



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
of **HEALTH SERVICES**



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RURAL HEALTH TRANSFORMATION

Rural Health Transformation Program Advisory Council

July 23, 2026

Wisconsin's Rural Health Transformation Program is supported by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$203,670,005.21 with 100 percent funded by CMS/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by CMS/HHS, or the U.S. Government

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



Agenda

- Welcome and agenda overview
- Review and approve April 23rd meeting minutes
- Public comment
- April meeting reflection
- Program updates and discussion
- Evaluation overview
- October meeting planning
- Future agenda items



Review and approve meeting minutes

- **Action needed:** Motion and second to approve the minutes from the April 23rd meeting of the Rural Health Transformation Program Advisory Council.
- Draft meeting minutes are available [here](#) and were sent to members in the pre-meeting packet.



Public comment

- The purpose of public comment is to give members of the public an opportunity to present information or opinions concerning the Rural Health Transformation Program.
 - The council will not engage in discussion with members of the public or answer questions at this time.
 - The council or DHS staff may clarify or correct inaccuracies presented during public comment.
- **To make a comment**, please use the raise hand function, and we will unmute your microphone as we call on you.



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April meeting reflection



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April meeting reflection

- Feedback applied to:
 - Accessible grant funding opportunities
 - Rurality
 - Member agreements
 - Broadband follow-up



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Broadband in Wisconsin

External Advisory Council
Rural Health Transformation Program

July 23, 2026

The Rural Health Transformation Program **cannot** fund:

- Broadband infrastructure
- Financial assistance to households for installation and monthly broadband internet costs
- The purchase of covered (foreign-made) telecommunications equipment

The Rural Health Transformation Program **can** fund:

- Telehealth capabilities and infrastructure

Broadband is high-speed internet with performance and reliability that meet the needs of an entire household or business.

- State statute: service with actual speeds of 100 Megabits per second (Mbps) download and 20 Mbps upload from a wired or fixed wireless technology.

Broadband access...

- Improves access to health care
- Decreases the learning gap and improves educational opportunities
- Enhances civic participation
- Increases social connectedness and community
- Improves employment opportunities and supports economic growth
- Increases tourism
- Increases property values

