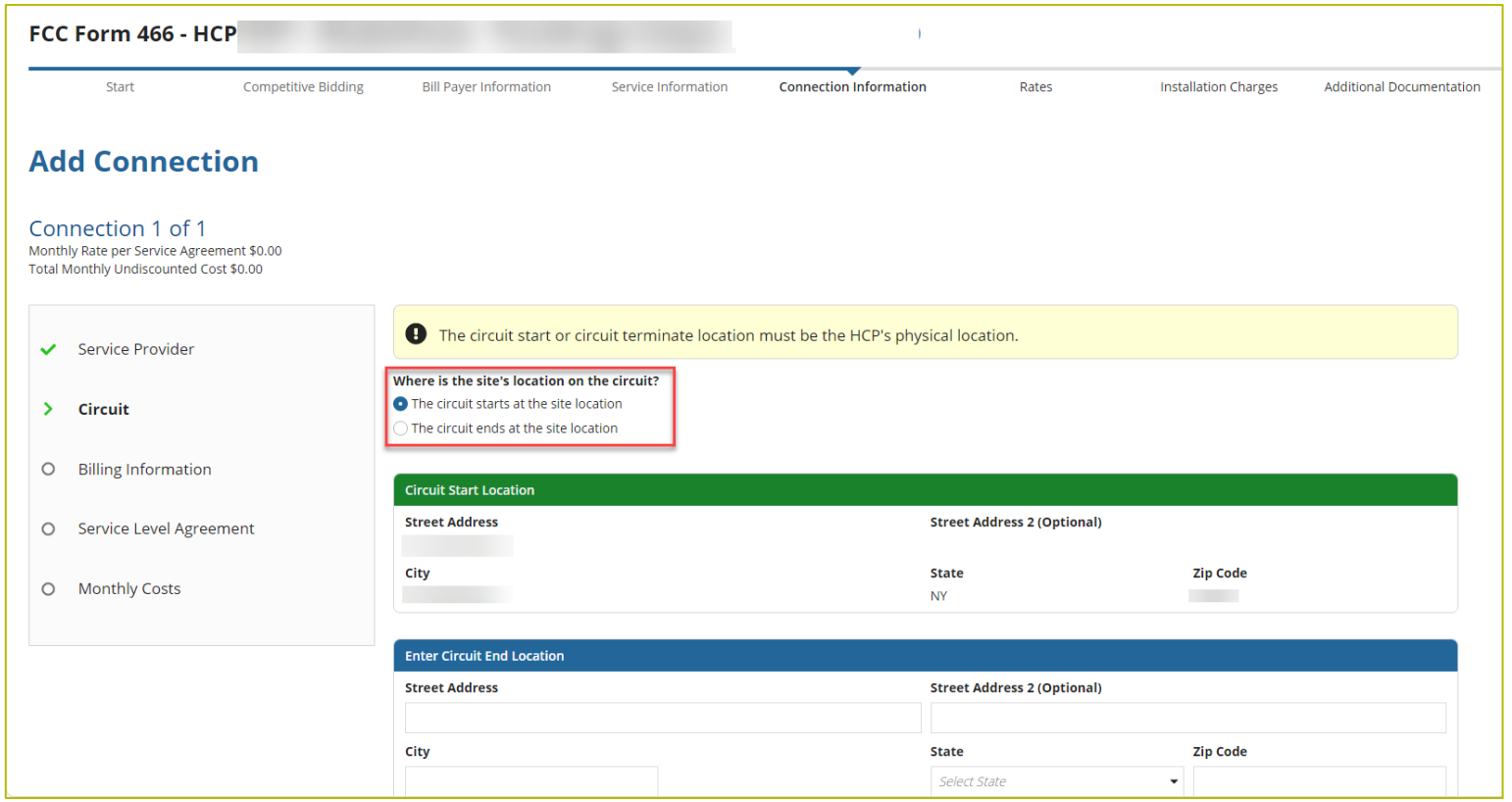
Add Connection Page – Service Provider

- Select your service provider's 498 ID/SPIN.
- You can search by service provider name or the 498 ID/SPIN.
- Click **Save & Continue**.



