PUBLIC NOTICE

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

News Media Information 202 / 418-0500
Internet: https://www.fcc.gov
TTY: 1-888-835-5322

DA 20-394
Released: April 8, 2020

WIRELINE COMPETITION BUREAU PROVIDES GUIDANCE ON THE COVID-19 TELEHEALTH PROGRAM APPLICATION PROCESS

WC Docket No. 20-89

On April 2, 2020, the Commission released a *Report and Order* establishing the COVID-19 Telehealth Program.[1] By this Public Notice, the Wireline Competition Bureau (Bureau) provides guidance on actions applicants can begin to take to ready themselves for filing an application for COVID-19 Telehealth Program funding.

The COVID-19 Telehealth Program will provide $200 million in funding, appropriated by Congress as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act,[2] to help health care providers provide connected care services to patients at their homes or mobile locations in response to the novel Coronavirus 2019 disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The COVID-19 Telehealth Program will provide immediate support to eligible health care providers responding to the COVID-19 pandemic by fully funding their telecommunications services, information services, and devices necessary to provide critical connected care services until the program's funds have been expended or the COVID-19 pandemic has ended.

Interested health care providers must complete several steps to apply for funding through the COVID-19 Telehealth Program. This Public Notice is aimed at assisting applicants. There are three steps interested providers can take immediately to prepare to apply for the COVID-19 Telehealth Program: (1) obtain an eligibility determination from the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC); (2) obtain an FCC Registration Number (FRN); and (3) register with System for Award Management. If an interested party does not already have these steps and accompanying components completed, the Bureau recommends that it gather the necessary information and begin to complete other necessary steps now, so it is prepared to submit applications for program funding as soon as applications can be accepted for filing. The Bureau will release a subsequent Public Notice announcing the application acceptance date immediately following the effective date of the COVID-19 Telehealth Program information collection requirements.[3] The various components are described below.

---

[1] *Promoting Telehealth for Low-Income Consumers*; *COVID-19 Telehealth Program*, WC Docket Nos. 18-213, 20-89, Report and Order, FCC 20-44, paras. 15-29 (2020) (*Report and Order*).

[2] CARES Act, Pub. L. No 116-136, 134 Stat. 281 (2020). The CARES Act appropriates $200 million to the Commission "to support efforts of health care providers to address coronavirus by providing telecommunications services, information services, and devices necessary to enable the provision of telehealth services" during the pendency of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Id*.

[3] The COVID-19 Telehealth Program information collection requirements will be effective upon publication of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval in the Federal Register.

Eligibility Determination

Health care providers seeking to participate in the COVID-19 Telehealth Program must obtain an eligibility determination from the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) for each health care provider site that they include in their application.[4] Health care provider sites that USAC has already deemed eligible to participate in the Commission's existing Rural Health Care (RHC) Programs may rely on that eligibility determination for the COVID-19 Telehealth Program. Interested health care providers that do not already have an eligibility determination may obtain one by filing an FCC Form 460 (Eligibility and Registration Form) with USAC.[5] **Applicants that do not yet have an eligibility determination from USAC can still nonetheless file an application with the Commission for the COVID-19 Telehealth Program while their FCC Form 460 is pending with USAC**.

The FCC Form 460 can be found at: https://www.usac.org/rural-health-care/resources/forms/. The FCC Form 460 requires applicants to provide basic information about the individual health care provider, such as:

- Address and contact information;
- Health care provider type;
- Brief explanation as to why the health care provider is eligible under the categories in section 254(h)(7)(B) of the Communications Act;
- Health care provider identifying number, such as a National Provider Identifier (NPI) code and/or taxonomy code; and
- Supporting documentation demonstrating the health care provider's eligibility.

Consortium applicants may file an FCC Form 460 on behalf of member health care providers if they have a Letter of Agency.[6] The FCC Form 460 is also used to provide certain basic information about consortia to USAC, including:

- Lead entity (Consortium Leader);
- Contact person within the lead entity (the Project Coordinator); and
- Health care provider sites that will participate in the consortium.

Contact USAC for specific questions about eligibility and completing the eligibility form (FCC Form 460) via telephone at (800) 453-1546 or via email at: RHC-Assist@usac.org.

[4] Consistent with the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the COVID-19 Telehealth Program limits participation to nonprofit and public eligible health care providers that fall within the following categories: (1) post-secondary educational institutions offering health care instruction, teaching hospitals, and medical schools; (2) community health centers or health centers providing health care to migrants; (3) local health departments or agencies; (4) community mental health centers; (5) not-for-profit hospitals; (6) rural health clinics; (7) skilled nursing facilities; or (8) consortia of health care providers consisting of one or more entities falling into the first seven categories. *See* 47 U.S.C. §§ 254(h)(1)(A), (h)(2)(A), and (h)(7)(B).

