

FCC Connected Care Pilot

General Facts

- The Connected Care Pilot is a **3-year program** (with 6-month startup and windup period) that provides **\$100 million dollars** to eligible healthcare providers providing connected care services, with the primary focus of the Pilot being services provided to low-income or veteran patients.
- The Pilot Program will provide selected projects funding to cover 85% of eligible costs of ***broadband connectivity, network equipment, and information services*** necessary to provide connected care services to the intended patient population. This does not include end-user devices or medical equipment. However, see below for more details about what is considered an “information service.”
- There is not a set number of projects that the FCC will fund.

Goals of the Pilot

- Helping healthcare providers improve patient outcomes **and** reduce costs.
- The Pilot is intended to generate ***meaningful measurable data*** about the benefits of connected care, and how and whether the Universal Service Fund (USF) support could be used more broadly in the future to enable the adoption of connected care services among patients and their healthcare providers.

Who is Eligible for the Connected Care Pilot Program?

- The Pilot Program is available to all nonprofit and public healthcare providers (eligible healthcare providers under § 254(h)(7)(B)) regardless of rural or non-rural geography.
 - ******Preference may be given to eligible healthcare providers that have either (1) experience with providing telehealth or connected care services to patients (e.g., remote patient monitoring, store-and-forward imaging, or video conferencing) beyond using electronic health records, or (2) a partnership with another health care provider, government agency, or designated telehealth resource center with such experience that will work with the health care provider to implement its proposed pilot.*** (§50)***

What Types of Projects is the FCC interested in funding?

- An applicant using the funds to treat a “medical condition.” (HHS definition of a medical condition (*see below*))
- Special Interest In:
 - Public Health Epidemics
 - Opioid Dependency
 - Mental Health Conditions
 - High-Risk Pregnancy
 - Chronic or Recurring Conditions (requiring several months of treatment) (e.g. diabetes, cancer, kidney disease, heart disease, and stroke recovery)

What Services Will the Connected Care Pilot Program Cover?

- **Broadband Services**
 - Eligible healthcare providers participating in the Pilot Program can receive support for qualifying broadband service from any broadband provider.
 - The broadband provider does not need be a designated eligible telecommunications carrier (ETC) under the Universal Service Fund statutory language.
 - Patient Broadband Internet Access Service: eligible healthcare providers may purchase mobile or fixed broadband Internet access service for participating patients to receive connected care services who do not already have broadband Internet access or who lack sufficient broadband Internet access to participate in the pilot. (¶ 57)
 - Eligible healthcare providers **MUST** include 2 things in their application: (1) the estimated number of patient broadband connections that healthcare providers intend to purchase for purposes of connected care services and (2) how the applicant intends to assess its patient lack of or insufficient broadband Internet access.
 - Healthcare Provider Broadband Data Connections: The Connected Care Pilot will also provide support for eligible healthcare providers broadband data connections for the purposes of providing connected care services to its patients.
 - Eligible healthcare providers may not request or receive funding for broadband data connections through both the Connected Care Pilot and the Healthcare Connect Fund.
- *****Other Information Services*****
 - The FCC does not provide a specific list of information service examples that will be funded through the Pilot Program but will perform a case-by-case evaluation of the information service.
 - While the FCC did not provide a list of information services for the Connected Care Pilot it did make references to remote patient monitoring, store and forward, and turnkey solutions (e.g. software solutions). (fn 150)
- **Network Equipment**
 - The Connected Care Pilot will fund network equipment (e.g. routers and servers) necessary to manage, control, or maintain supported broadband services for connected care services provided for in the Pilot Project application.
 - Cannot apply for the same network equipment under both the Pilot and the Healthcare Connect Fund.
- **NOT End-User Devices, Medical Equipment, Administrative Expenses or Other Miscellaneous Expenses.**

Important Definitions

- **Eligible Healthcare Provider**: nonprofit and public eligible healthcare providers are (1) post-secondary educational institutions offering healthcare instruction, teaching hospitals,

and medical schools; (2) community health centers or health centers providing healthcare to migrants; (3) local health departments or agencies; (5) not-for-profit hospitals; (6) rural health clinics; (7) skilled nursing facilities; or (8) consortia of healthcare providers consisting of one or more entities falling into the first seven categories.

