



TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE HEALTHCARE CONNECT FUND WITH JUNIPER NETWORKS

Simplified solution for a faster path to funding for eligible networking equipment and services

Challenges

Today's rural healthcare providers face many obstacles preventing new technology adoption or IT upgrades. While cost continues to be the #1 obstacle, lack of staffing and IT resources, uncertainty around benefits, and unproven ROI of new technologies often create a barrier to adoption.

Solution

Juniper Networks is streamlining the process to help rural healthcare providers find and secure FCC funding for eligible networking equipment and services through the Healthcare Connect Fund.

Benefits

Networks and MiCTA, qualified rural healthcare providers can:

- Receive a 65% subsidy on all eligible infrastructure equipment and services
- Expedite the filing process by avoiding the competitive bidding process (due to exemption status)
- Deliver a reliable and secure network experience to drive technology advancement and improved digit

The importance of affordable access to high quality broadband for healthcare continues to grow at a rapid pace. Unfortunately, broadband access at quality levels is often not available or affordable, especially for small or very rural healthcare providers (HCPs). Naturally, this can put certain providers at a disadvantage as they seek to upgrade their IT infrastructure to provide better levels of IT-assisted care.

The Challenge

Without reliable, high-speed connectivity, many rural communities are effectively barred from adopting next-generation technologies, limiting their effectiveness in reaching patients across remote areas. From utilizing cloud-based technologies to offering telemedicine services, an ever-increasing reliance on high performance networks places HCPs and patients at risk and at a severe disadvantage within these underserved communities. Unless HCPs can find a cost-effective way to achieve the robust connectivity required in today's digital health era, their IT services will unfortunately always be a step behind.

The Juniper Networks Solution

With underlying infrastructure playing such a critical role in driving improved patient outcomes across the continuum of care, Juniper Networks is committed to helping HCPs navigate federally funded programs that yield subsidies for eligible telecommunications equipment and/or services to improve the quality of healthcare for patients throughout their rural communities.

History of FCC Funding for Healthcare

Since 1998, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has provided universal service subsidies to offset the telecommunications costs of public or non-profit HCPs serving rural areas of the country. This program typically helped reduce the costs for plain telephone service and for T1 lines or greater. The program subsidy was based on the differential cost between urban and rural rates for equivalent services. In 2003, the FCC expanded the program to partially offset Internet Access Program costs with a flat-rate subsidy of 25%. Unfortunately, these programs were minimally utilized and only a small portion of the \$400 million in annual funding was actually consumed.

In 2007, the FCC launched a limited pilot program intended to increase program utilization by exploring ways to fund broadband networks. This program offered an 85% flat rate subsidy and ultimately committed \$364 million to fund regional and statewide



broadband networks in 39 states. These pilot projects ranged from statewide networks covering hundreds of HCPs to networks serving just a few HCPs in a small region.

Based on lessons learned from the pilot program, in 2012, the FCC created the Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) which provided a subsidy of 65% for eligible expenses related to broadband connectivity to both individual rural HCPs and consortia, which can include non-rural HCPs (if the consortium has a majority of rural sites). The HCF program replaces the Internet Access Program but exists alongside the Telecommunications Program, which provides reduced rates for voice services for the use of telemedicine and telehealth. However, the FCC expects that many HCPs currently receiving support under the Telecommunications Program will most likely migrate to the HCF program.

Healthcare Connect Fund Program Advantage

For those HCPs that have not taken advantage of the HCF program, there is no better time to start to understand the tremendous value that exists within the program. From the healthcare industry's point of view, one of the most important features of the program is the ability of urban non-profit and public hospitals with less than 400 beds to enjoy substantial subsidies by joining a buying consortium in which rural not for profit or public hospitals comprise a majority of the members (50% or greater). Those HCPs who are eligible and apply for the subsidized funds will receive a 65% discount on eligible expenses.

The HCF program can be used for high-speed internet access or private networks (e.g. MPLS) provided that these transmission services are used to transport healthcare data, in such use cases as electronic health records (EHRs), health information exchanges (HIEs), telemedicine, etc.

Eligible equipment and services can include switches, routers, and firewalls and the costs of designing, installing, and managing network equipment.

Juniper Networks and MiCTA Membership Advantage

MiCTA, formerly the Michigan Collegiate Telecommunications Association, is headquartered in Saginaw, MI and serves thousands of members nationwide. MiCTA focuses on providing quality products and services to its members at outstanding discounts, and its growth has enabled members to access better volume pricing as well as receive a continuous stream of information as it relates to technology changes and legislations that may be of impact.

Juniper Networks is pleased to announce a partnership with MiCTA to offer HCPs a quick route to procuring equipment and services for their network needs without the requirement to solicit a bid (USAC Form 461). Those HCPs who want to take advantage of the program can now avoid the bidding process by leveraging Juniper's MiCTA Master Service Agreement (MSA), eliminating administrative costs and timelines with going out to bid.

To learn more about the program, please contact Juniper's Healthcare Practice Leader, Matt Roberts (mattr@juniper.net).

About Juniper Networks

At Juniper Networks, we are dedicated to dramatically simplifying network operations and driving superior experiences for end users. Our solutions deliver industry-leading insight, automation, security and AI to drive real business results. We believe that powering connections will bring us closer together while empowering us all to solve the world's greatest challenges of well-being, sustainability and equality.



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