[5] As explained in the *Report and Order*, the COVID-19 Telehealth Program is open to rural and non-rural providers. Non-rural providers do not need to be part of a consortium to participate in the program. *Report and Order* at *11, para. 16 & n.50.

[6] Each Consortium Leader must obtain a Letter of Agency from each health care provider participant that is independent of the Consortium Leader (i.e. health care provider sites that are not owned or otherwise controlled by the Consortium Leader). The Letter of Agency is submitted as an attachment to the FCC Form 460. The purpose of the Letter of Agency is to provide authority for the Consortium Leader to submit the FCC Form 460 on behalf of the health care provider site. Consortium leaders are required to obtain supporting information and/or documents to support eligibility for each health care provider when they collect the Letter of Agency, and may be asked for this information during an audit or investigation.

Application and Request for Funding and Registering to Receive Payments Through COVID-19 Telehealth Program

Interested parties must submit an application and request for funding through the COVID-19 Telehealth Program to the Commission. The Bureau will make available an online portal for completing and submitting applications and requests for funding through the COVID-19 Telehealth Program. The Bureau will release a Public Notice and post information about the web address and opening date for that portal on the Commission's Keep Americans Connected page: https://www.fcc.gov/keep-americans-connected. A copy of the completed application will be filed by the system in the Commission's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS) at a later date.

To submit an application and request for funding, the applicant must first obtain an FCC Registration Number (FRN). Additionally, to receive payment through the COVID-19 Telehealth Program, applicants must be registered with the federal System for Award Management. While interested parties do not need to be registered with the System for Award Management in order to submit an application, the Bureau strongly encourages them to start that process early.

Obtaining an FCC Registration Number (FRN)

All applicants, like all other entities doing business with the Commission, must register for an FRN in the Commission Registration System (CORES). An FRN is a 10-digit number that is assigned to a business or individual registering with the FCC. This unique FRN is used to identify the registrant's business dealings with the FCC.

To register with CORES, please use the following link: https://apps.fcc.gov/cores/userLogin.do. The first step to setting up an account in CORES is creating a username and account in the FCC User Registration System. Before the account is activated, the user will receive an automated email titled "FCC Account Request Verification" and must verify its account email address as prompted. Once the user is logged in to CORES, the user should select the "Register New FRN" or "Associate Username to FRN" option as applicable from the menu options that appear and provide the information as prompted by CORES. Users will need to provide their taxpayer identification number or TIN to register. The TIN is a nine-digit number that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) requires of all individuals, businesses, and other employers to identify their tax accounts with the IRS. Once the user provides the information required in CORES and clicks "Submit," CORES will generate a new FRN or associate the user's existing FRN with its account.

Additional Information on Eligible Services

The COVID-19 Telehealth Program will provide immediate support to eligible health care providers responding to the COVID-19 pandemic by fully funding their telecommunications services, information services, and devices necessary to provide critical connected care services until the program's funds have been expended or the COVID-19 pandemic has ended. In order to ensure as many applicants as possible receive available funding, we do not anticipate awarding more than $1 million to any single applicant. Examples of services and devices that COVID-19 Telehealth Program applicants may seek funding for include:

- Telecommunications Services and Broadband Connectivity Services: Voice services, and Internet connectivity services for health care provider or their patients.
- Information Services: Remote patient monitoring platforms and services; patient reported outcome platforms; store and forward services, such as asynchronous transfer of patient images and data for interpretation by a physician; platforms and services to provide synchronous video consultation.
- Internet Connected Devices/Equipment: tablets, smart phones, or connected devices to receive connected care services at home (e.g, broadband enabled blood pressure

monitors; pulse-ox) for patient or health care provider use; telemedicine kiosks/carts for health care provider site.

Eligible health care providers that purchased telecommunications services, information services, and/or devices in response to the COVID-19 pandemic after March 13, 2020 may apply to receive funding support through the COVID-19 Telehealth Program for eligible services purchased on or after March 13, 2020. In addition, COVID-19 Telehealth Program support will be available to eligible health care providers for services that require monthly recurring charges, such as broadband connectivity or remote patient monitoring services, through September 30, 2020.

Required Information for Application for COVID-19 Telehealth Program

Applicants will be required to submit the following information on their application for the COVID-19 Telehealth Program. The actual wording on the electronic application may vary slightly from the wording in this Public Notice:

Applicant Information

- Applicant Name
- Applicant FCC Registration Number (FRN)
- Applicant National Provider Identifier (NPI)
- Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN/Tax ID)
- Data Universal Number System Number (DUNS)[7]
- Business Type (from Data Accountability and Transparency (DATA) Act[8] Business Types) – Applicants may provide up to three business types
- DATA Act Service Area – This information will be required for each line item for which funding is requested. Applicants must enter name of the applicable state(s) or "nationwide"

Contact Information

- Contact name for the individual that will be responsible for the application
- Position title
- Phone number
- Mailing address
- Email address

Health Care Provider Information

- Lead health care provider name (if part of a consortium)
- Facility name
- Indicate whether facility is a hospital
- Street address, city, state, county
- FCC Registration Number (FRN)
- Healthcare provider number[9]

[7] A DUNS number is a unique nine-character number used to identify your organization. The federal government uses the DUNS number to track how federal money is allocated. Most large organizations, libraries, colleges, and research universities already have a DUNS number. Applicants should contact their grant administrator, financial department, chief financial officer, or authorizing official to identify their organization's DUNS number. If your organization does not yet have a DUNS number, or no one knows it, visit the Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) website: https://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/displayHomePage.do or call 1-866-705-5711 to register or search for a DUNS number. Registering for a DUNS number is free of charge.

