



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
of **HEALTH SERVICES**

Rural Health Transformation Program

Thursday, February 5, 2026

Harnessing innovation and strengthening partnerships to build a healthier future for rural Wisconsin.

Federal funding support

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Program timeline

August 2025

DHS gathers
partner input
through
request for
information

November 4, 2025

DHS submits
application

TBD

CMS approves WI
DHS revised
budget and grant
activities

September 15, 2025

CMS posts notice of
funding opportunity

December 29, 2026

CMS announced
Wisconsin will receive
\$203.7 million in
FFY26

August 30, 2026

Annual report
and request for
second year
funds due to
CMS



Request for information

DHS solicited a RFI and received **172 responses** by the deadline.

Respondents included:

- Hospitals and health systems
- Local and Tribal governments
- Health care vendors
- Tech companies
- Educational institutions
- Associations
- Advocates

Priorities:

- IT investments (54%)
- Workforce support (42%)
- Behavioral health services (24%)
- Capital costs, innovative care models, chronic diseases (23%)
- Payments to providers (13%)



Partner meetings

DHS will continue to engage partners through a formal advisory group.

- WI Hospital Assoc./ Rural WI Health Cooperative
- WI High Value Network
- WI Office of Rural Health
- WI Primary Health Care Association
- Medical College of WI
- Pharmacy Society of WI
- Walgreens
- Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council/ Tribal consultation
- WI Emergency Medical Services Assoc.
- WI County Human Service Association
- National Alliance on Mental Illness WI (NAMI-WI)
- WI Assoc. of Local Health Depts. and Board / WI Public Health Assoc.
- Epic Systems
- WI Collaborative for Healthcare Quality
- United Way WI
- WI Statewide Health Information Network
- UW (Madison, Pop Health Institute, System)
- WI Technical College System
- Biotech Tech Hub
- Public Health Council
- Public Health Accreditation Board
- WI state agencies (DATCP, DSPS, DWD, DCF, DPI, DOA, OCI)



Problem statement

Rural residents lack access to primary and behavioral health care because of **geographic barriers** and **fragmented care pathways**.



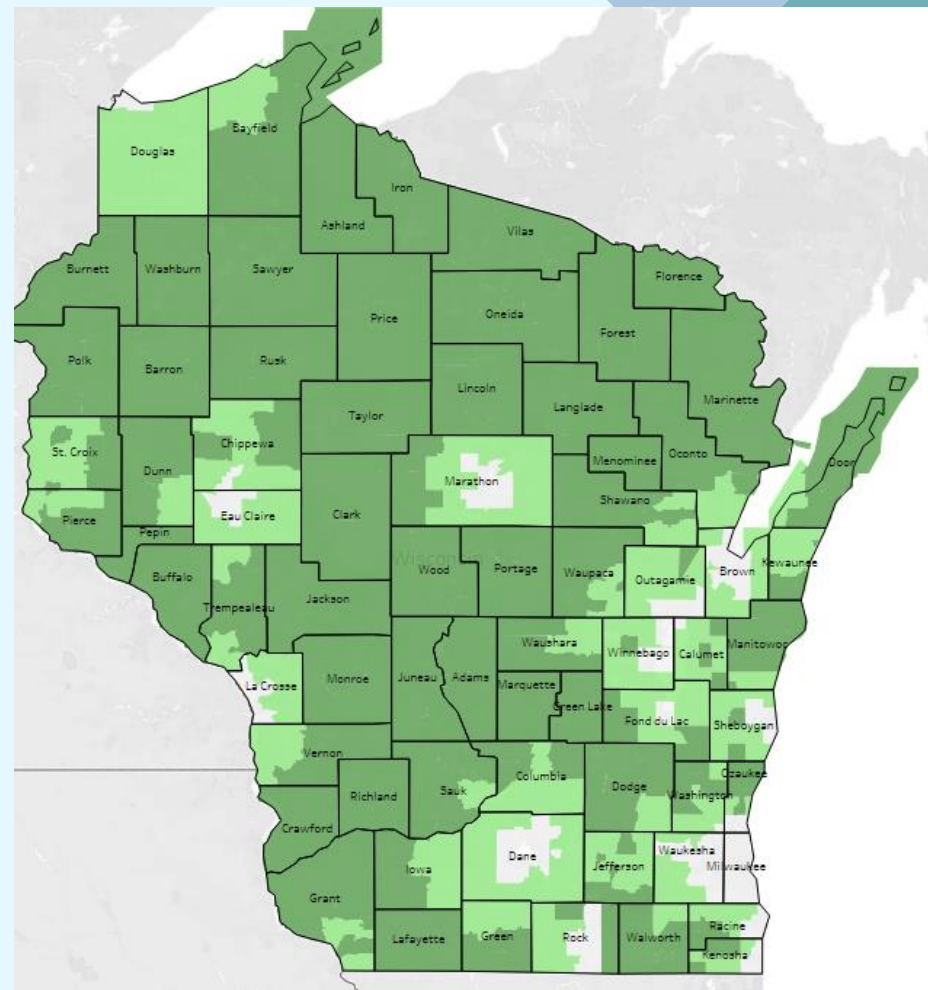
Rural Wisconsin



Metropolitan core

Semi-rural

Rural



Initiatives

Rural residents lack access to primary and behavioral health care because of geographical barriers and fragmented care pathways.

