

Minnesota Rural Health Transformation Program Application

Background

The federal Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) was created by H.R.1 (Public Law 119-21) on July 4, 2025. It is a federal initiative to improve rural health care by investing in infrastructure, workforce development, and innovative care models. RHTP aims to strengthen sustainable access to care by promoting health innovation, strategic partnerships, and technology in rural communities. The federal program provides up to \$50 billion in funding over five fiscal years to states to strengthen rural communities.

By the numbers

\$1 BILLION

Minnesota is applying for \$200 million per year for five years for a total of \$1 billion. CMS will notify states by Dec. 31 if their applications have been approved and the amount of funding each state will receive.

> 40 + 350

Minnesota's application was built on a strong foundation of stakeholder and partner engagement. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) held more than 40 meetings with rural partners and stakeholders and received nearly 350 responses to its request for public comment that shaped Minnesota's application in important ways.

1,696,123

Minnesota's rural population is estimated to include about 1.7 million people and represent approximately 30% of the state.

69 OF 87

Sixty-nine of the 87 counties in Minnesota are designated as Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas.

64 MINUTES

Minnesota's rural residents travel 64 minutes on average for medical-surgical care, compared to just 19 minutes in the state's urban areas.

Minnesota's vision

Minnesota's plan to improve rural health is built on actionable data, strong partnerships, and encouraging communities to have a say in what they need most. The plan recommends new tools and methods to improve provider financial sustainability and extend access to care into trusted community settings throughout rural Minnesota.

Engaging with communities

MDH worked hard to understand the real needs of rural Minnesota and incorporated those priorities into its application.

Broad support

Minnesota's application received strong support from across the state, including both DFL and GOP state and federal legislative delegations, the Minnesota Hospital Association, the Association of Minnesota Counties, Minnesota Medical Association, Minnesota Association of Community Health Centers, Minnesota Office of Emergency Medical Services, and rural health systems.

Application goals

Minnesota's RHTP application is centered on improving health outcomes, enhancing rural health workforce recruitment and retention, creating new health care access points in rural communities using telehealth, mobile care delivery, and regional collaborative models, delivering expanded services, and stabilizing rural provider finances. The goal is to have a thriving, collaborative, and technology-enabled rural health care system that ensures all rural Minnesotans have access to the care they need, when they need it, as close to home as possible.

Proposed Strategic initiatives

Minnesota proposes using RHTP funds to support five key initiatives; eligible rural providers and Tribal nations must participate in at least one (and in the case of hospitals, two), with flexibility on choice of specific activities to align with local needs and organizational priorities and capacity:

1. Community-based preventive care and chronic disease management.
2. Recruiting and retaining talent in rural communities.
3. Sustaining access to services to keep care closer to home.
4. Creating regional care models to improve whole-person health.
5. Investing in technology, infrastructure, and collaboration for financial viability.

Sample funding uses

Funds will be used to support these five initiatives via a combination of grants to eligible rural providers and Tribal nations to support technology and infrastructure improvements to allow providers to practice more efficiently and increase access to screenings and services; to increase telehealth technology and use in rural areas, and provide emergency medical services staff the ability to treat patients in place; to support expansion of clinical training and residencies in rural areas; and funding technical assistance vendors to support practices to improve financial stability, among other activities. All RHTP funding must be used to engage in Minnesota's initiatives.