

Palmetto State Providers Network (PSPN) Network Plan

(1) Goals and objectives of the proposed network

Palmetto State Providers Network (PSPN) is a federally approved healthcare Consortium consisting of dozens of hospitals and clinics. The mission of PSPN is to provide South Carolina with Broadband Infrastructure designed to improve the delivery of healthcare services, especially in rural areas and provide a common network connecting healthcare providers. PSPN is essential to helping behavioral and physical health care providers achieve the best possible care for patients. The majority of PSPN's participants are rural.

PSPN was formed in 2009 to establish a dedicated health care network for South Carolina. PSPN is a private, dedicated, secure, health care network providing connectivity among its members and access to commodity Internet. PSPN's broadband network is actively monitored for network trouble and outages around the clock.

PSPN's strategic plan has three main focus points:

1. **Access:** PSPN serves as South Carolina's healthcare broadband infrastructure—for not-for profit hospitals, clinics, and mental health centers.
2. **Leverage:** PSPN leverages its communications platform to provide shared services for common needs such as electronic health record, patient information exchange, PACs (Digital) imaging, telemedicine telecommunications and much more for patient's health.
3. **Innovation:** PSPN promotes the necessary technological, institutional and organizational innovations needed to advance the practice of telehealth and health information exchange.

The objectives of the proposed federal support from the HCF program are:

1. Provide uninterrupted, continued service to those consortium members that participate in the HCF consortium;
2. Adjust the bandwidth service to the current needs of continuing members; and
3. Add new eligible HCP's service sites associated to grow and build a stronger more robust network.

(2) Strategy for aggregating the specific needs of HCPs, including providers and patients within a state or region

PSPN's strategy for aggregating the specific needs of HCPs is to continue to provide an integrated, private, dedicated, enterprise-grade health care network in which members have core infrastructure services that provide:

1. Direct IP connectivity between members
2. Exclude all non-members from network access (e.g., it is a private network)
3. Available Network-wide firewall to the Internet

4. Available encryption of all network traffic to ensure privacy
5. Point-to-point private routing for dedicated sub-networks
6. Pooled, centralized, and redundant access to the Internet

PSPN aggregates network services, along with telecommunications transport services at competitively bid rates for its members. In addition, PSPN HCPs benefit from the greater buying power for broadband, video, etc. of PSPN as a whole. Participants also share best practices and solutions to complex telemedicine problems at PSPN-sponsored and organized user group meetings and webinars.

(3) Strategy for leveraging existing technology to adopt the most efficient and cost effective means of connecting providers

Network fiber and electronics provide an engineered solution for a South Carolina health care network. The design takes into account current and existing assets, network topology, fiber constraints, available technology, service requirements, and personnel resources that can be utilized. PSPN provides a constant pool of engineering teams familiar with the healthcare IT needs of the participating HCPs.

(4) How the broadband services will be used to improve or provide health care delivery

The principal goals of PSPN are to improve quality, access, and affordability of healthcare in rural South Carolina. PSPN offers medical-grade enterprise networking services, otherwise unavailable to individual Participating HCPs. The bandwidth provided by PSPN to participating HCPs enables previously unachievable telemedicine services and data security. Further; the pricing offered participating HCPs is substantially discounted from actual cost through USAC-HCF support. Seamless medical-grade electronic connectivity for South Carolina's health care community, anchored by Participating HCPs, is a first step toward reaching the goals of the PSPN.

- Quality is improved through the use of private dedicated network for health care. High speed broadband allows HIT programs to function faster, reducing the time for patient information to be accessed.
- Access to healthcare is improved through remote diagnosis, telehealth consults, interactive video and continuing medical education
- Affordability is improved through increased continuity of care made possible by health information exchange being transferred securely through the network

(5) Previous experience in developing and managing health IT (including telemedicine) programs

PSPN has operated as a successful, established consortium of healthcare providers since 2009. During that time thousands of valuable and lifesaving telemedicine consultations and

medical training events have been conducted using the highly reliable fiber facilities provided by its primary Vendor, FRC, LLC. FRC is owned by two seasoned South Carolina based telecommunications companies that have provided carrier telecom services since 1985.

PSPN and the consortium lead PCC have established telemedicine programs in behavioral health with the local unified school districts, as well as behavioral health partners in the metro South Carolina area. PCC staff have implemented and developed EHR, PACS, Dental and behavioral health IT systems used to reach clinics and providers throughout South Carolina and the region. PSPN and PCC staff have designed, created, and implemented high-speed telemedicine and electronic health record capable networks in large hospitals as well as small clinics and have experience in server and virtual serve infrastructure.

(6) Project management plan outlining the project's leadership and management structure, and a work plan, schedule, and budget

Work Plan and Schedule:

PSPN is an established USAC Rural Health consortium, and the principal aim with the present HCF is to provide a continuity of services to our members. A primary project management effort has started in order to fulfill all of the requirements for the inclusion in to the HCF programs and also to add new members.

HCP will be responsible for the 15% of eligible broadband connection costs and paid directly to the Service Provider. PSPN confirms through copies of customer invoices, canceled checks or ACH that the 15% has been paid. PSPN then invoices USAC for the remaining 85% subsidized amount as a result of funding commitment.

Leadership and Management

The Consortium Leader for PSPN is Palmetto Care Connections. Kathy Schwarting is the Project Coordinator. PSPN also utilizes a Governance Board consisting of Palmetto Care Connections Board members for policy and strategic direction.