RURAL HEALTH CARE PROGRAM
OVERVIEW
WHO ARE WE

The Rural Health Care Program is one of four universal service programs administered by USAC on behalf of the FCC.

LIFELINE PROGRAM
provides reduced rates for telecom services to eligible low-income consumers

HIGH COST PROGRAM
provides reduced rates for telecom and broadband services in eligible high-cost areas

SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES PROGRAM
provides funding for telecom and broadband services to eligible schools and libraries

RURAL HEALTH CARE PROGRAM
provides funding for telecom and broadband services to eligible rural health care providers
THE COMPONENTS OF THE RURAL HEALTH CARE (RHC) PROGRAM

Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) Program
• Supports broadband connectivity and broadband networks for eligible health care providers (HCPs)
• Eligible services and equipment with 65% discount

Telecommunications Program
• Funds urban/rural rate difference for telecommunications services for rural HCPs
• Remained in place after HCF Program implementation
ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?
STATUS

NONPROFIT OR PUBLIC
FACILITY TYPE

RURAL HEALTH CLINICS

COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTERS

LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS OR AGENCIES

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OFFERING HEALTH CARE INSTRUCTION, TEACHING HOSPITALS, AND MEDICAL SCHOOLS

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS OR HEALTH CENTERS PROVIDING HEALTH CARE TO MIGRANTS

DEDICATED EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS OF RURAL FOR-PROFIT HOSPITALS

PART-TIME ELIGIBLE ENTITIES

CONSORTIA OF THE ABOVE ENTITIES
RURAL LOCATIONS

• Individual HCP applicants must be located in an FCC-approved rural location to be considered rural.

• There is a rural look-up tool located on the USAC website.
HEALTHCARE CONNECT FUND (HCF) PROGRAM

OVERVIEW
Key Features of the HCF Program

- Support for broadband connectivity and broadband networks for eligible HCPs
- Both consortium and individual HCPs may apply
- 35% HCP contribution required
- Funding began January 1, 2014 (July 1, 2013, for existing Pilot Program projects)
- Funding year runs from July 1st to June 30th
- Covers both broadband services and HCP-owned infrastructure
- Non-rural HCPs can participate if in majority-rural consortia
- Multi-year funding commitments available to consortia
- Connections to off-site administrative offices and data centers covered
Key Features of the HCF Program

- **Administrative benefits include:**
  - Flat-rate discount, which simplifies the calculation of discount level
  - Consortia can use a single application

- **HCF Program provides options:**
  - HCPs can apply as individuals
  - HCPs can join an existing consortium, either now or after participating as an individual HCP in the HCF Program
  - HCPs also can band together and form a new consortium
Benefits of the Consortium Approach

• Creation and growth of broadband HCP networks
• Lower administrative costs
• Sharing of medical, administrative, and technical expertise
• Lower prices, higher bandwidth, and better quality connections
• Non-rural sites may participate in consortia and receive the discount, as long as they are in a consortium with a majority rural sites.
• Consortia can include ineligible health care provider sites, who pay their “fair share” but can be part of the network and benefit from negotiated rates
• Improved quality and reduced cost of healthcare through leveraging broadband connections in consortia
### Application Process

**Five Steps Total**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determine Eligibility</th>
<th>Develop Evaluation Criteria and Request Services</th>
<th>Evaluate Bids &amp; Select a Service Provider</th>
<th>Submit Funding Requests</th>
<th>Invoice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Must meet the three initial program criteria and make sure requested services are eligible</td>
<td>Develop scoring criteria to evaluate bids and describe service needs (posted on USAC website)</td>
<td>Choose the “most cost-effective” service provider</td>
<td>Provide information about services and selected service provider</td>
<td>Initiate invoicing process and submit to service provider for review (HCF Program)</td>
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</table>
# HCF and Telecommunications Program FY2015 Filing Calendar