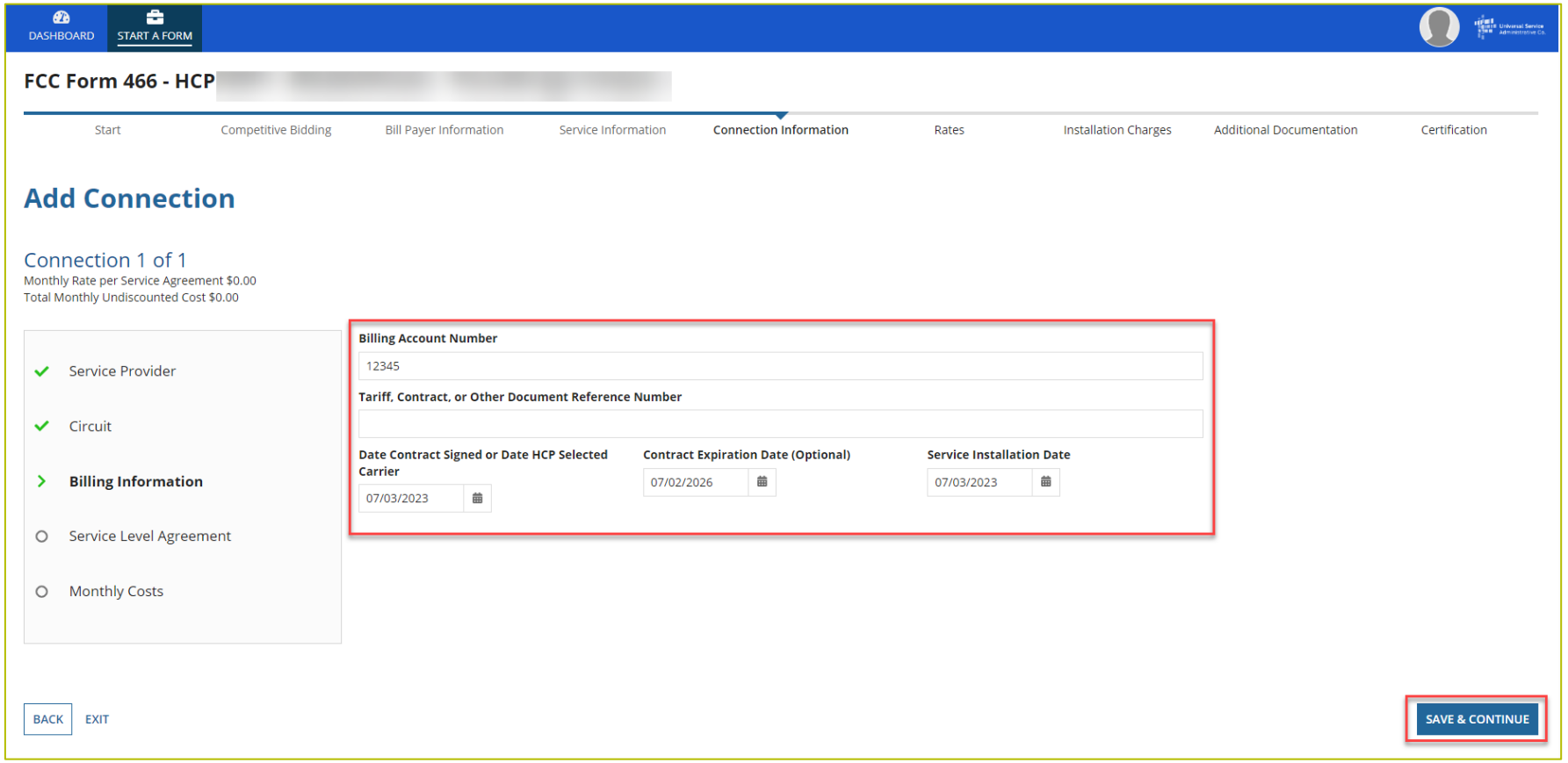
Add Connection Page - Circuit

- 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.



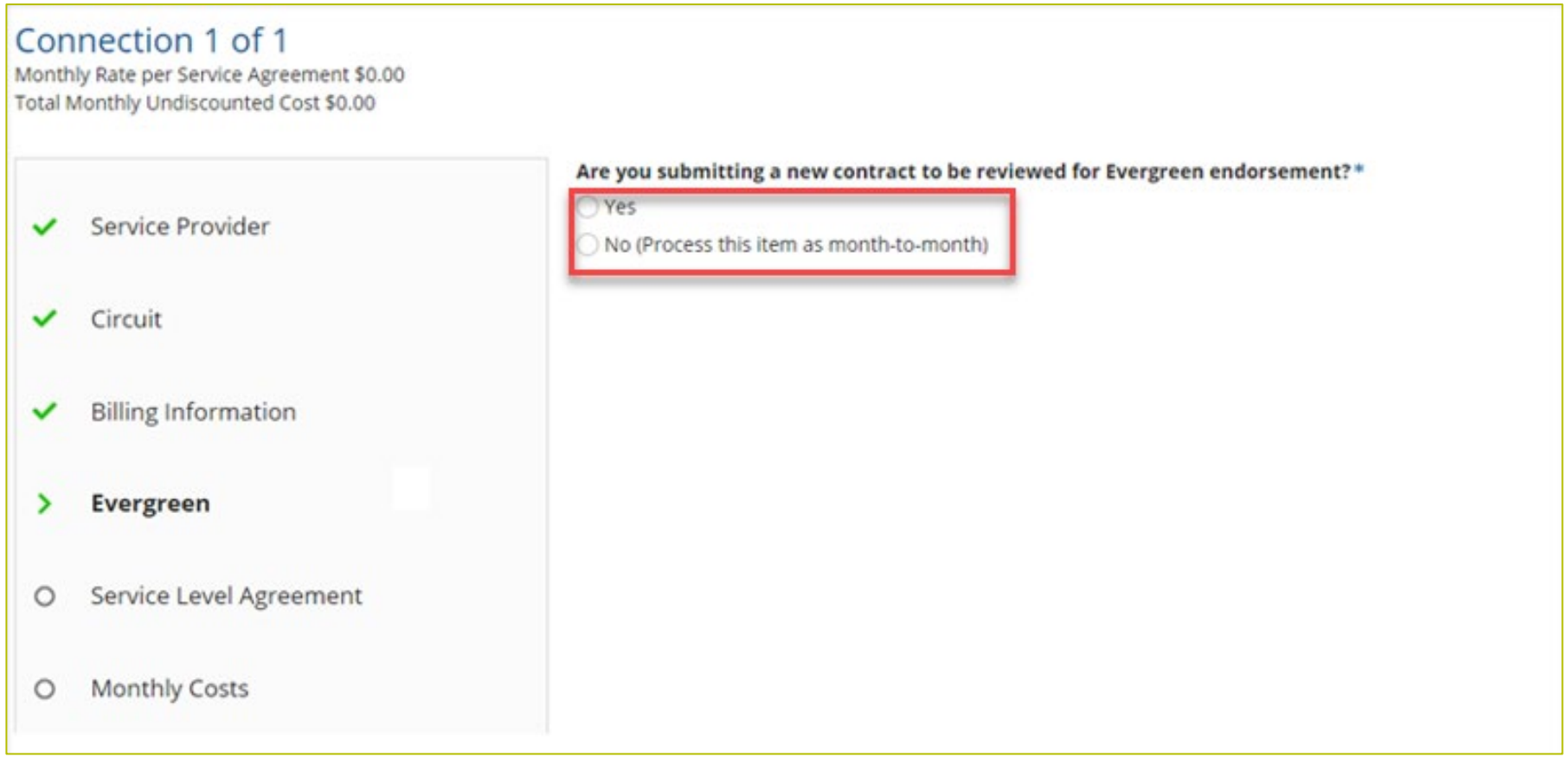
Add Connection Page – Billing Information

- Enter **Billing Information** in fields shown.
- Click **Save & Continue**.