Workforce

Technology

Coordinated care





Initiative 1: Workforce

Strengthening the rural health care workforce

Rural workforce grants

- **Goal:** Empower communities to develop regionally driven solutions through competitive grants.
- **Amount:** \$150 million overall (\$5 million in year 1)
- **Key partners:**
 - Department of Workforce Development (DWD)
 - Grantees to be determined through DWD grant process



Community health workers

- **Goal:** Pilot community health worker (CHW) integration and study the return on investment. Sustain support through Medicaid coverage starting in 2028.
- **Amount:** \$60 million overall (\$25 million in year 1)
- **Key partners:**
 - Rural facilities selected through a grant process
 - Wisconsin Association of Community Health Workers
 - Others to be determined



Workforce readiness

- **Goal:** From middle school to medical school, equip educational partners with tools to grow the next generation of health care professionals through allocations to educational institutions.
- **Amount:** \$130.5 million overall amount (\$53.5 million in year 1)
- **Key partners:**
 - Area Health Education Centers
 - Department of Public Instruction
 - University of Wisconsin System
 - Wisconsin Technical College System
 - Marquette University School of Dentistry
 - Medical College of Wisconsin



Objectives – Year One

Train, recruit, and retain health care workers.

- DWD publishes grant funding opportunity for rural workforce grants.
- Marquette submits accreditation for dental residency program.
- DHS selects a vendor for the community health worker study, develops the CHW supervisor training, and launches a grant funding opportunity for CHW services.





Initiative 2: Technology

Driving rural technology and innovation

Facility technology transformation

- **Goal:** Provide rural facilities with technology to transform patient care and support providers through flexible allocations and a digital backbone.
- **Amount:** \$300 million overall (\$69 million in year 1)
- **Key partners:**
 - Rural facilities
 - Others to be determined



Public navigation transformation

- **Goal:** Leverage technology to better connect residents with public services starting in 2026.
- **Amount:** \$29 million overall (\$13.6 million in year 1)
- **Key partners:**
 - United Way of WI
 - WI Statewide Health Information Network (WISHIN)
 - WI Department of Administration (DOA)
 - WI Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP)
 - WI Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA)



Objectives – Year One

Care through technology.

- DHS selects vendor for rural health care collaborative (EHR project) in partnership with rural facilities. Vendor begins to build the digital backbone.
- DHS develops funding method for IT allocations and publishes allocations.
- DHS develops grant funding opportunity and selects recipients for dental technology grants.



Objectives – Year One (continued)

Care through technology.

- DHS procures grants administration system.
- DVA and DATCP begin to implement veteran/farmer wellness projects.
- United Way and WISHIN develop workplans to improve community and health information exchanges.





Initiative 3: Coordinated care

Transforming rural care through partnerships

Care coordination grants

- **Goal:** Transform delivery through innovative care models developed through regional partnerships. Examples include mobile clinic development, telehealth partnerships, service co-location, and co-responder models for behavioral health.
- **Amount:** \$230 million overall (\$10 million in year 1)
- **Key partners:**
 - Grantees selected through a grant process



Behavioral health innovations

- **Goal:** Address Wisconsin's rural mental health crisis, especially for kids, starting in 2026.
- **Amount:** \$5 million overall (\$4 million in year 1)
- **Key partners:**
 - Office of Children's Mental Health



Medicaid reforms and strategic investments

- **Goal:** Invest in Tribal Nations, Medicaid reforms, and public intervenor services to improve health care for patients and providers.
- **Amount:** \$43.5 million overall (\$9.5 million in year 1)
- **Key partners:**
 - Office of the Commissioner of Insurance (OCI)
 - Tribal Nations



Objectives – Year One

Coordinate and innovate care delivery.

- DHS develops grant funding opportunity for the care coordination grants and contractors develop technical assistance program for facilities.
- DHS selects contractors for behavioral health study and data upgrades.
- DHS and OCMH develop a youth peer support curriculum.
- OCMH and DHS begin Children's mental health program expansion outreach.



Objectives – Year One (continued)

Coordinate and innovate care delivery.

- Medicaid coordinates with rural health clinics on payment system upgrades.
- DHS partners with Tribal Nations on tribal set-aside projects.
- Medicaid begins CARES modernization and dual eligibility changes.
- OCI contracts for public intervenor services.



Evaluation and technical assistance partners

- Wisconsin Office of Rural Health
- Wisconsin Collaborative on Healthcare Quality
- University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute



Advisory council

- DHS will establish a Rural Health Transformation Program Advisory Council to provide feedback on grant implementation, key milestones, outcomes, and decisions.
- Members will be selected through an application process and will include 17-20 members representing the breadth and geographic diversity of partners engaged in rural health initiatives.
 - Applications are due February 27.
 - Appointments will be made in early April.



Next steps & Questions



Learn more about
Wisconsin's RHT Program
and sign up for updates.

- **Recruit staff.** DHS is in the process of recruiting a team to manage this project. Information about recruitment opportunities will be posted on the DHS careers webpage.
- **Launch advisory council.** DHS will seek applicants for the RHT Program Advisory Council in February.
- **Get to work.** DHS and partners will launch 20 projects totaling \$190 million this year.





Thank you!