**FY2015 IMPORTANT DATES (FY2015: 7/1/2015 TO 6/30/2016)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Form(s)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>JANUARY 1, 2015</strong></td>
<td>FCC Form 461</td>
<td>First day applicants may submit the request for services form for the upcoming funding year</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FCC Form 465</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MARCH 1, 2015</strong></td>
<td>FCC Form 462</td>
<td>First day to submit the funding request form in the initial funding request filing period</td>
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<tr>
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<td>FCC Form 466</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>JUNE 1, 2015</strong></td>
<td>FCC Form 462</td>
<td>Last day to submit the funding request form in the initial funding request filing period – after this date, forms accepted on a rolling basis until June 30, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FCC Form 466</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>JUNE 2, 2015</strong></td>
<td>FCC Form 461</td>
<td><strong>DEADLINE</strong> to submit the funding request form and supporting documentation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FCC Form 465</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>JULY 1, 2015</strong></td>
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<td>First day of the funding year</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>JUNE 30, 2016</strong></td>
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<td>Last day of the funding year</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>JUNE 30, 2016</strong></td>
<td>FCC Form 462</td>
<td><strong>DEADLINE</strong> to submit the funding request form and supporting documentation</td>
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<td>FCC Form 466</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DECEMBER 31, 2016</strong></td>
<td>FCC Form 463</td>
<td><strong>DEADLINE</strong> to submit the invoicing form for funding commitments ending June 30, 2016</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**KEY:**
- Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) Program
- Telecommunications Program

*Due to May 30 falling on a weekend, the last day of the initial funding request filing period has been moved to the following business day.*
## Rural Health Care

### Telecommunications Program

The Telecommunications Program (formerly known as the Primary Program) provides discounts for telecommunications services for eligible health care providers (HCPs).

Applicants currently participating in the Rural Health Care (RHC) Program can continue to receive support for telecommunications services through the Telecommunications Program, with no changes.

Beginning in January 2014, applicants currently receiving support for Internet access can apply for support for those same services through the new Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) Program. For those receiving Internet access support, funding will continue through the end of Funding Year 2013, which ends on June 30, 2014. Once funding for Internet access ends, this component of the RHC Program will only provide telecommunications services support and will simply be known as the Telecommunications Program.

### HCF Program

The Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) Program is the newest component of the Rural Health Care Program. The HCF Program will provide a 65 percent discount on eligible expenses related to broadband connectivity to both individual rural health care providers (HCPs) and consortia, which can include non-rural HCPs (if the consortium has a majority of rural sites).

For new applicants, the filing window will open late summer 2013, with funding beginning on January 1, 2014. Starting in Funding Year 2014 (July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015), all applicants will be on the same funding year schedule.

### Pilot Program

The Pilot Program provides funding for up to 85 percent of eligible costs of the construction or implementation of statewide and/or regional broadband networks. There are 50 active projects involving hundreds of health care providers (HCPs).

While no new funding is available, some projects continue to accept new HCP sites. As funding for Pilot Program projects ends, Pilot Program projects should be applying for additional support if needed under the Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) Program. For the first funding year of the HCF Program, Funding Year 2013, only current Pilot Program participants are permitted to begin the application process.
CONTACT US

When contacting the Rural Health Care Program with questions or concerns, it is important to use the appropriate contact information to ensure that you reach the right team members. Contact information for individual health care providers, consortia, and service providers that participate in the Rural Health Care Program depends on the nature of your question or concern.

To get the answers you need, select your topic from the list below to access the appropriate email address. If you need to contact us by phone, please see the RHC Help Desk telephone directory.

General Inquiries and Assistance

- E-File (My Portal) Access and Password Resets
- My Portal Technical Issues
- My Portal Suggestions
- FCC Form 498 Change of Address, Contact, or Banking Information
- Training and Education
- Appeals
- General Inquiries
- General Suggestions and Feedback
All HCF Program forms and supporting documentation must be submitted by filing online through My Portal. For more information about these forms, review the [Guide to Forms](#).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORMS</th>
<th>Eligibility and Registration Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FCC Form 460</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>File Online</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>FCC Form 460 and Instructions</td>
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<tr>
<td>FCC Form 460 Online Filing Instructions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Mental Health Center Checklist</td>
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<td>FCC Form 460 Best Practices (Individual HCPS)</td>
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QUESTIONS?

CONTACT US!
Rural Health Care Program
(800) 453-1546
RHC-Assist@usac.org