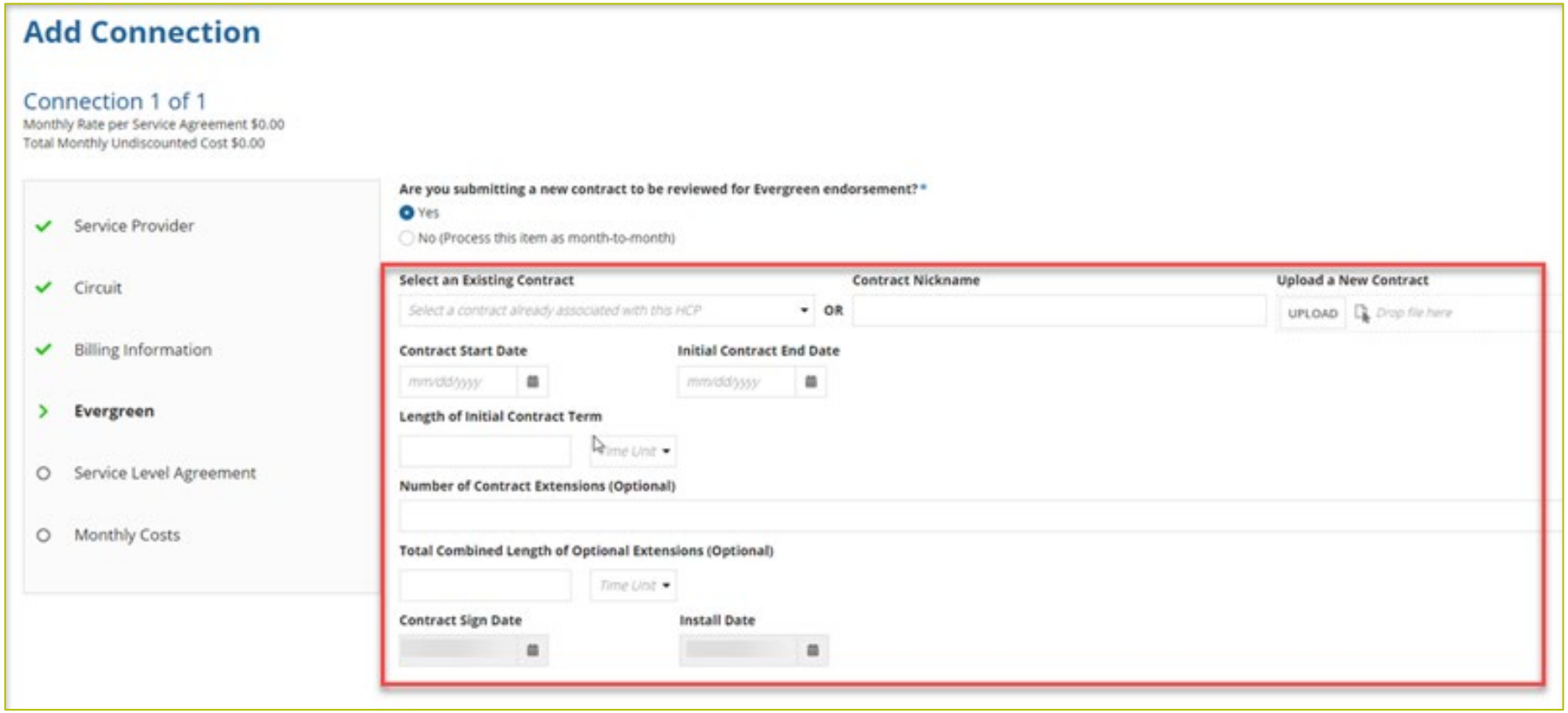
Add Connection Page – Evergreen

- 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.



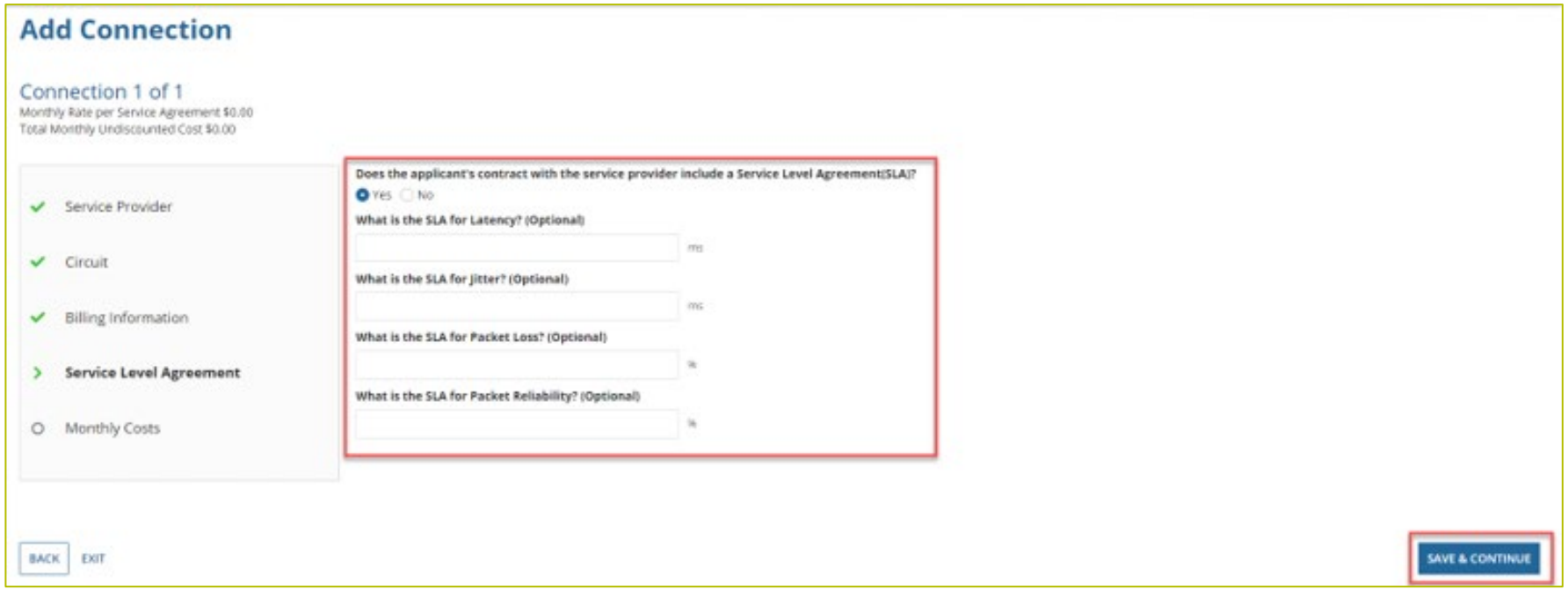
Add Connection Page – Evergreen (continued)