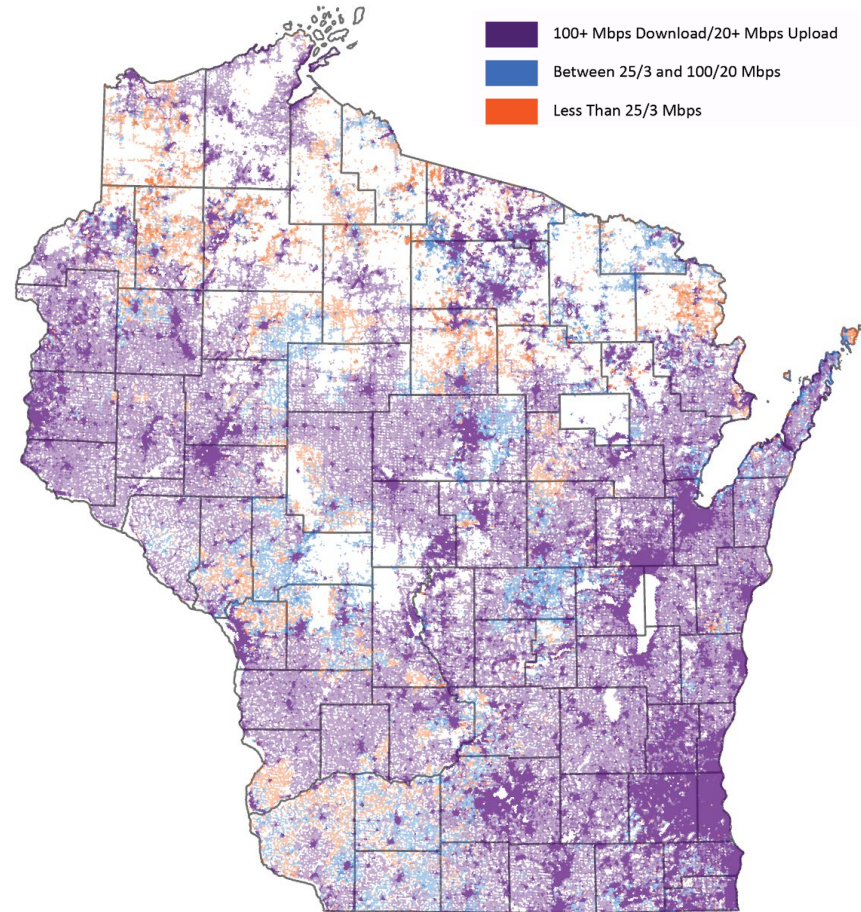
Types of Broadband Service

- Wired (fiber, cable, copper)
- Fixed Wireless (tower to home)
- Satellite (satellite to home)
- Mobile (tower to phone/device)

Availability of Broadband Service

- High-speed internet is available to 92.9% of households and businesses as of December 31, 2025
- Access at health care facilities is difficult to track, but evidence suggests almost universal service

Speed (Dec 31, 2025)	Locations	Percent
1000/1000 Mbps or better	1,248,200	54.2%
100/20 to 999/999 Mbps	890,500	38.7%
25/3 to 99/19 Mbps	93,600	4.1%
Below 25/3 Mbps	71,400	3.1%
Total	2,303,700	100%



In Progress Construction

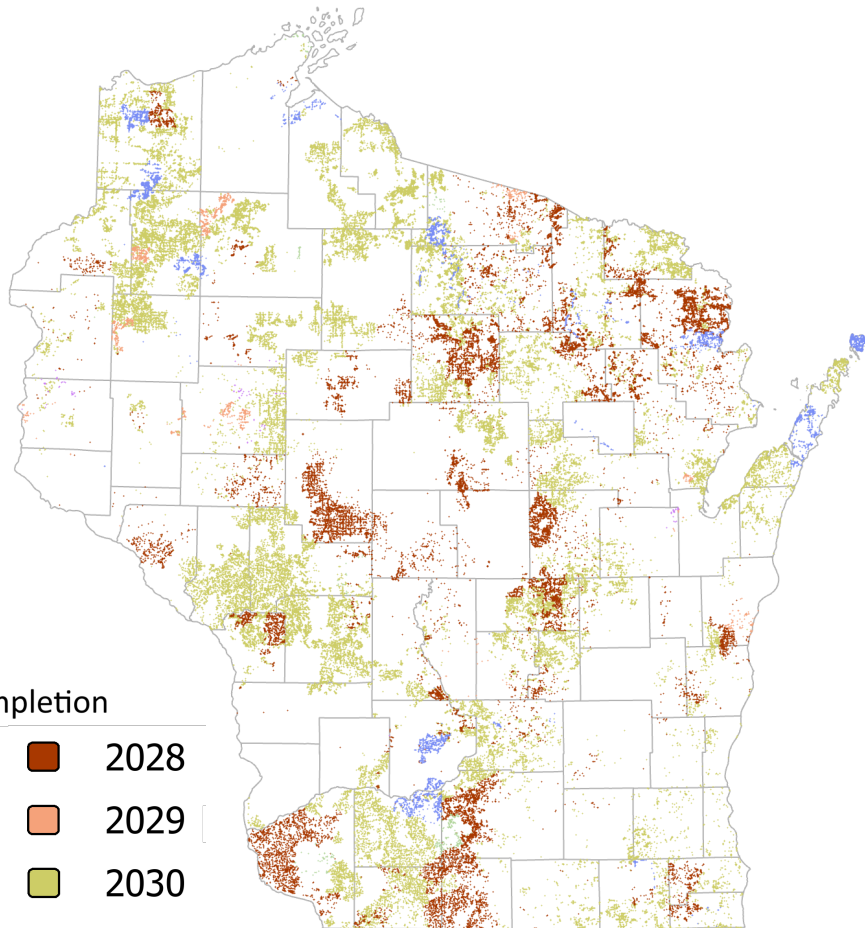
State and federal grants are filling gaps in unserved areas