[8] Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 (DATA Act), Pub. L. No. 113-101, 128 Stat. 1146 (2014).

[9] USAC assigns the health care provider number.

- Eligibility type[10]
- National Provider Identifier (NPI)
- Total patient population
- Estimated number of patients to be served by the funding request (and supporting documentation)

Medical Services to be Provided (applicants will check all that apply)

- Patient-Based Internet-Connected Remote Monitoring
- Other Monitoring
- Video Consults
- Voice Consults
- Imaging Diagnostics
- Other Diagnostics
- Remote Treatment
- Other Services

Conditions to be Treated with COVID-19 Telehealth Funding

- Whether the applicant will treat COVID-19 patients directly
- Whether the applicant will treat patients without COVID-19 symptoms or conditions (applicants will check all that apply):
  - Other infectious diseases
  - Emergency/Urgent Care
  - Routine, Non-Urgent Care
  - Mental Health Services (non-emergency)
  - Other conditions
- How using COVID-19 Telehealth Program funding to treat patients without COVID-19 symptoms or conditions would free up resources that will be used to treat COVID-19

Additional Information Concerning Requested Services and Devices

- Goals and objectives for use of the COVID-19 Telehealth Program Funding
- Timeline for deployment of the proposed service(s) or devices funded by the COVID-19 Telehealth Program
- Factors/metrics the applicant will use to help measure the impact of the services and devices funded by the COVID-19 Telehealth Program
- How COVID-19 has affected health care providers in your area
- Any additional information about the geographic area and population serve by the applicant. Indicate whether the geographic area you serve has been under any pre-existing strain (e.g., large underserved or low-income patient population; HCP shortages; rural hospital closures; limited broadband access and/or Internet adoption). If so, describe such factors
- Whether the applicant plans to target the funding to high-risk and vulnerable patients. If so, describe how
- Any additional information to support the application and request for funding

Requested Funding Items

- Total amount of funding requested

[10] Eligibility type (e.g., hospital) is determined and confirmed by USAC when an entity files an FCC Form 460 and is deemed to be eligible.

- Whether funding for devices is being requested. If so:
  - How are the devices integral to patient care?
  - Are the devices for patient use?
  - Are the devices for the health care provider's use?

Supporting Documentation

- An applicant should provide supporting documentation for the costs indicated in its application. Such supporting documentation should summarize the expected costs of the eligible services and devices requested and may include documentation such as an invoice or quote from a vendor or service provider (or similar information). Such information should be specific enough to identify line-items to facilitate swift review of the application, and we encourage applicants to include information such as a description of the service or device, its eligibility category, the quantity ordered, the upfront and monthly expenses, and the service dates for recurring services.

Registering with System for Award Management

To receive payments through the COVID-19 Telehealth Program, applicants must be registered with the federal System for Award Management. The System for Award Management is a web-based, government-wide application that collects, validates, stores, and disseminates business information about the federal government's partners in support of federal awards, grants, and electronic payment processes.

Many applicants may already be registered with the System for Award Management and do not need to re-register with that system in order to receive payment through the COVID-19 Telehealth Program. Health care providers not yet registered with the System for Award Management may still submit an application. However, the Bureau strongly recommends unregistered health care providers to start that registration process now because it may take up to 10 business days for your registration to become active and an additional 24 hours before that registration information is available in other government systems.

To register with the system, go to https://www.sam.gov/SAM/ with the following information: (1) DUNS number; (2) Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) or Employment Identification Number (EIN); and (3) Your bank's routing number, your bank account number, and your bank account type, *i.e.* checking or savings, to set up Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). You will receive a confirmation email once the registration is activated. **Only applicants registered through the System for Award Management will be able to receive COVID-19 Telehealth Program funding.** Registration in the System for Award Management provides the FCC with an authoritative source for information necessary to provide funding to applicants and to ensure accurate reporting pursuant to the DATA Act, Pub. L. 113-101.

Additional Information. For further information regarding this Public Notice, please contact Hayley Steffen, Attorney Advisor, Telecommunications Access Policy Division, Wireline Competition Bureau, Hayley.Steffen@fcc.gov or at (202) 418-1586.

-FCC-