IPv6 and the Rural Health Care Pilot Program

Background

IPv6, the next generation of the Internet Protocol, is gradually being phased into networks in parallel with its predecessor, IPv4. The biggest motivation for the deployment of IPv6 is the imminent exhaustion of the available pool of IPv4 addresses. Other important factors include better integration of features such as security and quality of service than in IPv4.

The US government is committed to the adoption of IPv6 for its networks. The best exposition of the requirements for IPv6 in civilian networks is in NIST publication [USGV6]. This document references standards which are expected to be met for nodes (both user and infrastructure devices) and applications.

Because of the need for RHCPP networks to interoperate with both non-governmental and governmental networks (in particular the Departments of Health and Human Services and Veterans Affairs), now and in the future, we strongly recommend that IPv6 be addressed at the outset of the RCHP program. We suggest that language similar to the following be included in RFPs for computer and networking hardware, applications and services.

Suggested Language

Organization expects that all computer and networking hardware, services and applications will conform to the mandatory components of [USGV6] (or later version at Organization's option). Vendor will provide explicit details of non-conformance by any component along with a good-faith estimate of when the component will be fully conformant.

Reference