165,000	Locations that are unserved as of December 31, 2025
-134,000	Locations in progress to build fiber or fixed wireless
31,000	Locations unserved and not in progress

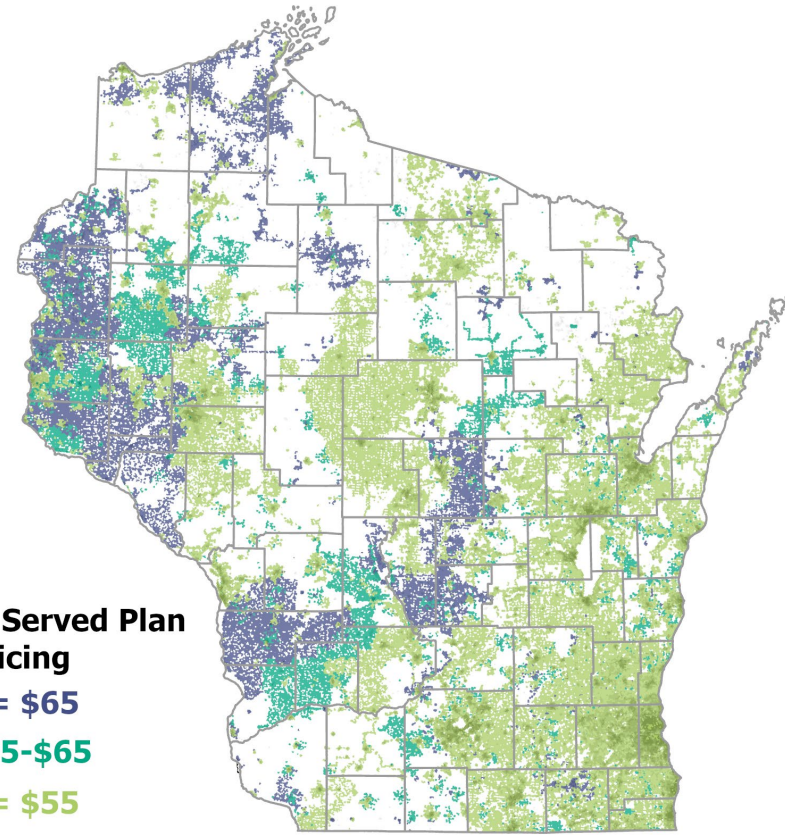
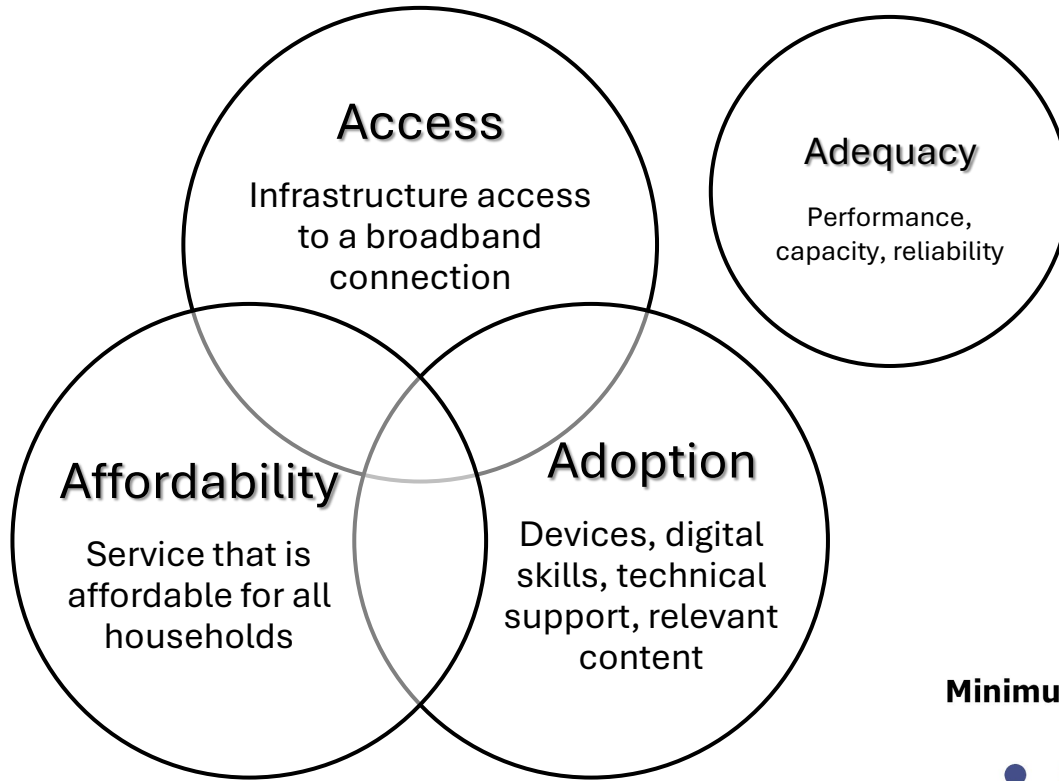
In the last five years, the Broadband Office has awarded over \$1 billion for broadband infrastructure