- If **Yes,** enter information about the contract in the fields as shown.
- Click **Save & Continue**.



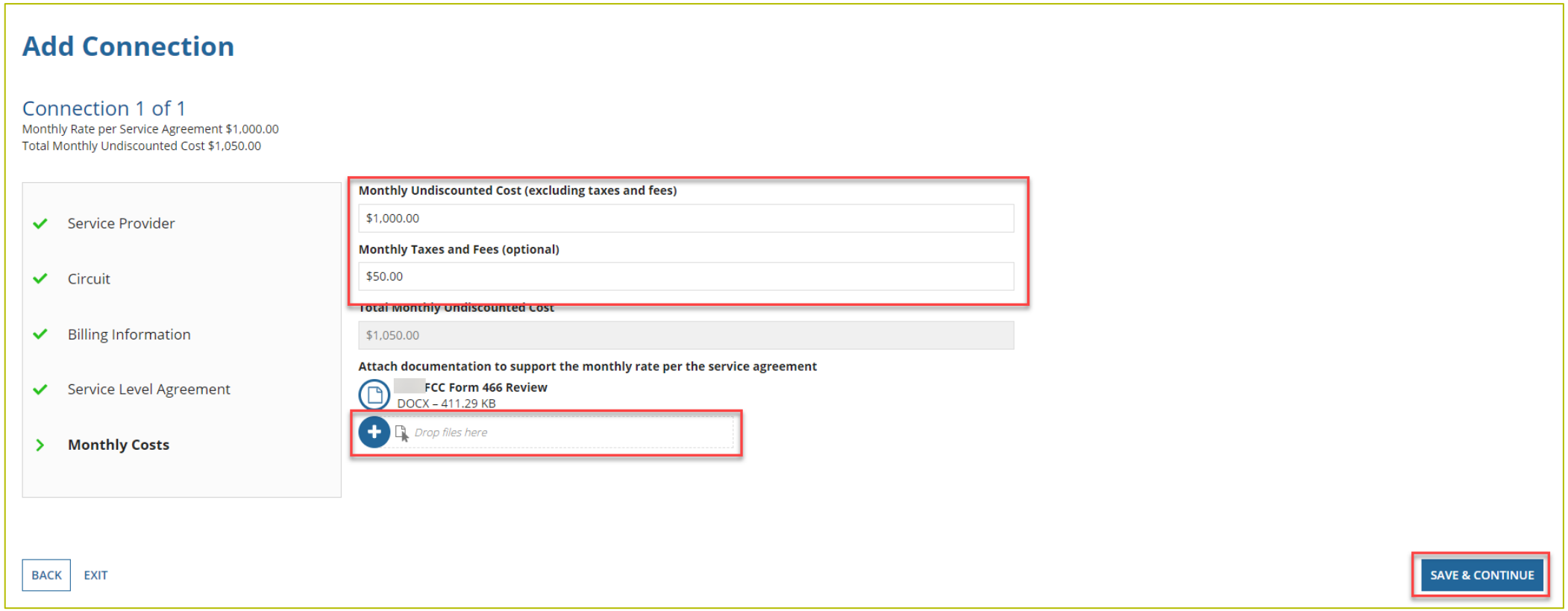
Add Connection Page – Service Level Agreement

- Select **Yes** or **No** to answer the question about a service level agreement.
- If **Yes**, enter the information shown. **Click Save & Continue**.



