



PUBLIC NOTICE

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WIRELINER COMPETITION BUREAU REMINDS HEALTHCARE CONNECT FUND CONSORTIA OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2016, FY 2015 ANNUAL REPORTS DEADLINE

WC Docket No. 02-60

In this Public Notice, the Wireline Competition Bureau (Bureau) reminds Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) consortia of their requirement to file Funding Year (FY) 2015 Annual Reports with the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) by September 30, 2016.¹ As announced in the Commission's 2012 *Healthcare Connect Fund Order*, all HCF consortia as well as Pilot Program consortia are required to submit Annual Reports to help USAC and the Commission assess progress towards HCF's program goals to: (1) increase broadband access for healthcare providers, particularly those serving rural areas; (2) foster development and deployment of broadband healthcare networks; and (3) maximize program cost-effectiveness.² Although most of the information necessary to meet this Annual Reports requirement is already submitted by consortia through existing program forms,³ to fulfill the Annual Reports requirement, the Commission also directed that HCF and Pilot Program consortia must submit to USAC the types of telehealth applications supported by HCF.⁴ Additionally, Pilot Program consortia must report to USAC the number of competitive bids received and an explanation of how each winning bid was selected.⁵

This is the first year that HCF and Pilot Program consortia are required to submit the supplemental information required in the *Healthcare Connect Fund Order*. New HCF participants began submitting applications in January 2014 and in June 2014, recognizing the limited amount of data available for new HCF participants, the Bureau waived the FY 2013 Annual Reports requirement.⁶ In September 2015, the Bureau announced that USAC already had collected the data needed for the FY 2014

¹ See *Rural Health Care Support Mechanism*, WC Docket No. 02-60, Report and Order, 27 FCC Rcd 16678, 16695-99, paras. 31-43, 16807-09, paras. 316-22 (2012) (*Healthcare Connect Fund Order*); 47 CFR § 54.647. Funding Year 2015 began on July 1, 2015, and ends on June 30, 2016.

² See *Healthcare Connect Fund Order*, 27 FCC Rcd at 16695-99, paras. 31-43.

³ *Id.* at 16809, para. 322 (explaining that the Commission sought to "simplify and streamline the [Annual Report] requirements as much as possible, in order to minimize the burden on participants while still ensuring the funding is used for its intended purpose"); *id.* at 16809, para. 320 (noting that "[s]ome of the [Annual Reports] data will already be collected through other forms that participants will submit through the funding process").

⁴ See *Healthcare Connect Fund Order* 27 FCC Rcd at 16807-09, paras. 317, 319, 321. The specific collections articulated herein were announced in the 2012 *Healthcare Connect Fund Order* and received Paperwork Reduction Act approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on August 22, 2013. See *Rural Health Care Support Mechanism*, 78 Fed. Reg. 54,967 (Sept. 9, 2013).

⁵ See *Healthcare Connect Fund Order*, 27 FCC Rcd at 16808-09, para. 319.

⁶ *Rural Health Care Support Mechanism*, WC Docket No. 02-60, Order, 29 FCC Rcd 7451, 7452, para. 4 (WCB 2014).

Annual Reports through program forms and therefore consortia would not be required to file any supplemental FY 2014 data.⁷ The Bureau also stated in September 2015 that, beginning with FY 2015, consortia would be required to file the supplemental information regarding telehealth applications and competitive bidding as noted above.⁸

Thus, on or before September 30, 2016, HCF and Pilot Program consortia must submit to USAC FY 2015 Annual Reports with information on how their program-supported services are being used for telehealth purposes, including for the exchange of electronic health records, participation in a health information exchange, remote training related to the delivery of telehealth services, and clinical telemedicine applications.⁹ Specifically, consortia will complete a checklist of specific telehealth applications utilized during the funding year. For FY 2015 Annual Reports, consortia need not specify which of their health care providers engaged in the telehealth applications identified or the precise number of encounters within each category; this data may, however, be required in future funding years. In addition to the telehealth application data required from both HCF and Pilot Program consortia, Pilot Program consortia must provide in their FY 2015 Annual Reports the number of competitive bids received, and the criteria and associated weighting they used to select winning bids for supported services.¹⁰ Only Pilot Program consortia must submit this additional competitive bidding data because HCF program forms already capture this data, whereas the forms used by Pilot Program consortia do not.¹¹

HCF consortia must e-mail their additional FY 2015 Annual Reports information to USAC at RHC-Assist@usac.org using the Excel spreadsheet template available at: <http://www.usac.org/rhc/healthcare-connect/consortia/step09/default.aspx>.

Pilot Program consortia must e-mail their additional FY 2015 Annual Reports information to USAC at RHC-Assist@usac.org using the Excel spreadsheet template available at: <http://usac.org/rhcp/participants/annual-report.aspx>.

For additional information concerning this Public Notice, please contact Elizabeth V. McCarthy at (202) 418-7400, in the Telecommunications Access Policy Division, Wireline Competition Bureau.

For information concerning HCF and Pilot Program Annual Reports filing procedures, please contact USAC's Rural Health Care Help Desk at (800) 453-1546.

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⁷ *Wireline Competition Bureau Addresses Funding Year 2014 Healthcare Connect Fund Consortia Annual Reports Requirements*, WC Docket No. 02-60, Public Notice, 30 FCC Rcd 9894 (WCB 2015).

⁸ *Id.* at 9895-96.

⁹ *See Healthcare Connect Fund Order*, 27 FCC Rcd at 16808-09, para. 319.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ Compare HCF FCC Form 461, Healthcare Connect Fund Request for Services Form, Block 5, Bid Evaluation, available at http://www.usac.org/_res/documents/rhc/pdf/forms/FCC-Form-461-Form-and-Instructions.pdf (requiring competitive bidding evaluation criteria and corresponding weights) (last visited June 14, 2016) and HCF FCC Form 462, Healthcare Connect Fund Funding Request Form, Block 2, Competitive Bidding Information and Block 7, Additional Documentation, available at http://www.usac.org/_res/documents/rhc/pdf/forms/FCC-Form-462-Form-and-Instructions.pdf (requiring number of bidding vendors and attachment of all bids received) (last visited June 14, 2016) with Rural Health Care Telecommunications Program FCC Form 466 (used by Pilot Program consortia), Funding Request and Certification Form, Block 7, Bid Documentation (requiring submission of all bids received), available at http://www.usac.org/_res/documents/rhc/pdf/forms/FCC-Form-466-Form-and-Instructions.pdf (last visited June 14, 2016).