Planned Completion

	2025		2028
	2026		2029
	2027		2030



Non-Infrastructure Barriers to Broadband



Minimum Served Plan Pricing

- $\geq \$65$
- \$55-\$65
- $\leq \$55$



Rory Tikalsky, Broadband Expansion Manager

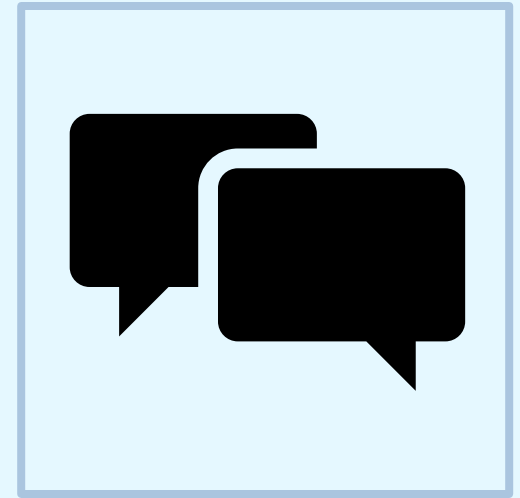
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

Wisconsin Broadband Office

PSCStateBroadbandOffice@wisconsin.gov

Review and approve member agreements

- **Action needed:** Motion and second to approve the member agreements as drafted.
- Draft member agreements were sent to members in the pre-meeting packet.



Member agreements

To foster a welcoming and productive environment, council members will:

- **Engage meaningfully.** To ensure all voices are heard and that members can build relationships with one another, we will design meetings to engage members in a variety of ways, including large and small group discussions, in writing through meeting chat functions, and via other interactive features.
- **Listen to understand, not just to respond.**
- **Assume good intentions and acknowledge impact.** Give others the benefit of the doubt but remain accountable if your words negatively impact someone else. Clarify to avoid making negative assumptions.
- **Disagree respectfully.** This group does not need to achieve unanimous consensus on every topic, but we will treat all opinions with respect. We will focus on addressing the problem or the idea, not the person.
- **Limit the use of acronyms and jargon.** If you must use an acronym, provide context about what it means. If you hear a phrase or an acronym you don't understand, raise your hand or ask for clarification in the chat.



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DHS commitments to members

To support the council's success, members can expect DHS and council leadership to work together to:

- **Provide timely materials.** DHS will send materials a week before the meeting.
- **Create meaningful agendas.** Agendas will be designed to help members know what to expect from each agenda item.
- **Manage meetings effectively.** DHS will work with council leadership to ensure adequate discussion time while not lingering on a topic for too long. We will use a variety of strategies to keep the meeting moving and resolve disagreements.