- **Fill out an FCC Form 460!**
- **USAC will review eligible healthcare provider eligibility forms.**
- **Connected Care Services:** a subset of telehealth (see below) that “uses broadband Internet access service-enabled technologies to deliver remote medical, diagnostic, patient-centered, and treatment related services directly to patients outside of traditional brick and mortar medical facilities—including specifically to patients at their mobile location or residence.” (§ 39)
 - **Telehealth:** For purposes of the Pilot Program, *we also define “telehealth” as the broad range of health care-related applications that depend upon broadband connectivity, including telemedicine; exchange of electronic health records; collection of data through Health Information Exchanges and other entities; exchange of large image files (e.g., X-ray, MRIs, and CAT scans); and the use of real-time and delayed video conferencing for a wide range of telemedicine, consultation, training, and other health care purposes.*
 - Connected Care can be provided by doctors, nurses, or other healthcare professionals.
- **Medical Condition:** any condition whether medical or mental, including but not limited to any condition resulting from illness, injury (whether or not the injury is accidental), pregnancy, or congenital malformation.
- **Low Income Patient:** healthcare providers may determine a low-income patient if (1) patient is eligible for Medicaid or (2) the patient’s household income is at or below 135% of HHS’ Federal Poverty Guidelines. (§52)
- **Veteran:** healthcare providers may determine whether a patient qualifies as a veteran based on if the patient qualifies for healthcare through the VA. (§53)

Application Process

1. Become an Eligible Healthcare Provider – Submit an eligibility and registration form (Form 460) to USAC to be deemed an eligible healthcare provider.
2. Submit additional documentation to USAC to verify eligibility to participate in the Connected Care Pilot.
3. Submit Application to the FCC via their electronic comment filing system (ECFS) under **WC Docket No. 18-213**. The application itself must also reference WC Docket No. 18-213. All filings must be addressed to the Commission’s Secretary, Office of the Secretary, Federal Communications Commission. Applicants must also send a courtesy copy of their application via email to ConnCarePilotProg@fcc.gov.
 - The FCC will provide a “Connected Care Pilot Program Application.”
 - **Due Date:**
 - Applications will be due 45 days from the effective date of the Pilot Program Rules or

- 120 days from the release date of this Report and Order, whichever comes later.
 - ***CHI will update once we know more information. ***
4. The Wireline Bureau in consultation with the Connect2Health Task Force will evaluate the projects based on the criteria below.
 5. Once selected additional information will be provided with next steps for funding, invoicing, and specific data to be collected, reported, and the reporting format that must be used.
 6. Data reporting will occur at the end of each Connected Care Pilot Year before additional funding is dispersed.

Application Criteria

1. Description of Pilot Project Proposal.
 - a. Clear Research and Evaluation strategy for meeting the healthcare needs of participating patients through the use of connected care services and how proposed Pilot Project will accomplish these objectives.
 - b. Demonstrate how these connected care services will impact low income or veteran individuals.
2. **See Paragraph 68** from order (pages 37-43) about minimum details that must also be included in the application (e.g. name, address, manager of project, area where project will have an impact, etc.)
3. Certification: Applicant must comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and other applicable privacy and reimbursement laws and regulations, and applicable medical licensing laws and regulations, as well as all applicable Pilot Program requirements and procedures, including the requirement to retain records to demonstrate compliance with the Pilot Program requirements and procedures for five years, subject to audit. Healthcare providers that participate in the Connected Care Pilot must also comply with all applicable federal and state laws, including the False Claims Act, the Anti-Kickback Statute, and the Civil Monetary Penalties Law. We understand that health care providers must routinely navigate these laws in other contexts. Thus, health care providers that are interested in applying for the Pilot Program should speak to their compliance experts prior to applying to participate in the Pilot Program. Further, applicants will also be required to certify that they are not already receiving or expecting to receive other federal funding for the exact same services eligible for support under the Pilot Program. We recognize that we may need to waive certain of the RHC Program rules that we extend to the Pilot Program in order to implement the Pilot Program, and we therefore also request that applicants identify in their application, as applicable, any Commission rules that we extend to the Pilot Program in this Report and Order from which they may need a waiver in order to participate in the Pilot Program, if selected.