

Navigating the FCC Rural Health Care Program — Healthcare Connect Fund

Guidance for funding and selecting essential
connectivity solutions



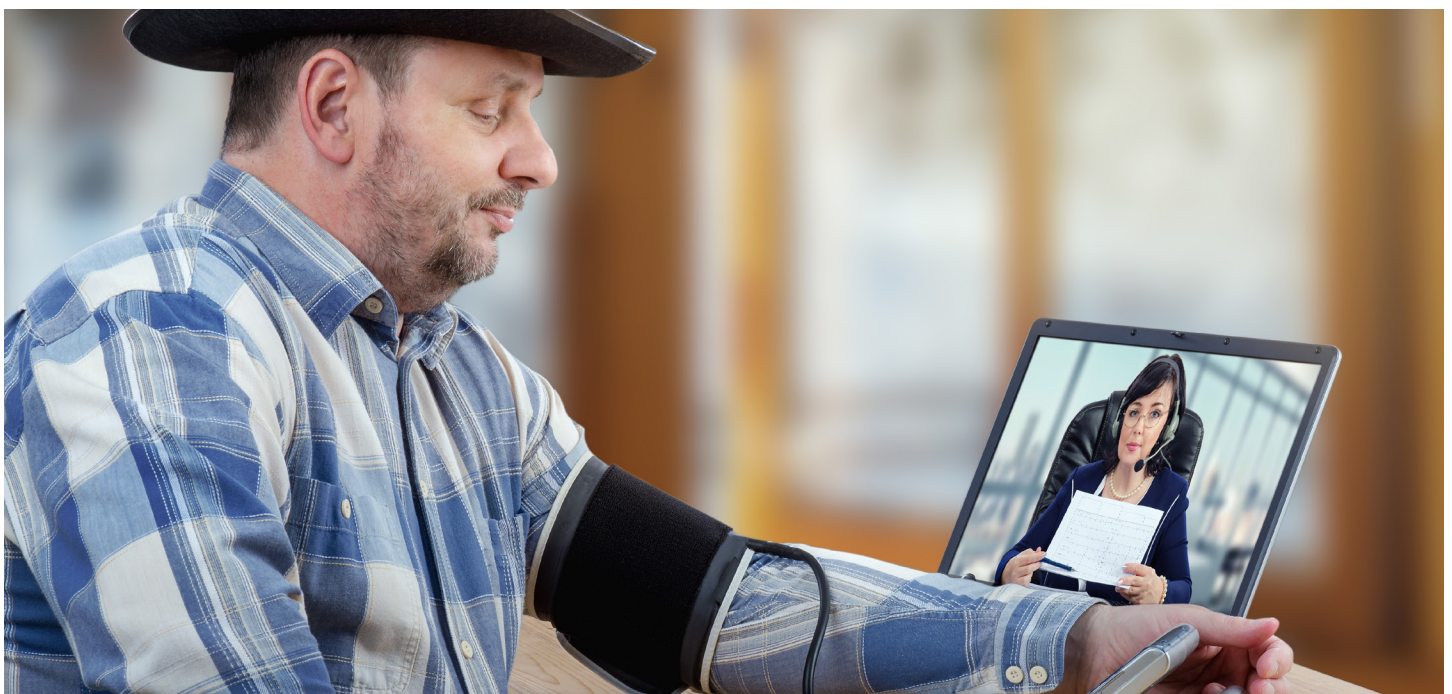
86,000
Potential shortfall
of physicians
by 2036.¹

Quality healthcare empowers entire communities to live more fully. With it, there's peace of mind that children and families can stay healthy and strong. It gives elderly residents hope for brighter tomorrows. And more than just receiving care, it's the reassurance that someone cares about community members' well-being, healing and future. But for millions of people in rural areas, high-quality healthcare services are out of reach.

Lack of specialized treatment facilities — even limited access to primary medicine — means rural patients may have to travel long distances, wait months for appointments or forgo care. Digital connectivity at health facilities has the power to transform experiences for these patients. When healthcare providers have advanced connectivity networks, rural populations have the hope of lifesaving care from skilled providers, anywhere in the world. It gives health systems a way to meet provider and budget shortfalls head-on. And it can help clinicians engage and educate patients by making personalized health information available electronically.