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Program Updates & Discussion



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CMS Site Visit

- June 15-16 site visit
- Meetings held at:
 - DHS offices (Madison)
 - Scenic Bluffs Community Health Centers (Cashton)
 - Ho-Chunk Nation Health Department (Black River Falls)



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Our Goal

Improve the health and well-being of rural communities across Wisconsin

Expand access, improve quality, and ensure sustainable solutions

Workforce:
Strengthen
capacity

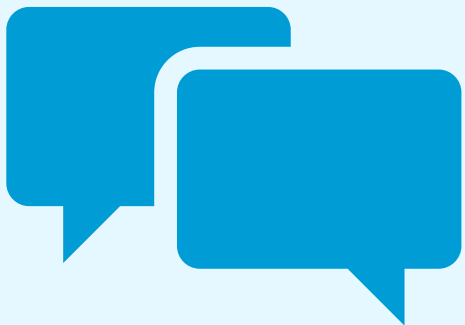
Technology:
Leverage
innovation

Coordinated Care:
Build
partnerships



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Discussion Question



- What are you seeing and hearing in your communities and networks related to each of the three initiatives?



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Initiative 1: Workforce

Strengthening the rural health care workforce



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Community Health Worker Grants

Support expanded integration and sustainability of community health workers as an evidence-based care model to improve health outcomes in Wisconsin's rural communities.

- **Launched:** June 15, 2026
- **Deadline:** August 7, 2026
- **Award announcements:** September
- [Funding opportunity and application questions and answers \(PDF\).](#)



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Workforce Innovation Grant: Healthcare Employment, Access, and Rural Transformation (WIG: HEART) Grant Program

WIG: HEART Grant Program

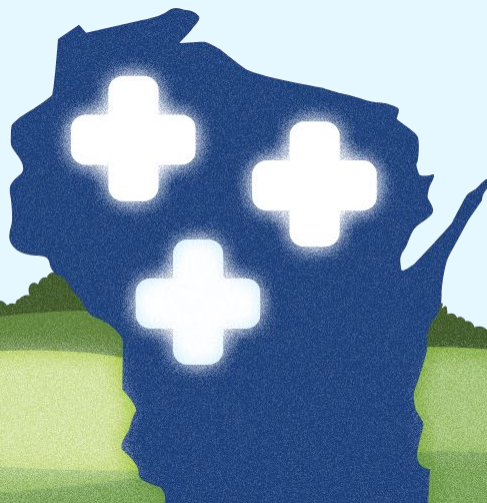
Apply by Aug. 17, 2026

www.dwd.wisconsin.gov/det/HEART

- Supports innovative solutions to Wisconsin **healthcare workforce** challenges

The Workforce Innovation Grant: Healthcare Employment, Access, and Rural Transformation (WIG: HEART) grant program project is supported by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) through a subaward as part of a financial assistance award made to the State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services totaling \$203,670,005.21 with 100 percent funded by CMS/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by CMS/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

- Targets **rural** and **semi-rural** areas of Wisconsin
- Awards regional workforce development partners up to **\$10M** over four years





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Workforce Innovation Grant: Healthcare Employment, Access,
and Rural Transformation (WIG: HEART) Grant Program

WIG: HEART Grant Program

Apply by Aug. 17, 2026

www.dwd.wisconsin.gov/det/HEART

- What has happened **so far?**
- What happens **next?**
- **How can you help?**
 - Participate on evaluation committee
 - Share ideas for information exchange