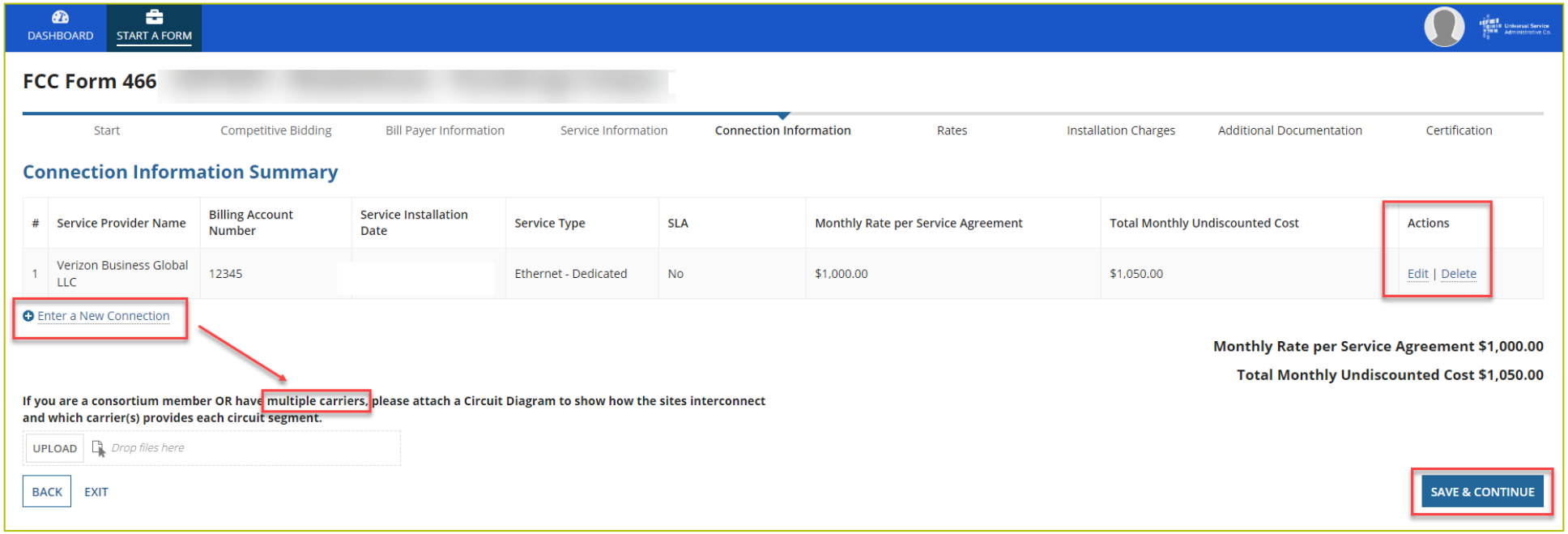
Add Connection Page – Monthly Costs

- 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**.



Connection Information Summary Page

- 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**.

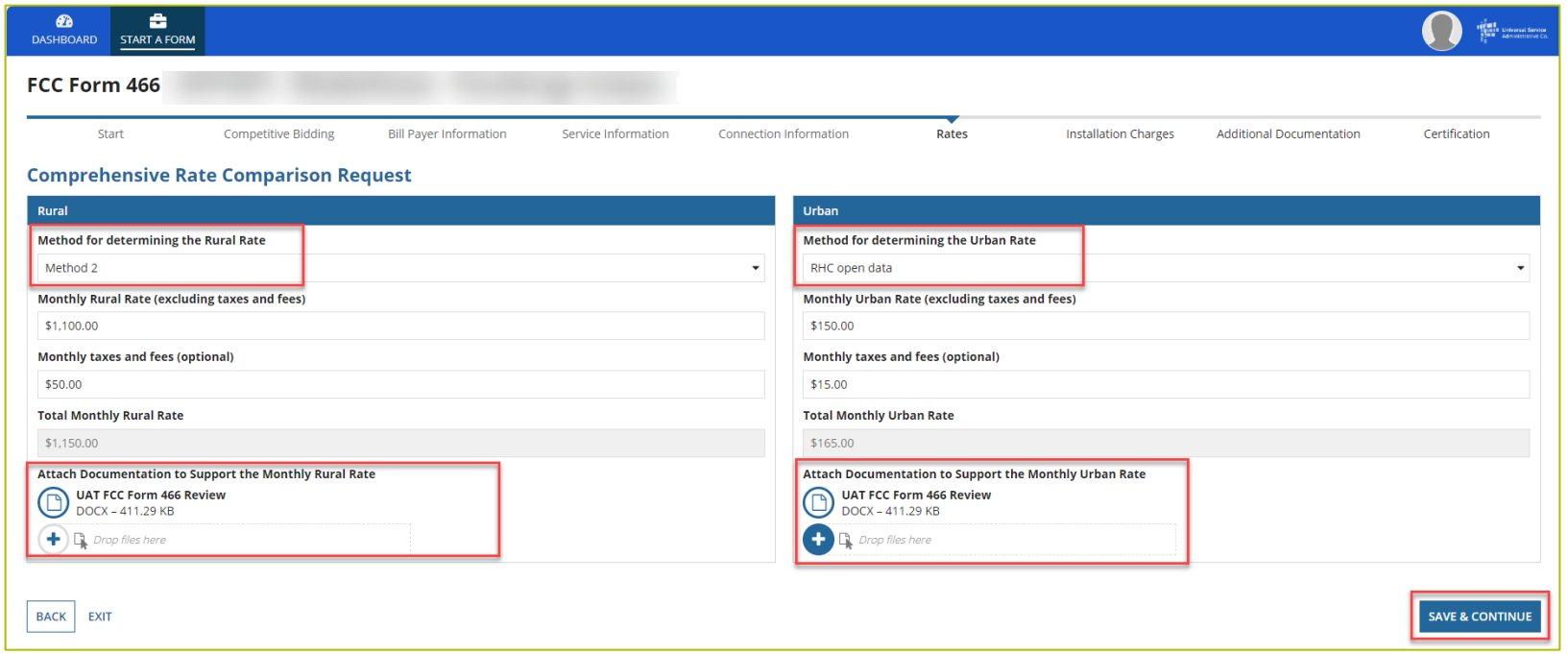


FCC Order DA 23-6

- 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.