Connectivity is a vital resource that empowers providers at all stages of the care continuum as they pursue the Quadruple Aim — enhanced patient experience, improved population health, reduced costs and better care team satisfaction. For rural health systems working to increase patient engagement and transition to a value-based care model, reliable connectivity to the internet for access to systems and information, as well as connectivity between locations and facilities, is a necessity. As necessary as connectivity is, however, it comes at a cost many providers are unable to fund.

Fortunately, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Rural Health Care (RHC) Program is available to help rural providers overcome the technology-upgrade budget barrier. In this guide, you'll find information on the program and guidance for selecting essential connectivity solutions.



Receiving federal funding

The Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) administers the RHC Program on behalf of the FCC, which developed the program to help rural health providers fund connectivity solutions.² Recent appropriations have made more than \$700 million available each year for rural providers.³

Started in 2012, the Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) Program gives subsidy relief for broadband services to eligible healthcare providers and consortia. It aims to encourage the creation of state and regional broadband healthcare networks that expand access to rural and underserved communities.



discount available on broadband services and equipment through the RHC Program.⁴

What services are eligible?	Broadband services and networking equipment. The organization must be a public or nonprofit entity to qualify.
How much can we save?	Up to a 65% flat-rate discount on all eligible expenses.
Who is eligible?	<p>The following types of facilities are eligible for RHC funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-secondary educational institutions offering healthcare instruction. • Community health centers or health centers providing healthcare to migrants. • Local health departments or agencies. • Community mental health centers. • Not-for-profit hospitals. • Rural health clinics. • Dedicated emergency departments of rural for-profit hospitals. • Skilled nursing facilities. • Consortia of healthcare providers consisting of one or more entities described above.
Are there competitive bid exemptions?	<p>Applicants are exempt if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual undiscounted cost for eligible services is \$10,000 or less (eligible for single-year funding only). • HCP is participating in a government master service agreement (MSA) negotiated by a federal, state, tribal or local governmental entity on the applicant's behalf and awarded pursuant to applicable federal, state, tribal or local competitive bidding requirements. • HCP site is opting in to an existing MSA approved under the HCF Program with the mechanism for adding additional sites to the MSA. • HCP site has an RHC Program-endorsed evergreen contract.
How do we apply?	<p>Apply as an individual HCP or as part of a consortium. Note: You can obtain a multi-year funding commitment.</p>

Begin your funding request now

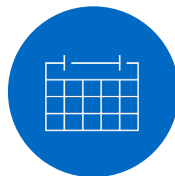
There are five steps to the HCF application process:



Looking for step-by-step guidance? Watch these [helpful webinars](#) on submitting RHC Program forms.

File RHC Program application forms through the [USAC "My Portal."](#)

RHC Program planning calendar FY 2025: July 1, 2024 - October 28, 2026



July 1, 2024:
First day to submit Request for Service forms. (Must be posted to USAC's website by March 4, 2025.)



December 1, 2024 - April 1, 2025:
Funding request filing window period.



October 28, 2026:
Invoicing deadline.

Spectrum Enterprise partners with healthcare organizations nationwide, providing connectivity, voice, security and entertainment solutions to help providers and patients thrive.

Tips for evaluating service providers

Here are some questions to consider when evaluating a connectivity services provider:

Will they be there when we need them?

Just like HCPs, connectivity doesn't get a day off. Partner with a provider that offers RHC-eligible services backed by 100%, 24/7/365 U.S.-based support. Ask if they have U.S.-based call centers. Also, look for a strong service-level agreement (SLA) and inquire about their mean time to restore service should an outage ever occur.

Do they understand our unique needs?

As an industry, healthcare has demanding requirements for performance, reliability and security. Additionally, each healthcare provider has its own unique needs. That's why it's important to work with a responsive technology partner that has extensive healthcare industry experience and is dedicated to helping you successfully transform your organization in this digital health era.

Is sensitive data secure?