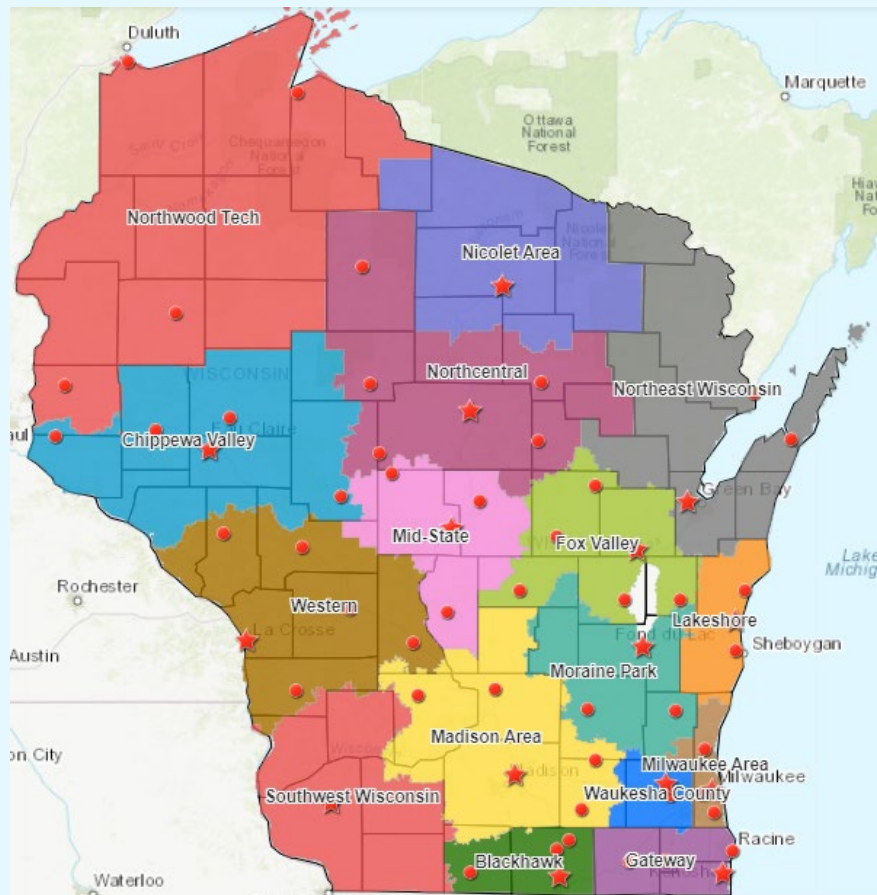
RHT Grant Update

Dani Cook

Director-Healthcare

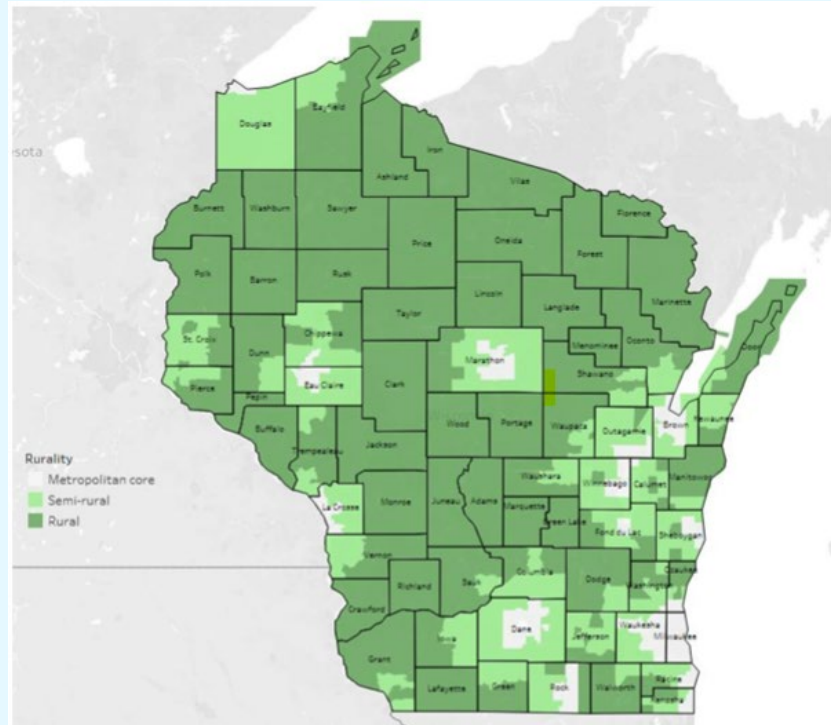


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Rurality Designations



Fund Allocation

- Base amount: \$300,000
- Remaining funds distributed by county:
 - 60% - Rural
 - 40% - Semi-rural
- Funding split based upon county funding formula that is used for AEFLA and WTCS Board purposes