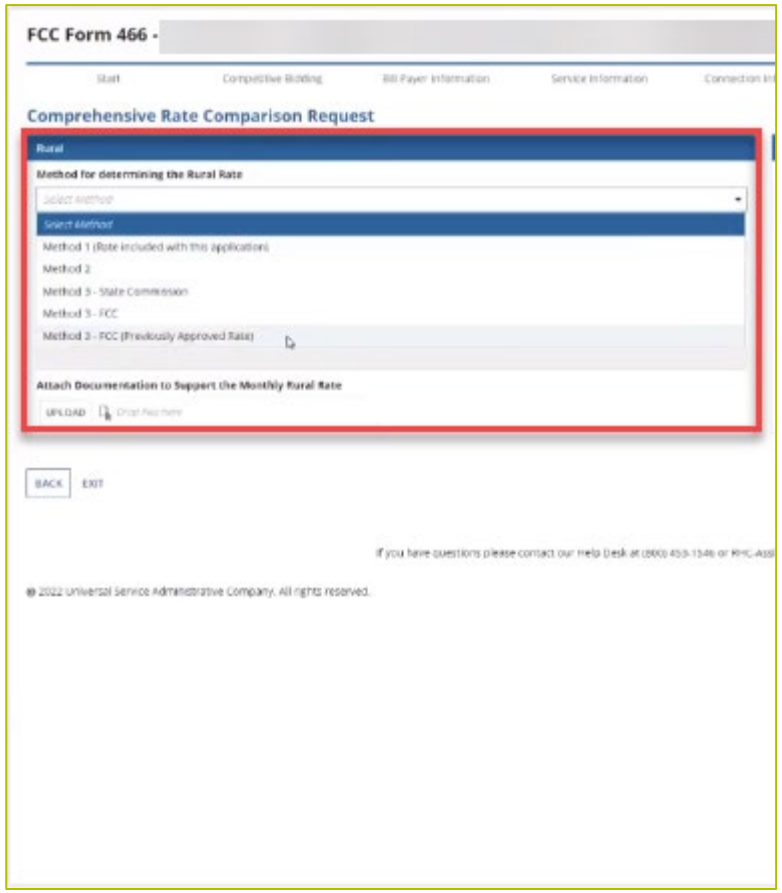
Rates Page

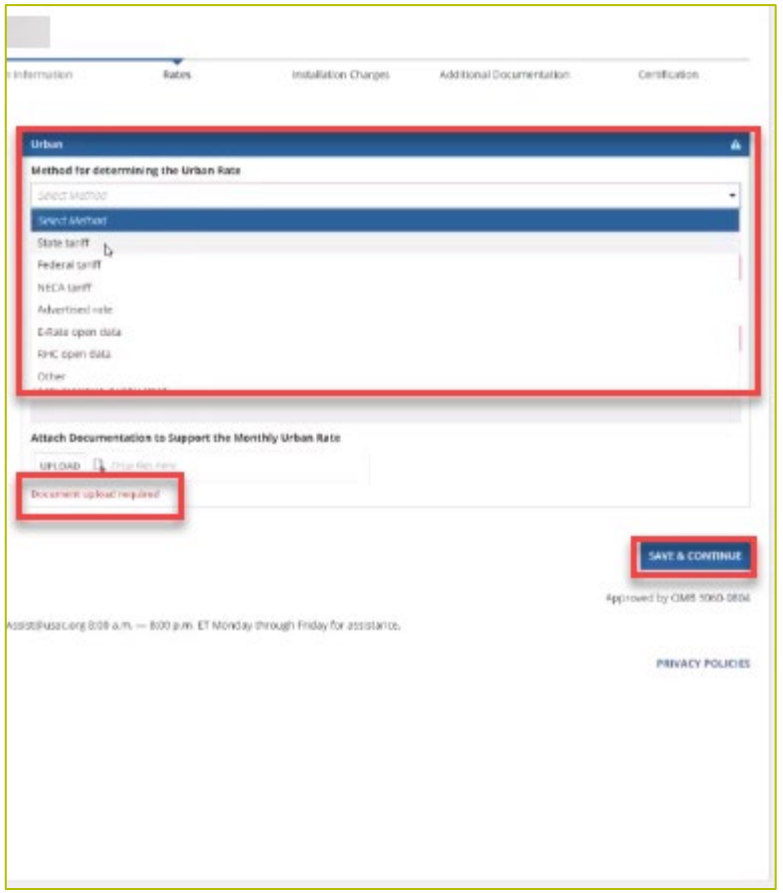
- Choose the **Method for determining the Rural Rate** and the **Method for determining the Urban Rate**.
- Enter the monthly calculated rural and urban rates that comply with the method per Telecom Program rules.
  - Use the Urban and Rural Rate Information FY2024-2025 tip sheet for information about 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)

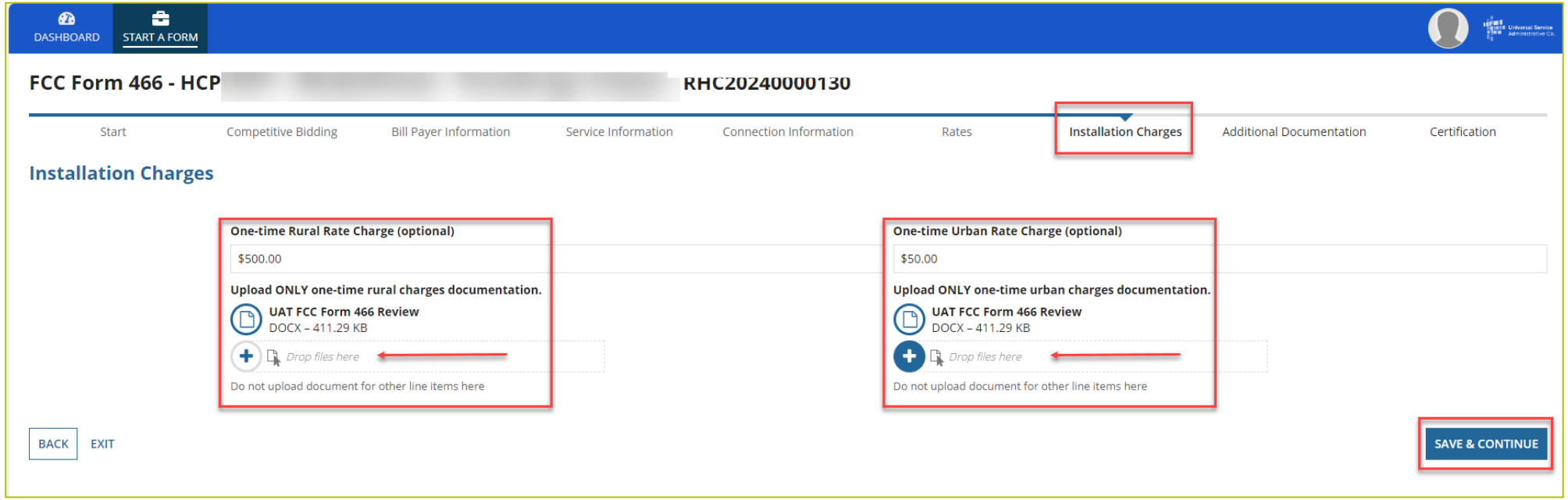
- Select methods for determining the rural and urban rates from the drop-down menus.
- Upload the documentation, then click **Save & Continue**.





