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CMS Awards Wisconsin \$203 Million in Rural Health Transformation Funds for 2026

On Dec. 29, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced it had awarded Wisconsin \$203.7 million for the first year of the federal Rural Health Transformation (RHT) Program.

Authorized under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, the RHT Program is a competitive five-year \$50 billion federal funding opportunity available to all states to strengthen and support rural health care. CMS will award funds to approved states over five years, with \$10 billion distributed each year from 2026 through 2031.

Wisconsin and all 49 other states received RHT Program awards for next year. The 2026 awards will be distributed to states in early January and may be spent through September 30, 2027, according to CMS guidance.

In early November, the state's Department of Health Services (DHS) applied for \$1 billion in RHT Program funds to support rural health transformation initiatives in Wisconsin for the next five years. In its application, DHS proposed investing \$945 million in three broad initiatives to strengthen the rural health care workforce, drive rural technology and innovation and transform rural care through partnerships. DHS' application set aside the remaining \$55 million for administration and evaluation.

According to news reports, CMS staff said the RHT Program distributions amount to the maximum a state will receive in future years, meaning Wisconsin could potentially receive an additional \$18 million above the \$1 billion the state requested in RHTP funds over the five years of the program.

Wisconsin's first-year allocation of almost \$204 million ranks 23rd among the 50 state awards. RHTP awards ranged from \$147 million (New Jersey) to \$281 million (Texas). A compilation of each's state's RHTP project abstracts is posted on the CMS website [here](#).

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2026 WHA Health Care Leadership Academy