As more patient data and records are shared electronically, healthcare providers need an end-to-end networking solution they can trust. Vet your service provider's security solutions, asking the following: Do they use the latest technology, such as a HIPAA-compatible, reliable firewall and virtual private network (VPN) capabilities to securely connect multiple locations? Do they offer secure, redundant fiber?

Improve patient care with Spectrum Enterprise®

Getting funding for critical technology can be a complex process. Working together, we can help you bring enhanced connectivity to rural and underserved communities. Our team of committed RHC Program specialists has helped providers like you navigate the program for more than 10 years. From implementing telehealth and cloud-based applications to enabling electronic health records (EHR) platforms and health information exchanges (HIEs), high-speed broadband networks like ours are at the heart of the digital transformation in healthcare. To effectively address these advanced technology needs in rural communities, organizations need the right network infrastructure partner.

Spectrum Enterprise delivers networking and managed services solutions, including internet access, wide area networks (WAN), security, voice and TV solutions and private access to cloud solutions. Our advanced connectivity portfolio can help healthcare providers improve the patient experience and system efficiency.



The following Spectrum Enterprise technologies are backed by a 100% uptime SLA guarantee and qualify for the RHC Program:



Dedicated Fiber Internet: Every second providers must wait for medical charts to upload, test results to download and billing data to transfer is not only lost productivity and revenue, but it can severely impact patient outcomes. Dedicated Fiber Internet offers fast, reliable, symmetrical and dedicated connectivity — up to 100 Gbps — to provide an exceptional patient and provider internet connectivity experience.



Ethernet Services: In the healthcare industry, vast amounts of sensitive digital-health data are continually transmitted. Spectrum Enterprise can help securely deliver this data with low latency over a nationwide fiber network. Our Ethernet Services let health systems link locations, leverage bandwidth-intensive applications like picture archiving and communication systems (PACS), connect to leading cloud service providers and strengthen business continuity plans.

We help healthcare facilities expand their networks quickly with flat-rate pricing and scalable bandwidth up to 100 Gbps. An Ethernet portal empowers IT staff with network visibility, including real-time status updates and reporting capabilities.



Cloud Connect: As the industry transitions from a volume-based model to a value-based one, health systems are turning to cloud service providers (CSPs) for improved vendor access, increased operational efficiencies and streamlined costs. Spectrum Enterprise Cloud Connect supports hybrid cloud IT strategies, allowing for easy integration of public and private cloud environments into a hospital's private WAN. Cloud Connect provides end-to-end performance, simplicity and enhanced security comparable to your organization's private network. Accelerate cloud performance with fast, secure and dependable private connectivity.

Committed to rural healthcare

Together we can help you bring better care to each patient, reduce costs and improve how administrators and providers support their communities.

[Schedule an appointment](#) with a rural healthcare solutions expert today.

1. ["New AAMC Report Shows Continuing Projected Physician Shortage,"](#) the Association of American Medical Colleges, March 21, 2024.
2. ["Rural Health Care Program,"](#) Federal Communications Commission, 2023.
3. ["Public Notice: Wireline Competition Bureau Announces E-Rate and RHC Programs' Inflation-Based Caps for Funding Year 2024,"](#) Federal Communications Commission, March 8, 2024.
4. ["Rural Health Care Program,"](#) Federal Communications Commission, 2023.

About Spectrum Enterprise

Spectrum Enterprise, a part of Charter Communications, Inc., is a national provider of scalable, fiber technology solutions serving many of America's largest businesses and communications service providers. The broad Spectrum Enterprise portfolio includes [networking and managed services solutions](#): [Internet access](#), [Ethernet access and networks](#), [Voice](#) and [TV solutions](#). The Spectrum Enterprise team of experts works closely with clients to achieve greater business success by providing solutions designed to meet their evolving needs. For more information, visit [enterprise.spectrum.com](#).

©2024 Charter Communications. All rights reserved. Spectrum Enterprise is a registered trademark of Charter Communications. All other logos, marks, designs, and otherwise are the trademarks and intellectual property of their respective third-party owners. Not all products, pricing and services are available in all areas. Pricing and actual speeds may vary. Restrictions may apply. Subject to change without notice.