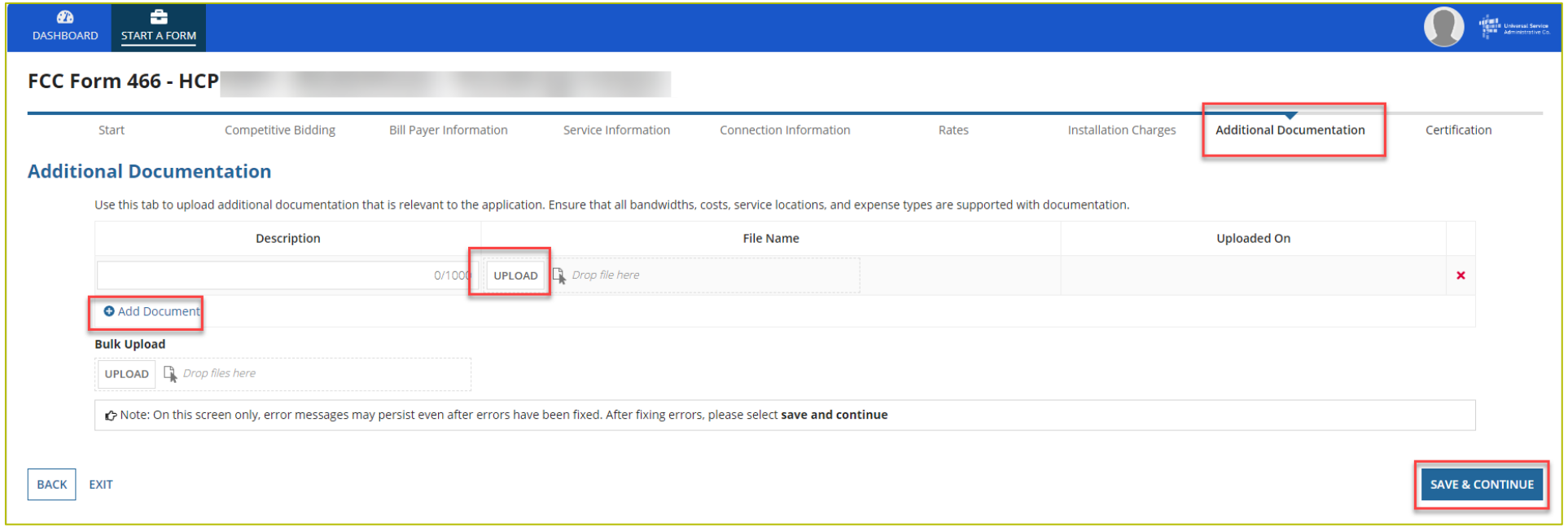
Installation Charges Page

- 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**.