	Year 1 Grant Allocation
Blackhawk	603,380
Chippewa Valley	1,928,291
Fox Valley	1,154,615
Gateway	826,788
Lakeshore	658,830
Madison	1,506,464
Mid-State	1,282,347
Milwaukee	511,135
Moraine Park	1,116,848
Nicolet	1,750,025
Northcentral	1,886,333
Northeast	1,796,276
Northwood	3,199,618
Southwest	1,572,292
Waukesha	512,140
Western	1,834,021
Total Award	22,139,403



Measurable Objectives

- By August 2028, create or expand healthcare programs and/or apprenticeship programs with a five-year commitment to serving rural areas.
- By August 2029, increased the number of locations and number of students enrolled or completing new or expanded healthcare and/or apprenticeship programs.
- By August 2029, increase the number of locations and number of students enrolled or completing rural or semi-rural clinical rotations or simulation-based training and locations of participating facilities.



Pre-proposal Concepts

- 13 new programs
- Six program areas-expansion
- Renovation
- Hospital partnerships
- Dual enrollment expansion



Discussion Question



- What are you seeing and hearing in your communities and networks related to each of the three initiatives?



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Initiative 2: Technology

Driving rural technology and innovation



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Investing in Dental Care Technology

Support dental clinics in adopting technologies that improve efficiency and increase access to care in rural and semi-rural communities.

- **Launched:** June 15, 2026
- **Deadline:** July 27, 2026
- **Award announcements:** September
- [Funding opportunity and application questions and answers \(PDF\).](#)



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Rural Technology Transformation Funds

Support technology investments that remove barriers to care, maximize provider productivity, and ensure improved patient or community health outcomes.

- **Launched:** July 1, 2026
- **Deadline:** August 1, 2026
- **Award announcements:** September
- Funding opportunity and questions and answers (PDF).

Eligibility:

- Organizations have been pre-identified based on the rural health facility information provided to CMS as part of Wisconsin's Rural Health Transformation Program application.
- Only organizations named in the application are eligible.



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Discussion Question



- What are you seeing and hearing in your communities and networks related to each of the three initiatives?



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Initiative 3: Coordinated care

Transforming rural care through partnerships



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Care coordination grants

Support new and innovative partnership models that coordinate care across systems and sectors in rural Wisconsin.

- **Launched:** June 15, 2026
- **Deadline:** August 21, 2026
- **Award announcements:** October
- Funding opportunity and application questions and answers (PDF).



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Discussion Question



- What are you seeing and hearing in your communities and networks related to each of the three initiatives?



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Evaluation: Planning for Tomorrow



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RHTP Evaluation Structure

- **Overview of Lessons Learned and Policy Intersections**
 - RHTP Program and Policy Team
- **Wisconsin Office of Rural Health**
 - Leading evaluation activities with sub-recipients
 - Coordinating CMS reporting
- **Data Access and Technical Assistance**
 - Wisconsin Community Health Coalition
 - UW Population Health Institute



Questions for Discussion

- What do we want to learn after 5 years?
- What opportunities do you see for learning across sub-recipients and projects?
- What is the best way to share findings and lessons learned?
- What evaluation activities do you think are most effective or useful?





October meeting format



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Meeting details

- **Date:** October 22, 2026
- **Location:** Northcentral Technical College, Wausau
- **Anticipated agenda for the day:**
 - 9:30 a.m. – Arrive and get settled for the day
 - 10-11 a.m. – Tour
 - 11 a.m.-12 p.m. – Listening Session
 - 12-1 p.m. – Lunch
 - 1-3 p.m. – Meeting



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Next steps



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

- Upcoming Advisory Council Meetings
 - October 22, 2026 – In person!

