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Thursday, November 6, 2025

State Health Department Applies for \$1 Billion in Rural Health Transformation Funds

Copy of application released today

Today (Nov. 6, 2025) the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) released Wisconsin's highly anticipated application for \$1 billion in federal funds to support rural health transformation initiatives in Wisconsin for the next five years.

For the past several months, WHA and the Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative (RWHC) have worked very closely with DHS leadership as they prepared Wisconsin's application for the competitive Rural Health Transformation (RHT) Program funding opportunity that was included in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) enacted on July 4.

WHA and RWHC strongly and consistently advocated for flexible funding opportunities for rural Wisconsin hospitals to address challenges that are often unique to their circumstances and the communities they serve, such as workforce shortages, aging infrastructure and technology, at-risk service lines and other systemic challenges.

Most recently, on October 23, DHS Deputy Secretary Deb Standridge and DHS Policy Director Sam Austin briefed the WHA Board of Directors on what DHS was planning to include in the state's RHT Program application. The meeting also provided the WHA Board of Directors an opportunity to provide direct feedback to DHS leadership before the RHT Program application was finalized and submitted to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the federal agency responsible for making award decisions and administering the program.

In its one-page summary of Wisconsin's RHT Program application, DHS highlights three broad initiatives where the agency would invest \$944 million: strengthening rural health care workforce (\$337 million); driving rural technology and innovation (\$329 million); and transforming rural care through partnerships (\$279 million). The remaining \$55 million would be spent on administration and evaluation.

WHA is currently analyzing DHS' RHT Program application and will provide an assessment after completing its analysis of the 62-page document.

Wisconsin, along with the other 49 states, submitted applications to CMS before the Nov. 5 deadline, according to federal Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

CMS will announce approved awardees by Dec. 31, 2025.

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EDUCATION EVENTS

Nov. 19, 2025

Caring for Wisconsin's Caregivers: Advancing Health Workforce Well-Being

Jan. 28, 2026

2026 WHA Health Care Leadership Academy

Mar. 13, 2026

2026 Physician Leadership Development Conference