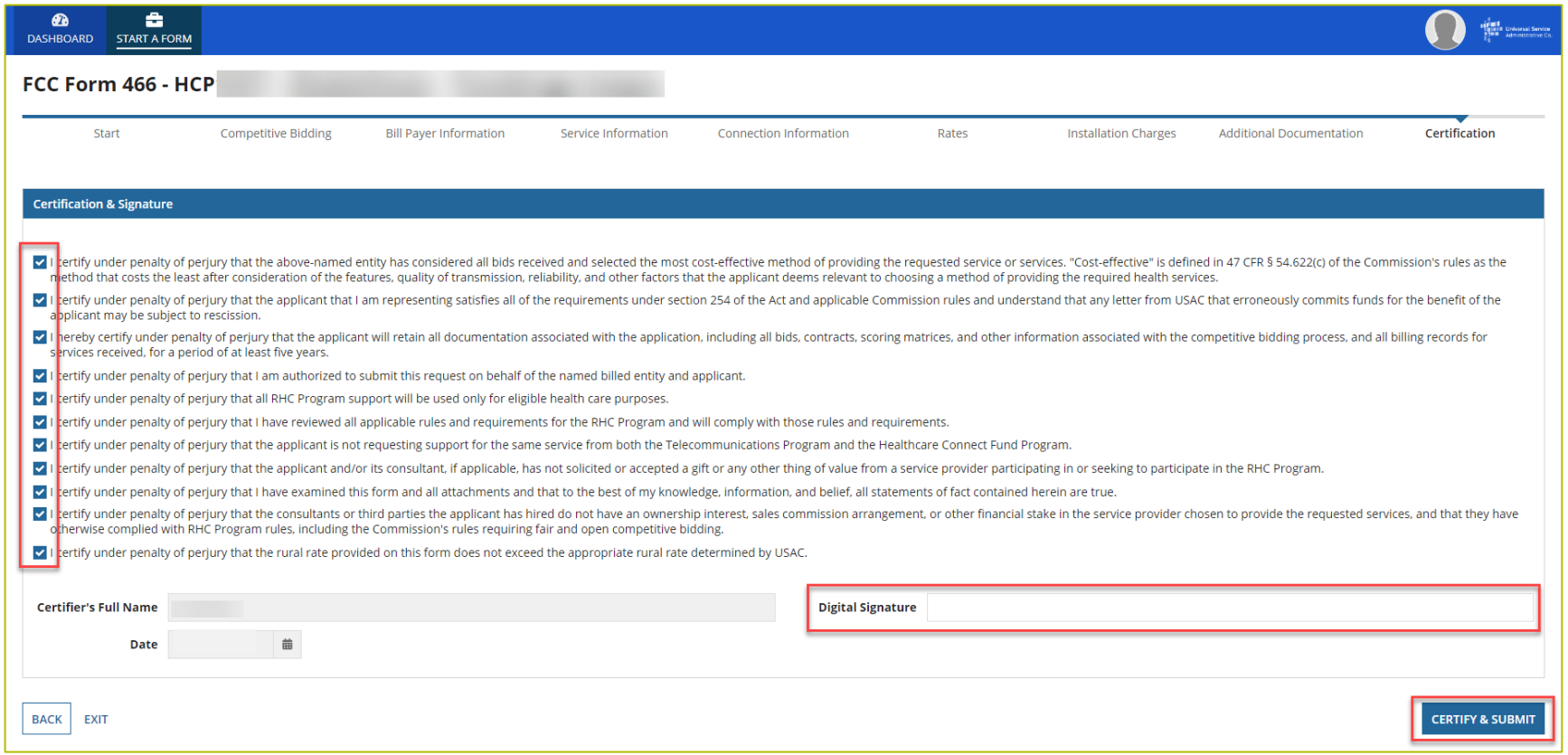
Additional Documentation Page

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



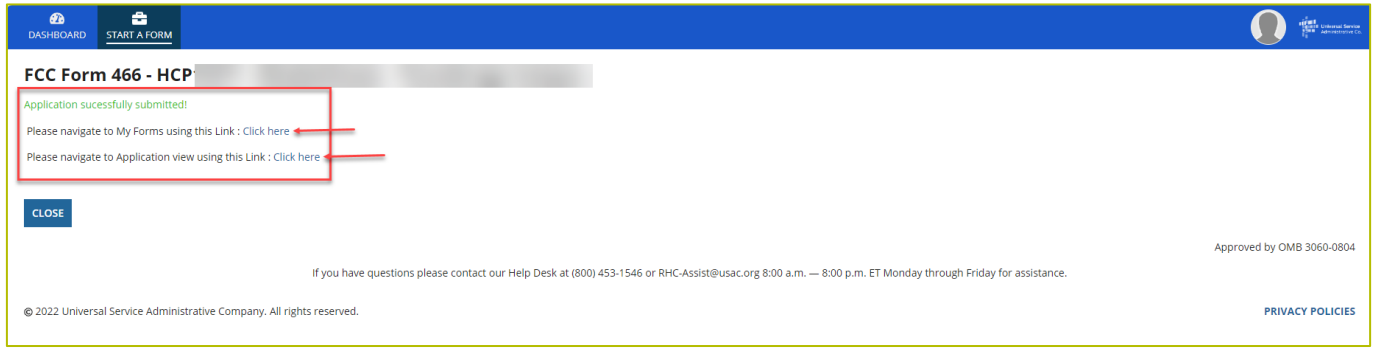
Certifications Page

- 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**.

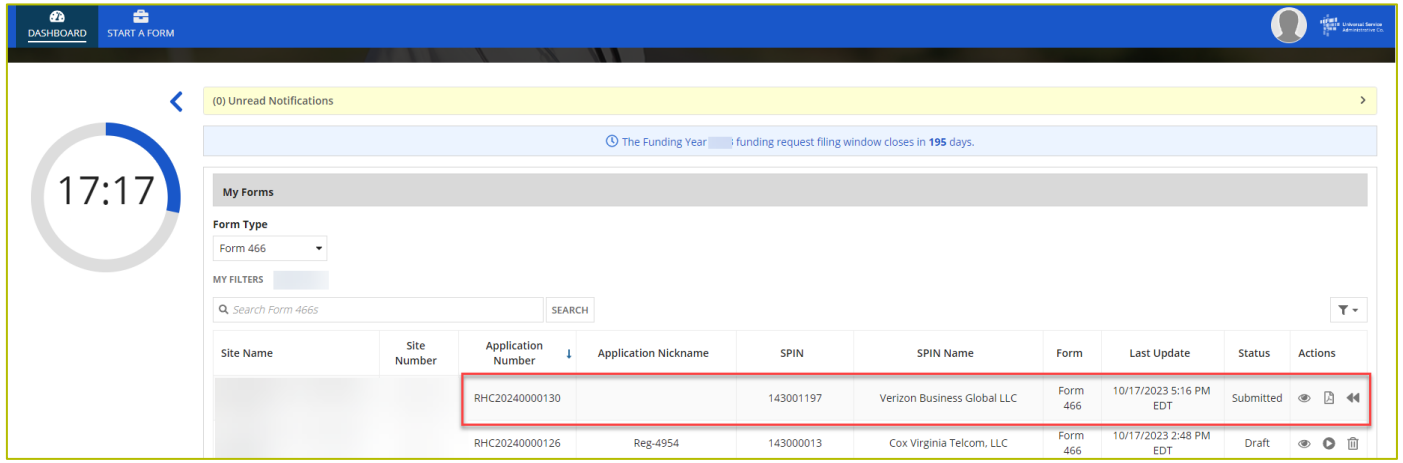


After Submitting

- 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 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.

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?

Resources

Telecom Program Funding Request Office Hours

Upcoming Trainings

Please join the RHC Outreach team for the following webinars:

- HCF Program Office Hours Webinar:
  - When: Wednesday, February 5, 2025, from 2-3 p.m. ET - Register
- Telecom Program Office Hours Webinar
  - When: Wednesday, February 12, 2025, from 2-3 p.m. ET - Register
- Consortium Best Practices Webinar
  - When: Wednesday, February 19, 2025, 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 webpage
- Rural and Urban Rate Information for FY2024 and FY2025
- Competitive Bidding Exemptions
- Examples of Eligible Products and Services Telecom Program

Online Resources - RHC Connect

- Welcome to RHC Connect FCC Form 460 webpage
  - RHC Connect FCC Form 460 User Guide
  - Welcome to RHC Connect – FCC Form 460 self-paced video training guide
- Welcome to RHC Connect - FCC Form 465 webpage
  - RHC Connect FCC Form 465 User Guide
  - Welcome to RHC Connect – FCC Form 465 self-paced video training guide
- Welcome to RHC Connect – FCC Form 466 webpage
  - RHC Connect FCC Form 466 User Guide
  - RHC Connect - FCC Form 466 self-paced video training guide
- Welcome to RHC Connect – FCC Form 469 webpage
  - RHC Connect FCC Form 469 User Guide – HCPs and service providers
- 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

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 and RHC Connect
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.